



ACON ANNUAL REPORT

2023-2024



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

ACON acknowledges the
Traditional Owners and Custodians
of all the lands on which we work.

We pay our respects to all Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander peoples and
acknowledge Elders past and present.



ABOUT US



We are a fiercely proud community organisation. For our entire history, the work of ACON has been designed by and for our communities.

Established in 1985, our early years were defined by community coming together to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in NSW, and we remain committed to ending HIV for everyone in our communities. We do this by delivering campaigns and programs to eliminate new HIV transmissions. Supporting people living with HIV to live healthy and connected lives remains core to our work.

As we have grown, we have been proud to work with a diverse range of people to ensure their voices and health needs are represented in the work we do.

We help our communities take control of their health so they can look after themselves as well as their partners, family and friends. We offer a range of services including sexual health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, safety and inclusion, domestic and family violence and ageing.

We have continued to evolve as an organisation, developing significant new programs and services to meet the needs of our community, especially in the areas of training, capacity building, cancer prevention, and clinical testing and screening services.

Our head office is in Sydney and we also have offices in regional centres across New South Wales. We provide our services and programs locally, state-wide and nationally.

Learn more about ACON by visiting acon.org.au.



ACON at Newcastle Pride

OUR PURPOSE

WE CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES TO LIVE THEIR HEALTHIEST LIVES



OUR COVER & DESIGN

The cover and design of the ACON Annual Report 2023-2024 takes its inspiration from our large-scale social marketing campaign *LET'S TEST*, which was launched and implemented statewide during the 2024 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival.

Rollled out under ACON's Ending HIV brand, *LET'S TEST* aimed to educate and motivate men who have sex with men (MSM) across New South Wales to get tested, particularly those living in Greater Western Sydney and regional NSW. The campaign promoted testing services outside inner-city areas, with a particular focus on de-stigmatising testing, and connecting the most at-risk groups of MSM to these services.

The campaign was developed by ACON's long-time creative partners Frost*collective. We acknowledge their ongoing partnership and support.

We thank all who participated and engaged with the campaign throughout the year and thank our communities for continuing to look after their health and that of their partners.

Learn more about the campaign on page 24.



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ACON CEO & PRESIDENT MESSAGE

It has been a very important year for ACON in terms of progressing our vision to be a global leader in community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders, and fulfilling our purpose of “creating opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives”.

Now, as we conclude the final year of the ACON Strategic Plan 2019-2024, we can reflect on a number of achievements that have contributed towards our goal of meeting our purpose and objectives.

We continued our work to end HIV transmission for all in our communities. Over the course of the year, HIV diagnoses in NSW continued to decline. There has been high use of PrEP across NSW, particularly among gay and bisexual men, and an earlier uptake of HIV treatments that will lead to better health for more people in our communities.

But there is still more work to do. The majority of people newly diagnosed with HIV are now born overseas and we are still not seeing the same rates of decline in outer suburban areas of Sydney and regional NSW. We will continue to adapt and tailor our responses to reach all communities at risk of HIV transmission in NSW.

Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health

programming is a key strategic focus for ACON. This year, we have been able to expand our reach in areas such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs support, domestic and family violence, ageing and community safety.

This year, substantial progress has been made in the realisation of an ACON Health Centre – a key objective of our strategic plan. In April, we were proud to unveil Kaleido Health, an integrated, community-controlled and inclusive service specifically designed to meet the health needs of sexuality and gender diverse people and their families, situated in the Belltower building on Gadigal land in Sydney’s South Eveleigh precinct.

We thank the NSW Government for their support for Kaleido Health. We look forward to working with the NSW Health as well as our other partners in delivering this new community-driven health service for LGBTQ+ people in NSW.

Sexuality and gender diverse people experience a disproportionate cancer burden and face unique challenges compared to the general population. In the past 12 months we have continued to raise awareness on cancer screening and prevention among our communities through bold, engaging and innovative campaigns. Such has been their success that some of this important work has been expanded from statewide coverage to national distribution.

Another important area of focus for ACON has been the prevention of mpox. As cases rise in Australia, we have been working closely with NSW Health and other partners on developing and implementing strategies to inform and protect our communities against mpox.

ACON continues to build our presence in Greater Western Sydney. We developed ‘Starting Out West’, a peer education workshop specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse, and overseas-born LGBTQ+ communities, in Western Sydney. We continued to collaborate with local groups such as House of Silky to deliver HIV, sexual health and risk reduction messages to queer and trans people in the area and we strengthened partnerships with a range of organisations and interagency forums such as NSW Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Sexual Health Action Group and the Greater Western Sydney LGBTQ+ Inclusion Networks.

In the coming year, we will continue to provide support and work with local communities to ensure LGBTQ+ people in Greater Western Sydney have access to inclusive and culturally safe resources, services and spaces.

The theme of safety also lies at the heart of our ongoing work in advocating for truth and justice for victims of historical hate



ACON President Dr Justin Koonin and ACON CEO Michael Woodhouse

crimes. This year, the long-running Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes released its recommendations and we were heartened to see all of them accepted in full by the NSW Government. These measures will shed more light on unsolved cases and also improve systems and processes in the handling of hate crimes in NSW. ACON stands ready to work with the NSW Government and other agencies to fully implement the reforms necessary to protect our communities.

Developing financial diversity, strength and growth is critical to our operations and sustainability. We maintained our focus on prudent financial management in an increasingly challenging economic environment. Over the coming year, we will seek out and pursue new funding opportunities as we implement programs and services that address the health and support needs of our communities.

As detailed in the pages of this report, this year we achieved many other important outcomes across all our work areas and we thank our staff, board, members, volunteers and supporters for their time, expertise, contributions, partnership and assistance. ACON would not have the impact that it does without the passion and efforts of so many people and organisations. We

thank our clients and community members for caring for each other and working to keep our community healthy and strong.

There are many who embody this spirit of compassion and community, and we would like to take a moment to honour four such individuals and their contributions to ACON.

In September, we bade farewell to Nicolas Parkhill, who stepped down from the organisation after 18 years. Nicolas’ strategic leadership, relentless pursuit of excellence, spirit of innovation and collaborative approach have seen ACON achieve remarkable growth and success. He leaves behind an organisation that is strong, agile and responsive.

Nicolas has been a fervent champion for our communities and we thank him for his unwavering passion and commitment to improving health outcomes for people living with HIV and LGBTQ+ people. The communities ACON serves are stronger and more resilient thanks to his tireless efforts.

We also wish to acknowledge ACON’s Deputy CEO Karen Price who, after over a decade, stepped down in October. Karen has been a powerful force at ACON, leading the organisation into new areas of growth such as cancer prevention and primary care. It is thanks to Karen’s vision, courage and grit that we have

been able to make great strides with Kaleido Health over the years. Thank you Karen for all your contributions to ACON and to our communities.

We also wish to highlight the outstanding work of Teddy Cook, ACON’s Director of Community Health, who concluded his 12 years of service in August. Teddy worked across client services, community health and regional services, and his commitment to health equity sharpened our focus on supporting the health of trans and gender diverse people. We salute you Teddy and thank you for all you have accomplished over the years.

Finally, we wish to honour Bill Whittaker, ACON’s first CEO, who sadly passed away in September 2024. Bill was at the helm of ACON from 1986 to 1990 and was one of the architects of Australia’s response to HIV. He was a prominent, passionate and pioneering gay activist who worked tirelessly to promote the health and human rights of LGBTQ+ communities. We pay tribute to Bill and his life-changing contributions to LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV.

Bill’s legacy, and the contributions our dedicated and hard-working staff – past and present – will inspire us as we develop our new strategic plan that will guide our work for the next five years. As the pace of change increases and our work becomes more complex, our new strategic plan will be a roadmap that will guide us as we meet the challenges facing the organisation and our communities in coming years.

Thank you for your support for ACON. We look forward to walking with you on the journey ahead.

Dr Justin Koonin
ACON President

Michael Woodhouse
ACON CEO



VALE BILL WHITTAKER

Bill Whittaker, ACON's first CEO and one of the key architects of Australia's HIV response, passed away this year. We pay tribute to his lifechanging contributions, far-reaching impact and enduring legacy.

It was with great sadness that this year we mourned the loss of Bill Whittaker – ACON's first CEO and a giant in Australia's HIV response.

Bill Whittaker was one of the key architects of Australia's response to HIV/AIDS who worked in HIV community development, policy and strategy locally and internationally for nearly 40 years.

He was also a prominent, passionate and pioneering gay activist who worked tirelessly to promote the health and human rights of LGBTQ communities.

Bill began his activism as a volunteer and then President of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, where he acted to strengthen the organisation's role in fighting for gay and lesbian rights and countering homophobia. He was President of Mardi Gras at the height of the AIDS crisis in Australia in the mid-1980s, which saw unrelenting attacks on LGBTQ communities and on the Mardi Gras itself.

It was during this time that Bill forged links with other activists like Lex Watson and Don Baxter, to help build the community response to AIDS.

In 1986, Bill became the first CEO of the AIDS Council of NSW or what we know today as ACON.

Under his tenure, the organisation was built from a staff of three to a staff of over 70 and played a pivotal role in shaping both the NSW HIV response and the national response.

Bill led the reform of Australia's clinical trial system, helped get people with HIV early access to the first HIV treatments and led the development of internationally recognised AIDS information campaigns. During this time he also helped develop Australia's first National HIV/AIDS Strategy, which set the foundations for Australia's successful HIV responses over three decades.



Bill Whittaker at an ACON rally outside NSW Parliament in 1987. Photo SSO/Courtesy AQuA.

After leaving ACON in 1990, Bill then spent the next two decades working in a variety of community-based AIDS organisations.

During these years Bill held various positions including founding Chair of the National Association of People with HIV/AIDS, President of Positive Life NSW and National President of the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations.

In 1992, Bill was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to community health through HIV/AIDS organisations.

Bill also worked extensively on the global fight against HIV. In the 1980s and 1990s, he joined other activists to help start building an international community-based HIV advocacy movement.

Bill participated in the United Nations Special Sessions on HIV in 2001, 2006 and 2011. He was a commissioner with the UNAIDS High Level Commission on HIV Prevention and a special representative of the National Association of People with HIV (Australia) and a Board member of Pacific Friends of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

Later, Bill led NSW Government's 2012 HIV Strategy Implementation Committee, which heralded a new and transformative approach to HIV prevention and treatment. The advancements and progress we are seeing now in the HIV landscape can be attributable to the foundations laid by people like Bill. His contributions to Australia's HIV response are truly nothing short of remarkable.

Bill passed away in September 2024. He was a fearless, devoted, brave and bold advocate. His work has improved the lives of tens of thousands of people here in Australia and around the world.

ACON pays tribute to Bill and his lifechanging contributions, far-reaching impact and enduring legacy.

He will be dearly missed, but never, ever, forgotten.

Vale Bill.

Bill Whittaker was one of the key architects of Australia's response to HIV/AIDS who worked in HIV community development, policy and strategy locally and internationally for nearly 40 years.

OUR STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024



Released in 2019, the ACON Strategic Plan sets out our purpose, vision, values and priorities. Developed in consultation with community, staff and other stakeholders including funding bodies, service delivery partners and research organisations, the plan maps our strategic direction as we work to improve the health and wellbeing of people of diverse sexualities and genders. We continue to work with our communities, our partners and our allies in fulfilling objectives outlined in the plan to deliver better health outcomes for our communities.

Initially running from 2019-2022, the ACON Board agreed in June 2022 to extend the life of the existing plan for an additional two years, recognising that the plan remains current and clearly articulates ACON's strategic outlook. As a result, it is now the ACON Strategic Plan 2019-2024.

ACON

OUR PURPOSE

We create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

OUR VISION

We strive to be a global leader in community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders.

OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON

1. Ending HIV transmission for all in our communities
2. Delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming
3. Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion
4. Developing financial diversity, strength and growth
5. Building a workplace that attracts and develops the best people

OUR VALUES

Our values inform who we are:

- Community
- Collaboration
- Informed

Our values inform how we work with people:

- Equity
- Inclusion
- Compassion

Our values inform how we make decisions:

- Excellence
- Courage
- Innovation

HIGHLIGHTS: 2023-2024

Here is a snapshot of the impact of our work and how, together we will continue to improve the health and wellbeing of sexuality and gender diverse communities.

We continued to educate our communities and provide them with vital messages on HIV prevention and sexual health

1.6m

visitors to the Ending HIV website

1,000+
placements of our 'LET'S TEST' campaign across print, digital, out-of-home, cinema and radio

1,000+
participants across our peer education workshops on HIV, risk reduction, sexual health, relationships and community

We continued to raise awareness among our communities on combination prevention and risk reduction

1.1m

Online interactions that raise awareness of HIV and STI prevention

188,642

safe sex packs distributed across Sydney and regional NSW

311

venues and services that received and displayed HIV and STI prevention resources

We continued to support our communities in testing for HIV and STIs

1m

Online interactions that promote HIV and STI testing

8

Community events where we provide HIV testing

6,580

client sessions at ACON's a[TEST] testing facilities

Our staff are continuing their work to support the mental health and wellbeing of our communities

18,000+

occasions of services provided across our counselling, care coordination, substance support, suicide prevention and aftercare support, and client services

2,600+

patrons supported by ACON Rovers at LGBTQ+ festivals and events in NSW

1,595

free meals served to vulnerable people living with HIV

We continued to reach our communities with vital information and resources on community health

165,000+

people reached by our harm reduction campaign Take Care XOXO during Mardi Gras

64,000+

pageviews on ACON's national SDFV digital support hub Say It Out Loud

26,000+

pageviews on ACON's digital resource on suicide prevention Here.org.au

We continued to engage our communities on reducing cancer risk and cancer screening

1.3m

total views of CAN WE's Be Apologetic video, raising awareness of the cancer risks of alcohol

180,000

new users reached by ACON's cancer prevention digital resource, CAN WE

134,375

pageviews on CAN WE's cancer risk quiz, Know Yourself

Over the year, we continued to amplify the voices of those we serve and ensure meaningful inclusion, support and participation of our communities.

1.3m

pageviews on leading digital health resource for trans people, TransHub

8,000+

learners engaged in courses delivered by Pride Training

2,761

responses collected from Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey – 38% increase year-on-year

200+

delegates attended our inaugural Pride In Sport Summit

REGIONAL NSW

We hosted activations at festivals and events in Lismore, Ballina, Broken Hill, Hay, Bega, Wagga, Port Kembla, Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Wollongong, Albury, Katoomba, Penrith, the Central Coast, Young, Queanbeyan, Jindabyne, Nowra and Parramatta

We continued to build a strong and resilient organisation for our communities

\$812k

raised in fundraising in financial year 2023-2024, up 43%

800k

media mentions across print and digital about our programs and services

400+

volunteers engaged with ACON throughout the year

85% participation rate for ACON employee engagement survey with Flexibility, Values and Teamwork rating amongst highest areas at 82%, 86% and 89%

SPOTLIGHT ON GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY

We're here to help sexuality and gender diverse people and people with HIV in Greater Western Sydney take control of their health by providing a range of programs and services and supporting local groups, communities and initiatives.



ACON at Parramatta Pride Picnic

SUPPORTING THE HEALTH & WELLBEING OF LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES IN GWS

NSW has achieved significant progress in bringing HIV notifications down thanks to a collaborative and coordinated HIV response. But while we've seen dramatic declines in notifications in urban, inner Sydney areas, these efforts haven't had the same impact in other areas, particularly Greater Western Sydney.

ACON has worked to support the health of sexuality and gender diverse people in Greater Western Sydney for many years, delivering education, support, capacity-building and community development programs and services to the area. This work has included community outreach programs, peer-led workshops, HIV prevention education and support for people living with HIV. Over the years, we have also broadened our focus to include other areas of LGBTQ+ health including community safety and social inclusion.

Addressing the unique health needs of diverse LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney requires nuanced, tailored and culturally appropriate responses. ACON is continuing to deliver programs and service that support the health and wellbeing of our communities in Greater Western Sydney.

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH TEAM FOR GWS

ACON's HIV & Sexual Health Division operates a unit focused on addressing HIV and sexual health in Greater Western Sydney. The unit employs three full-time staff that develop and deliver peer education workshops, undertake community outreach and participate in events in the area.

ACON also has a dedicated project on fostering multicultural engagement and community development. Established in 2022, the project's aims is to better engage multicultural communities including those living in Western Sydney in ACON programs and services.

PEER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS IN GWS

This year, we developed and implemented Starting Out West, an education workshop specifically for culturally and linguistically diverse, and overseas-born LGBTQ+ communities from or living in Western Sydney. Workshops were delivered in partnership with Parramatta Head to Health and the Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre in Liverpool. ACON will continue to work with local partners as we expand our workshop activities in Western Sydney.

As we work to expand our workshop offerings in Western Sydney, we have commenced conducting facilitator recruitment and training in Western Sydney. Key to the success of our workshops in Western Sydney is that they are led by local community members with strong community connections.

SHINING A LIGHT ON HIV TESTING IN GWS

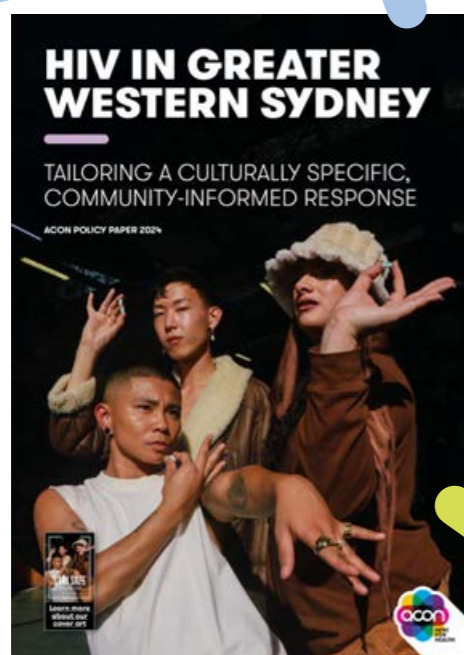
Encouraging gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men in Greater Western Sydney to get tested for HIV and STIs was the focus of our large-scale social marketing campaign, implemented during the 2024 Sydney Mardi Gras Festival. The campaign - LET'S TEST - sought to motivate communities in Greater Western Sydney to get sexual health screenings by de-stigmatising testing and promoting services in the region. The campaign was featured in 22 placements in over 10 suburbs across Western Sydney including Parramatta, Fairfield, Penrith, Granville, Moorebank, Campbelltown and Bankstown. A campaign video tailored for Western Sydney was also produced, highlighting the ease of testing at Parramatta Sexual Health Clinic and Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic.

SUPPORTING GWS RESIDENTS AT A[TEST]

ACON's a[TEST] is a peer-led service that offers rapid HIV and STI screening in Sydney's Surry Hills and Darlinghurst. Data shows a[TEST] consistently records a high number of tests, making it one of the most popular testing sites for gay and bisexual men in Sydney. It also shows usage by populations currently at highest risk of HIV transmission such as people born overseas or living in outer suburban Sydney. During 2021-2023, 47% of clients were born overseas, while 16% of unique visits were by clients from Local Health Districts beyond central and eastern Sydney. The high demand for the service underscores the future need for community-based testing services in other areas of NSW including Greater Western Sydney.

EXPLORING HIV IN MULTICULTURAL LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES IN GWS

This year, ACON's Policy, Strategy and Research team published a paper addressing HIV among multicultural LGBTQ+ communities living in Greater Western Sydney. The paper explores the reasons why HIV notifications in Greater Western Sydney are not experiencing the same reductions as in inner Sydney over time. It examines key barriers obstructing access to prevention, testing, and treatment interventions for LGBTQ+ communities living in Greater Western Sydney, and offers case studies of successful, community-informed responses as well as recommendations for changes across the sector aimed at bringing notifications down in the region.



ACON'S SAFETY, INCLUSION & JUSTICE PROJECT

ACON's Safety, Inclusion and Justice Project works to deliver safety and inclusion initiatives in Western Sydney. Its work is informed by the 2020 research report Advancing LGBTQ+ Safety and Inclusion produced by ACON and Western Sydney University. The project runs a number of initiatives including inclusive events for local communities and workshops for community leaders in the region. It also provides support to the Greater Western Sydney LGBTQ+ Inclusion Networks.

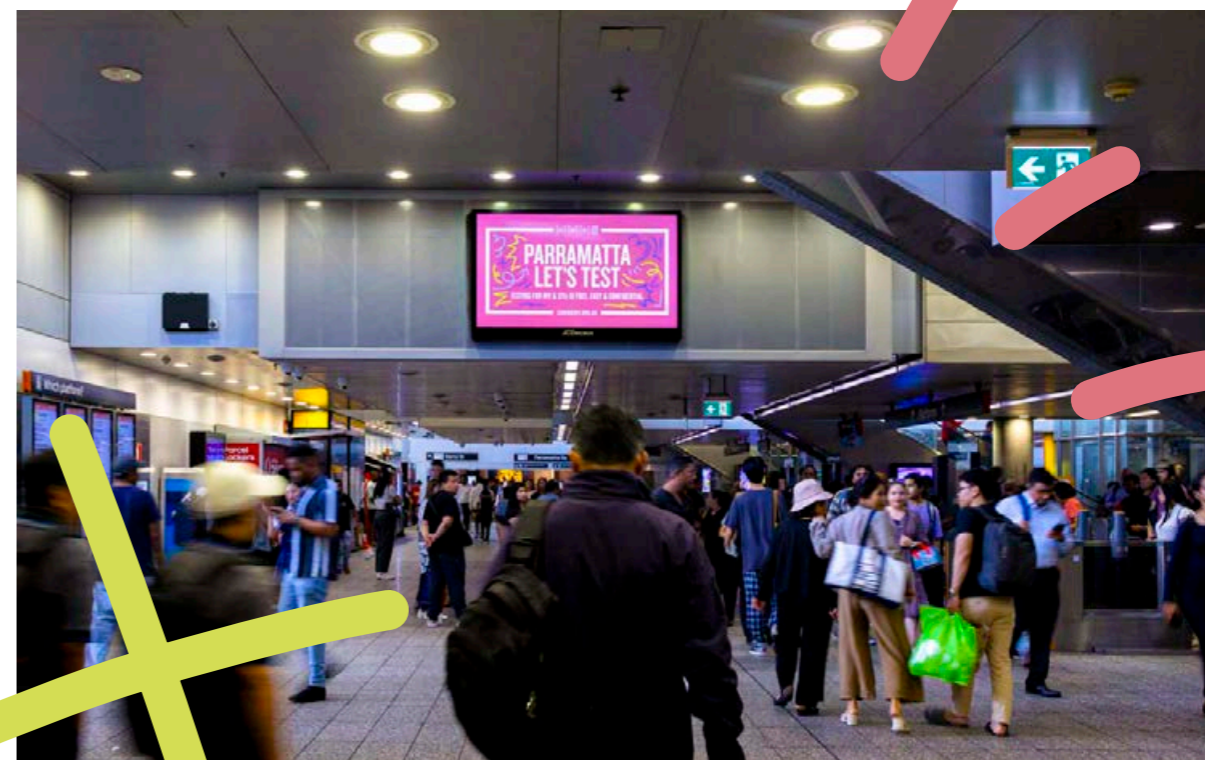
GWS LGBTQ+ INCLUSION NETWORKS

As part of our work in empowering LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney, ACON supports five Greater Western Sydney LGBTQ+ Inclusion Networks to deliver their inclusion activities: Fairfield Liverpool Inclusive Network, Inclusive Communities Network (Canterbury-Bankstown); Macarthur-Wingecarribee Diversity Network; Parramatta Queer Forum; and Western Sydney Rainbow Connection. The networks are comprised of service providers, LGBTQ+ community members, leaders, and groups, focusing on LGBTQ+ inclusion, safety, culturally competent services provision, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration.

This year, we supported activities hosted by the networks including an IDAHOBIT event in Bankstown, an LGBTQ+ Speaker Series in Penrith, a movie night in Camden and the annual Parramatta Pride Picnic. Information about the networks and their activities are housed in a digital portal – Greater Western Sydney Inclusive Communities (www.inclusivecommunities.com.au) – produced and led by ACON.

PARRAMATTA QUEER FORUM & PRIDE PICNIC

As part of the Parramatta Queer Forum, a group comprising local residents and service providers seeking to build capacity, increase visibility and run events for sexuality and gender diverse people in the Parramatta local government area, ACON leads the production and delivery of the Parramatta Pride Picnic, the biggest outdoor LGBTQ event in Western Sydney. First held in 2008, the Parramatta Pride Picnic provides ACON and partners with a unique opportunity to promote key health messages and engage community members on HIV prevention, LGBTQ health, harm reduction and community safety. Over 1500 attended this year's event, which was held at Parramatta Park. Since its establishment, it is estimated that over 15,000 people have attended the Parramatta Pride Picnic.



PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

Throughout the year, ACON participated in a range of events and initiatives to raise awareness of health issues relating to LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney.

In October 2023, we collaborated with NSW Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Sexual Health Action Group on a symposium on health equity at Club Parramatta, which brought together over 100 attendees from across the sector.

In November 2023, we participated in Hello Doctor, a health-related expo hosted by TAFE NSW Granville and the Western Sydney Local Health District, delivering over 300 occasions of service linking LGBTQ+ individuals to local health services and community groups in Western Sydney.

We continued our partnership with Western Sydney arts collectives House of Silky and West Ball to promote HIV and sexual health testing as well as harm reduction among queer and trans people in Western Sydney. This year, we supported The Grand Silky Ball at Machine Hall as part of VIVID Sydney 2024 and we collaborated on several West Ball initiatives.

We also continued to provide sexual health information and resources to local sex-on-premises venue Arrows in Rydalmere. This partnership also enabled us to undertake community outreach on mpox and establish a pop-up vaccinations site with alongside the Western Sydney Local Health District.

ACON partnered with C3West for a project engaging CALD LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney. In the lead up to NAIDOC, we hosted an event in Parramatta featuring short films and a panel discussion with First Nations and CALD LGBTQ+ speakers, aimed at fostering solidarity and understanding amongst our shared communities.

ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs team, which works to support organisations and service providers in LGBTQ+ inclusion, delivered over 35 hours of facilitated training to over 200 learners from a range of clients in Greater Western Sydney including councils, health and support organisations.

ACON also advised interagency forums on issues and initiatives aimed at engaging multicultural LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney, including the LGBTQ+ CALD Communities Health Working Group, CALD SHAG and NSW Antiracism Working Group.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACON acknowledges the support of our many partners in Greater Western Sydney. Thank you for your commitment in caring for our communities. We also thank the Western Sydney Local Health District, the South-Western Sydney Local Health District and the Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District for continuing to support LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV in Greater Western Sydney. And we thank all our staff and volunteers for their passion and efforts in building thriving communities in Greater Western Sydney.

FOCUS AREA

1

ENDING HIV TRANSMISSION FOR ALL IN OUR COMMUNITIES

We provide up to date information and deliver innovative social marketing campaigns to our communities on a variety of sexual health issues.

We develop peer-led prevention programs to reduce transmissions of HIV and other STIs in our communities.

We improve access to testing with models that are responsive to the needs of our communities.

We advocate for innovative responses to end HIV transmission and reduce STIs in Australia.

IN THIS SECTION

- HIV Prevention
- HIV Campaigns
- HIV & Sexual Health
- HIV Testing
- Mpox Prevention

HIV PREVENTION

We're here to engage and mobilise people in our communities to test often, treat early and stay safe. We develop and promote campaigns to build knowledge and skills, operate HIV and STI testing services, run HIV prevention and risk reduction community workshops, provide a range of support services and distribute hundreds of thousands of free safe sex packs every year throughout NSW.

HIV PREVENTION IN NSW

Gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (MSM) – the population group at most risk of HIV transmission – have consistently shown that they're committed to ending HIV by adopting the use of tools and technologies such as PrEP and Undetectable Viral Load that will allow them to look after their health and that of their partners.

Results from the annual Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey (SGCPS) shows HIV prevention coverage in NSW has grown significantly since 2014. Over time, the proportion of gay and bisexual men with casual partners using some form of prevention strategy – such as PrEP, undetectable viral load, condoms – increased from 72.2% in 2014 to 83.2% in 2023.

We know that PrEP is a proven biomedical tool in preventing HIV transmission and its use is at an all-time high in NSW. The SGCPS shows a rapid increase in PrEP use over time with PrEP becoming the most used HIV prevention tactic by gay and bisexual men with casual partners in 2019. The proportion of gay and bisexual men with casual partners who reported PrEP use and condomless anal intercourse was 47% in 2023 – the highest recorded in the SGCPS.

Combining PrEP with high HIV testing rates, wider reach and earlier uptake of treatment, continued condom use and utilisation of undetectable viral load give us the arsenal to move

closer towards our goal of virtually eliminating new HIV transmissions in NSW by 2030.

Data from NSW Health shows that HIV diagnoses in NSW continued to decline from the levels reached prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, there were 231 diagnoses, which is 20% lower than the pre-pandemic period. Between January and June 2024, there were 124 people newly diagnosed with HIV, similar to the same period in 2023 (n=127).

Of the 231 HIV notifications in 2023, MSM accounted for 168 diagnoses; of these, 59 (35%) were Australian-born, a 37% drop compared to the pre-pandemic average. Both early-stage and late-stage diagnoses continue to decline among Australian-born MSM, with reductions of 20% and 38% respectively, compared to pre-pandemic averages.

The majority of HIV notifications were among people born overseas. In 2023, overseas-born MSM made up two thirds (109, 65%) of HIV diagnoses; though this was still 16% lower since the pre-pandemic period.

The majority of newly diagnosed MSM live in inner Sydney (56, 33%). For overseas-born MSM, 39% live in inner Sydney and 33% lived in Greater Western Sydney. In the pre-pandemic period 17% of overseas born MSM lived in Greater Western Sydney.

While we are seeing a reduction in the diagnoses of overseas-born MSM in other parts of Sydney, we are not seeing the same level of decline in HIV notifications among people

born overseas in Greater Western Sydney. This means we need to continue to focus efforts so that no parts of NSW get left behind.

ACON will continue to work with NSW Health and our many partners to extend our programs and services to ensure we are reaching all populations at risk of HIV with appropriate and tailored education and resources on testing, prevention and treatment.

We commend the NSW Government for continuing to lead the way with their bold and innovative approach to the HIV response, and the ongoing dedicated work of our sector partners.

ENDING HIV: ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES

ACON's award-winning community education and mobilisation initiative Ending HIV continues to educate gay, bisexual and other MSM on what they can do to help prevent new HIV transmission in NSW. Since its launch in 2013, we've improved our communities' understanding on the importance of frequent HIV testing, the effectiveness of HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, the benefits of starting HIV treatment early and having an undetectable viral load. This year, we have also been able to deliver important messages and information on other emerging health issues such as mpox.

This year, we had over 1.6 million users and, over its lifetime, accumulated more than 25,000 connections across our social media channels.

BOLSTERING THE NATIONAL HIV RESPONSE

Efforts to end HIV transmissions in Australia will ramp thanks to new funding from the Australian Government. As part of the 2024 Federal Budget, the government announced \$43.9 million to address HIV over the next two years, which includes \$26 million to provide access to PrEP for Medicare ineligible people at risk of HIV – a significant investment in preventive health.

Funding will also bolster a range of HIV testing, PrEP uptake and education programs, as well as other initiatives in relation to mental health and LGBTQ health that improve the quality of life of all people living with HIV.

Emen8, ACON's national digital sexual health resource produced in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health, will receive further funding over two years to continue delivering vital health information for our communities. And new funding

will also enable ACON to establish a national HIV multicultural peer navigation pilot program.

The funding is a significant commitment from the Federal Government. Several initiatives being implemented are informed by the National HIV Taskforce Report, which was released on 1 December 2023. The taskforce, established in 2023, comprises representatives from across different political parties, community peaks bodies such as Health Equity Matters and the National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS and others, as well as experts from ASHM, the Kirby Institute, Burnett Institute, and others. Several ACON staff have participated in activities related to the taskforce.

We acknowledge the Australian Government and, in particular, the Minister for Health Mark Butler and Assistant Minister for Health Ged Kearney, for their commitment and support to Australia's HIV response.

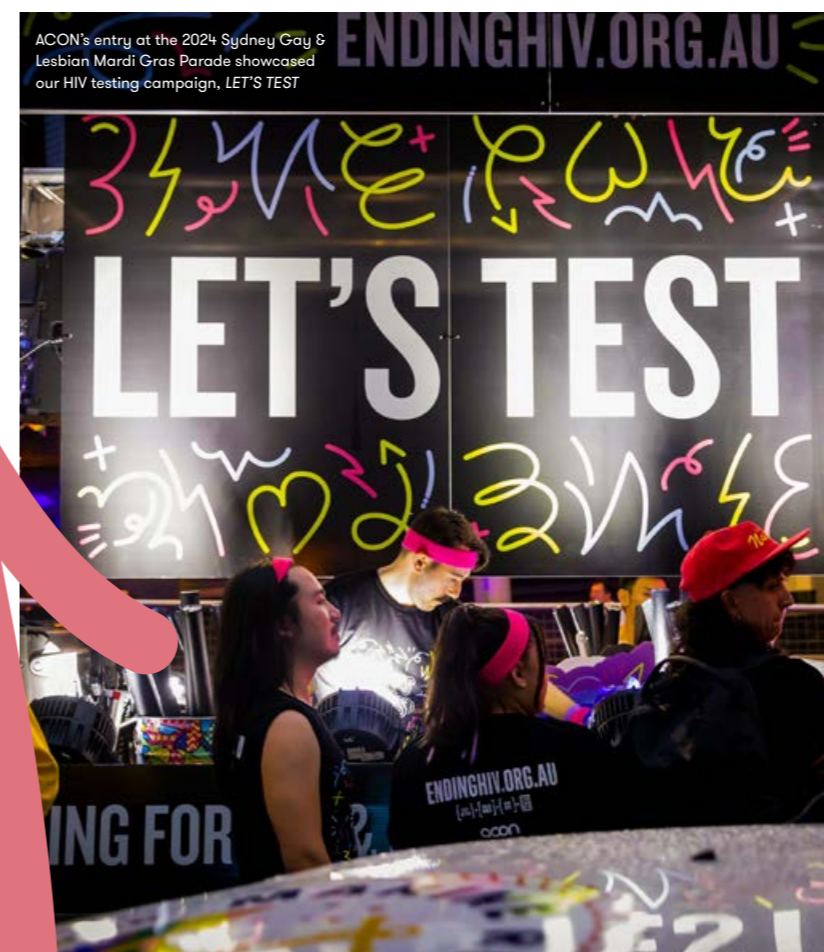
EMEN8: NATIONAL HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH DIGITAL PLATFORM

Emen8 is our national digital HIV prevention and sexual health resource for gay, bisexual and other MSM, produced in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health. It is funded by the Australian Department of Health.

This year, Emen8 implemented key enhancements that enable it to amplify its reach. These include expanding its map to include all known S100 HIV treatment prescribers and all HIV self-test kit stockists nationally; introducing an interactive tool on identifying PrEP options; and maximising its footprint on Google and Instagram. Emen8 also produced two sexual health campaigns on testing and PrEP.

As well as HIV and sexual health, Emen8 produced content around mpox prevention and vaccinations, becoming a major information hub for GBMSM across Australia.

This year, Emen8 recorded 446,107 users and 946,854 pageviews.



WHAT'S NEXT

A key area of focus for ACON in the coming year is extending the reach of our programs and services to all of our communities to include gay, bisexual and MSM in Greater Western Sydney and regional areas, people born overseas, and those from multicultural and migrant backgrounds. In 2025, we will be developing an awareness campaign that will present a contemporary view of HIV to ensure all our communities are equipped with the latest information on prevention, testing and treatment.

Read more about our work in HIV prevention at acon.org.au/whatwe-are-here-for/hiv-prevention



HIV CAMPAIGNS

We're here to develop and deliver innovative social marketing campaigns that engages our communities on HIV and sexual health.

NSW has made progress towards reducing HIV rates but there is still a long way to go. While we are seeing declines among Australian-born gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (GBMSM) and those living in the inner city, we are still not seeing the same declines among overseas-born GBMSM and those living in outer suburban and regional areas.

ACON's *LET'S TEST* campaign was developed to educate and motivate GBMSM to get tested, particularly

those living in Greater Western Sydney and regional NSW. The campaign highlighted testing services outside inner-city areas with a particular focus on de-stigmatising testing, and connecting most at-risk groups to these services.

APPROACH

The approach was to speak differently to unique geographical areas and cultural backgrounds, particularly those born overseas or were culturally and linguistically diverse.

The primary message of *LET'S TEST* was tailored to specific geographical areas such as Bankstown, Parramatta or Newcastle. This ensured the campaign spoke directly to local communities.

The campaign design utilised bright colours and graphics, highlighting the supplementary message that HIV and STI testing is free, easy, and confidential.

For the campaign video, we enlisted seven community members to speak to their experiences with

testing in their local area and the different ways of getting tested for HIV and STIs. These videos were designed specifically for TikTok and Instagram's Reels to meet current trends in media consumption. A TV commercial was also created for cinema and YouTube.

In addition, we rolled out a variation of the campaign specifically speaking to First Nations communities with the message *HEY MOB, LET'S TEST*. This iteration was used at key events such as during National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC week.

DISTRIBUTION

The campaign was launched in February in the lead up to the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival and was implemented statewide across multiple channels including out-of-home, on public

transport, in LGBTQ+ venues, cinema, radio, social media and dating applications.

Over a six-week period, the campaign was displayed on 496 out-of-home placements including billboards, digital panels, street posters and on public transport such as buses and trams. This included placements in priority areas across Greater Western Sydney, as well as Newcastle and Wollongong.

Reach of the campaign was broadened with visibility at events such as the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade and other events during the Mardi Gras season.

The main campaign video was shared across social media and in cinemas, including through Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival. More than 150 advertisements ran across several radio channels. Printed resources and around

25,000 units of merchandise were distributed at events and partner venues including sexual health clinics, licensed LGBTQ bars and sex-on-premises venues.

RESULTS

An online evaluation survey collected feedback from 171 respondents across NSW. Respondents ranged from different gender identities, sexualities, ages, countries of birth and areas of residence. The survey found:

- 50% recalled having seen the campaign.
- 93% said the advertisements communicated messages effectively.
- 86% found the advertisements engaging.
- 97% said the campaign video was engaging.



Our ACON Sexperts

HIV & SEXUAL HEALTH

We're here to help sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW take control of their sexual health by providing information and a range of support services including peer-run testing facilities for HIV and sexually transmitted infections; sex, health and relationship workshops; free condoms, safe sex packs and resources; and dedicated programs for young gay men, Asian gay men, sexually adventurous men, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

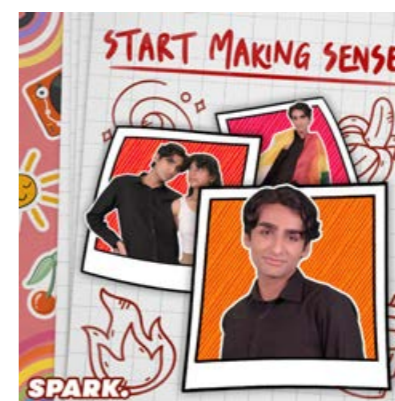
PEER EDUCATION

ACON's Peer Education team continued to engage our communities on HIV prevention, sexual health, relationships, community connection and combatting stigma, recording over 2,800 interactions with community members throughout 2023-2024.

This year, Peer Education ran eight workshops, two forums and one joint forum with ACON's SPARK program. Through these workshops, ACON's Peer Education project reached 205 participants.

The project collaborated with several universities to deliver important health information and resources on campuses including the University of NSW's Health Promotion unit, Western Sydney University, and the University of Sydney's Sydney University Postgraduate Representative Association and Law Society. In supporting Sydney University's Law Society Queer Collective, the project collaborated with the NSW Health HIV and Related Programs team to create a pop-up testing event for students.

Peer Education was also heavily active during the Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras period and across a range of community events spoke with over 700 attendees and distributed 450 safe sex packs.



YOUNG GAY, BI+ & QUEER MEN

ACON's SPARK project continued to build on its suite of programs for young gay, bi+ and queer men with a range of workshops, forums and outreach initiatives. SPARK also implemented education initiatives that better engaged marginalised young LGBTQ+ people, particularly those living in Greater Western Sydney.

In 2023-2024, SPARK ran five workshops and two forums, collectively reaching 50 community members. These included Start Making Sense, Adult Themes and Art of Connection.

This year, SPARK undertook to enhance its education workshop for people from Middle Eastern backgrounds. The Start Making Sense: Middle Eastern Men workshop adopted a culturally safe approach with up-to-date and tailored HIV and sexual health information. The workshop drew positive feedback, scoring a 9.3 out of 10 satisfaction rating from its nine participants.

SPARK also engaged communities through outreach activities at UNSW SEXtember, TriKone's Klub Karma, Koori Knockout, Parramatta Pride and Minus18 Queer Formal.

Pictured, insets: Creative artwork for ACON's Peer Education Workshops.

ASIAN GAY, BI+ & QUEER MEN

We continued to support gay, bi+ and queer men from Asian cultural backgrounds through a range of events and projects. The regular social and health promotion workshops and social gatherings, SocialisAsians and ConversAsians, continued to draw strong engagement. Along with outreach-based work, we reached 2,728 CALD community members and distributed 1,304 condoms across more than ten community events including Bar Bombay,

FLAGCOM (the Filipino lesbian and gay community and friends), and VicWise 'Networking across Cultures'.

The Asian Gay Men's Project led the recruitment for the Gay Asian Men's Survey, an important research project examining the behaviours of gay men from Asian cultural backgrounds on issues such as HIV and STIs, HIV treatment and the use of alcohol and other drugs. A key finding in the 2023 survey showed 90% of respondents had ever tested for HIV – an increase from 2021.

Responses from the survey helps inform programs and services that improve the sexual health and wellbeing of Asian gay men.

This year, the project worked to establish and build ties with the Thai community. After establishing and developing a relationship with the Thai consulate in Sydney, we attended various consulate events to reach newly arrived community members from Thailand. This engagement has led to greater involvement with the Thai community across our programs and workshops. We also developed several in-language resources including around mpox, HIV and sexual health tailored for Thai-speaking communities.

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH

Engaging LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remains a strong focus of our health promotion work. This year, the project supported several important community events to deliver vital health information and resources.

A key health message for ACON in the past year has been to reaffirm the importance of HIV and STI testing. To better reach LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ACON's major social marketing campaign LET'S TEST was adapted for community. That campaign – HEY MOB, LET'S TEST – was implemented in Sydney, Redfern, Newcastle and Lismore, and featured culturally-tailored messaging and resources.

Among the key events attended by the project include Koori Knockout Central Coast, ACON's International Women's Day at the Museum of Contemporary Art, National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

During NAIDOC week, the project attended the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service's event at Redfern Community Centre and the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, where they had community conversations around the HEY MOB, LET'S TEST campaign.



ACON's Peer Education Team at Worship Queer Collective's Lunar New Year event, Dragon Balls XL



Jinny-Jane and Estelle from our First Nations Health Programs

parties. And we facilitated a workshop on SOPV etiquette and sexual health. The workshop was attended by 30 community members new to these venues, providing them with the knowledge to engage safely.

PEER SEXUALISED DRUG USE SERVICE

ACON's M3THOD program continues to support the people who use drugs like crystal methamphetamine and GHB when having sex. The program delivered three workshops, supporting 30 clients seeking to learn how to party safely, change their relationship to 'party and play' or reduce the frequency of their drug use. A resource booklet was also produced to provide further information and support.

In collaboration with ACON's Substance Support Counselling Service, the M3THOD team also devised a group program for people who use drugs who want to gain in-depth understanding of their drug use and make the changes that suit individual needs.

WHAT'S NEXT

We're incredibly proud of our collaboration with Western Sydney arts collective West Ball. Next year, we look forward to developing a new sexual health campaign that builds on our previous success with West Ball as we continue to highlight important sexual health messaging for LGBTQ+ communities and queer people of colour in Greater Western Sydney.

You can find out more about our work in sexual health by visiting acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/sexual-health/.

For Mardi Gras, the project led the delivery of the First Nations Float at parade, and they partnered with BlaQ to host an after-event, which drew around 250 community members who received ACON health information and resources.

ACON is also continuing on its reconciliation journey. To learn more about ACON's Reconciliation Action Plan, turn to page 82.

SEXPERTS

ACON's Sexperts program, delivered in partnership with sex-on-premises (SOPV) venues, provides sexual health promotion focusing on

testing, HIV prevention and risk reduction. Sexperts are trained in HIV and sexual health knowledge, as well as other topics relevant to community health and wellbeing. Sexperts have a diversity of lived experiences and comprise diverse background with a number based in Greater Western Sydney and/or having CALD background. Over the year, Sexperts undertook 22 outreach sessions at SOPVs and engaged around 105 individuals.

Additionally, we had teams of Sexpert volunteers throughout the Mardi Gras festival period to distribute safe sex packs and campaign collateral at several

a[TEST]: COMMUNITY-BASED HIV & STI TESTING SERVICE

Our a[TEST] service, established in 2013, continue to offer community-based rapid HIV and STI screening at two sites in inner Sydney – a[TEST] Oxford Street and a[TEST] Surry Hills. This year, we recorded 6,580 occasions of service across both locations.

At specific hours in Surry Hills, we also provided an in-language Mandarin service with a[TEST] Chinese Clinic, which was set up in 2018 response to rising HIV notifications among overseas-born gay men in NSW.

As well as HIV and STI screening, clients at a[TEST] are given access to information and resources on HIV prevention strategies such as PrEP, PEP and undetectable viral load, as well as information on testing guidelines. The service also acts as an active referral pathway into other ACON services such as counselling, peer education workshops and more.

A review of a[TEST] found that between 2021 and 2023, the service recorded 17,212 visits, of which 67% (n=11,664) visits were unique, making it one of the most popular HIV testing facilities in NSW. Among the top reasons for using the service among clients were its free and convenient locations and the non-judgmental care provided by peers.

Importantly, data shows that a[TEST] is being attended by populations currently at highest risk of HIV transmission such as people born overseas or living in outer suburban Sydney. During 2021-2023, 47% of clients were born overseas, while 16% of unique visits were by clients from Local Health Districts beyond central and eastern Sydney. The high demand for the service underscores the future need for a[TEST] services in other areas of NSW.

We acknowledge the ongoing support of our clinical partner, the Sydney Sexual Health Centre. We extend our thanks to all our a[TEST] peers for their passion, commitment and hard work. And we thank our clients and community members



Peer-led HIV and STI testing at a[TEST]

HIV TESTING

Getting people in our communities to test for HIV more often is vital to our efforts to ending HIV transmissions in NSW. Making testing easier and more accessible as well as educating gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men about the importance of testing regularly are important areas of focus for our approach to HIV prevention.

for taking control of their health, and the health of their partners, by continuing to visit our a[TEST] sites.

PROMOTING HIV TESTING

To raise further awareness of HIV and STI testing and prompt gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men to get a sexual health screen, particularly those living outside inner-city areas, ACON implemented a large-scale social marketing campaign on HIV testing. The LET'S TEST campaign, highlighted testing services across various localities to reach distinct geographic and demographic audiences. The campaign was distributed in various media and channels including social media, outdoor media, video, online dating apps, print, cinema and radio.

During the Mardi Gras festival, a[TEST] partnered with Sydney Local Health District to promote HIV testing at the Pride Square in Newtown. Over several days, the LET'S TEST activation on King Street provided community members with information and resources on HIV testing and sexual health. Staff from a[TEST] distributed a range of resources including 600 safe sex packs and 40 HIV self-testing kits.

At Sydney Gay & Lesbian Mardi Gras, ACON's parade entry showcased LET'S TEST and promoted our message on HIV testing to hundreds and thousands of viewers.

We continued to promote the importance of regular HIV and STI screening in digital spaces – over the course of the year, we recorded over 1.2 million online interactions around HIV and STI testing.

HIV TESTING IN REGIONAL NSW

Crucial to meeting our goal of virtual elimination of HIV transmission is getting GSMSM in regional areas to test more often. Throughout the year, ACON continued efforts to engage our communities on HIV and STI testing through our regional offices and outreach service.

In Newcastle, ACON continued to collaborate with HNE Sexual Health to provide a free, drop-in HIV testing service. In 2023-2024, the bi-weekly clinics provided HIV testing to 419 clients. In Broken Hill, we hosted a rapid HIV testing pop-up clinic during the Broken Hill Festival. During HIV Testing Week, we partnered with Murrumbidgee and Southern NSW Local Health Districts on a forum on HIV testing, HIV prevention, PrEP and treatment options.

REMOVING BARRIERS TO HIV TESTING

ACON continues to support initiatives that reduce barriers to HIV testing and make HIV testing more accessible.

MyTest is a NSW Health initiative that makes HIV self-testing kits available for free from vending machines in selected locations in NSW such as universities, sex-on-premises venues and LGBTQ+ venues.

Self-testing helps overcome key barriers some people experience when testing, such as fear of a positive result in the presence of a healthcare provider, avoiding screening due to privacy concerns or lack of access to sexual health services.

Providing more options for people to take control of their health is critical to ensuring more people regularly test for HIV.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we are working towards finding a permanent site for our a[TEST] service in Newtown in Sydney's inner west, which was closed during COVID-19 pandemic. Providing our communities more testing options is key to getting people to test more.

You can learn more about HIV testing at [endinghiv.org.au/test-often/](https://www.acon.org.au/test-often/)

MPOX PREVENTION

We're here to develop and implement strategies to inform and protect our communities against mpox.

ACON has been working closely with NSW Health, the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care and our other partners to stop the spread of mpox.

ACON is continuing to engage our communities on mpox, ensuring people have access to vital and up-to-date information and resources on prevention strategies, monitoring for symptoms and the importance of vaccinations.

Since mpox was first reported in Australia in 2022, notifications have remained low. However, we have seen an increase in mpox cases this

year. From June to September 2024, there were over 400 diagnoses. In response, ACON developed a campaign – MPOX Rising – to raise awareness on mpox and encourage people to get vaccinated. The campaign has been implemented on key social media platforms and LGBTQ community media.

In support of efforts to get more people vaccinated against mpox, ACON has provided operational support to South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, Sydney Local Health District and Western Sydney Local Health District with

pop-up vaccination sites at local community establishments, such as sex-on-premises venues. Trained peer volunteers have been on hand to support community members accessing these sites.

In the past year, we continued to deliver a suite of communications on mpox including:

- Tailored communications delivered through culturally relevant platforms including social media, hook-up apps and LGBTQ online news and media outlets
- Targeted social media communications encouraging

vaccinations, monitoring for symptoms and transmission prevention strategies

- Extensive editorial coverage on key mpox issues through our national sexual health resource Emen8, delivered in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health
- Distribution of media releases and editorials from subject matter experts from ACON
- Working with our SOPV partners as well as licenced clubs and venues to ensure that information about mpox and vaccinations is displayed throughout the venues for their patrons.
- Participating in media conference and activities to disseminate vital mpox messages

In collaboration with NSW Health, we continued to participate in key departmental working groups to ensure the needs of our communities are represented and helps inform response strategies and measures. We acknowledge NSW Health for their continued leadership in ensuring the health and safety of our communities.

WHAT'S NEXT

A key challenge in the mpox response is ensuring people remain vigilant and get vaccinated. In the coming year, ACON will be developing a new awareness campaign to encourage greater uptake of the mpox vaccine among our communities. The campaign will be developed under our sexual health digital resource Emen8 and will be rolled out nationally.

Learn more about our work on mpox prevention at aconhealth.org.au/mpox



Pop-up mpox vaccination clinic at Sauna X by 357 in Darlinghurst in Sydney

FOCUS AREA

2

DELIVERING EXCELLENT, CLIENT-CENTRED CARE AND INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAMMING

We support people living with HIV to live fulfilled, healthy lives in which they are active members of their community.

We ensure that our care and support services are of an excellent standard through ongoing needs assessment, co-design, inclusive marketing and ongoing evaluation.

We ensure that our communities are actively and meaningfully included in our work and within our organisation.

We seek to find better models of care and support for members of our communities that are left behind by current service provision, including the provision of support for young sexuality and gender diverse community members.

We examine innovative ways to meet the health needs of our communities where they are at, including the establishment of an LGBT Health Centre.

IN THIS SECTION

Kaleido Health

Mental Health

HIV Support

LGBTQ+ Women's Health

Cancer Programs

Alcohol & Other Drugs

Domestic & Family Violence

KALEIDO HEALTH CENTRE

We're here to support our communities' health and wellbeing with Kaleido Health, an integrated, community-driven and inclusive health service specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBTQ+ people in NSW.

THE STORY SO FAR

ACON understands that while many people of diverse sexualities and genders are strong and resilient, when compared to the general population, we experience health inequalities that require specific responses.

In 2022, after many years of detailed work and advocacy, ACON was proud to receive funding from the NSW Government to establish a community-led, integrated health care service for sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW. This funding was provided through the NSW Ministry of Health as part of its commitment under the state's first LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy.

This funding has led to the creation of our new specialised LGBTQ+ health service – Kaleido Health Centre – which is due to open in 2024-2025. Kaleido Health will provide trauma-informed, integrated and multi-disciplinary care for sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW.

OUR SERVICES

With vital support from Sydney Local Health District and our other partners including St Vincent's Health Network Sydney and Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, we are making great progress toward establishing the service and delivering what we know our communities want – informed, non-judgemental, safe and appropriate care.

Kaleido Health Centre will provide LGBTQ+ people access to a range of health services including primary care and general practice medicine, sexual health services, mental health support, gender-affirming health care, drug and alcohol support, cancer screening and support services and more.

Kaleido will partner with a wide range of providers and professionals to offer specialist, allied health, and team-based/clinic-based services designed to meet the evidenced population-level healthcare needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

OUR LOCATION

The Kaleido Health Centre is being established on Gadigal land and will occupy the historic Belltower building within Sydney's South Eveleigh precinct.

Built in 1887 as the original Works Managers' Office of the Eveleigh Railway Yards, the Belltower was chosen as the site for the Kaleido Health Centre due to its accessibility and location, right next to Redfern train station and interchange.

ACON has worked with Bila Group to understand the place-based history of the area and its cultural significance to First Nations communities. In addition, Bila Group have assisted the Kaleido team and ACON's First Nations Health Programs team with running

community consultations to ensure the design of Kaleido is culturally safe and welcoming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

OUR ENTITY

Though an initiative of ACON, Kaleido Health has been established as a separate subsidiary entity with its own CEO and Board of Directors. The Board will include shared directors with ACON. This will allow Kaleido the flexibility and independence to flourish and focus on its core service offering while still benefitting from ACON's experience and community connection, and embodying ACON's purpose and values.

WHAT'S NEXT

Work on the Kaleido Health Centre is underway. Preparations for the service's operations are progressing while building works and site development has commenced. Kaleido is due to open in 2025.

Learn more about Kaleido Health: kaleidohealth.org.au

ACON staff with key partners and stakeholders at the Kaleido Health Centre in the Belltower building in South Eveleigh



kaleido
HEALTH CENTRE
WE/US/OURS

OUR BRANDING

ACON has a longstanding collaborative relationship with one of Australia's leading creative agencies, Frost*collective, who worked with us to develop the Kaleido Health Centre name, brand and interior design strategy.

The name mirrors the LGBTQ+ community's diversity, unity, and intersectionality, much like a kaleidoscope. It signifies holistic and progressive care for the community.

The symbol consists of eight differently coloured diamonds arranged in the shape of a heart, representing our inclusive and approachable nature.

The brand colours are influenced by the progress pride flag design, a nod to the diversity and inclusivity fundamental to our health centre and the fact we are run by community, for community.

The Kaleido Health Centre is located on Gadigal land in the historic Belltower building within Sydney's South Eveleigh precinct.





MENTAL HEALTH

We're here to help LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV take control of their mental health by providing information, a range of counselling services and a care coordination program for people with complex needs.

COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR LGBTQ+ COMMUNITIES

ACON's team of specialist LGBTQ+ counsellors continued to provide support to people from our communities across a range of issues related to their mental health. Over the past year, our LGBTQ+ counselling service supported 235 clients over 1900 occasions of service. This includes

254 occasions of service delivered by our after-hours volunteer counsellors. Investing in the training and development of volunteer counsellors – many of whom have become part of our employed staff – enables ACON to build the capacity of the mental health services sector, while providing low or no-cost, inclusive and affirming services to our communities.

COUNSELLING SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

ACON is here to assist people living with HIV needing support in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. During the 2023-2024 period, we delivered 637 occasions of service of best practice, evidence-based mental health support for people living with HIV across NSW, reducing the severity of mental health

symptoms and empowering people with the knowledge, resources and strategies to take control of their psychological wellbeing.

SUICIDE PREVENTION HEALTH PROMOTION

ACON's Suicide Prevention Program aims to reduce suicide rates among LGBTQ+ populations in NSW through community health promotion and peer education. In the past year, the program's digital hub, [HERE.org.au](https://here.org.au), continued to provide vital information and resources and drew strong engagement with 26,000 page views and 8,100 unique users.

In September 2023, the program hosted a suicide prevention forum, which attracted 188 attendees. Additionally, our

Co-creating Community Care workshops were conducted from October to November for LGBTQ+ individuals with lived and living suicide experiences. A total of 28 participants attended the workshops, which addressed topics such as resource-sharing, relationship-building, and self-advocacy.

All program activities have been co-designed with The Rainbow Mental Health Lived Experience Network and further supported by our stakeholder partners. We acknowledge the funding support of the NSW Ministry of Health Towards Zero Suicides Initiative.

SUICIDE AFTERCARE

ACON's dedicated suicide prevention and aftercare service continued to support community members experiencing a suicidal crisis or requiring assistance following a suicide attempt. This year, our team of specialist LGBTQ+ social workers, psychologists, counsellors and peer workers delivered over 1400 occasions of service to 124 people across NSW. Since the program began in 2021, ACON has provided over 4500 occasions of service to nearly 300 people.

PRIDE COUNSELLING

Pride Counselling Programs is ACON's social enterprise counselling service for sexuality and gender diverse community members in NSW. This means all income generated by the service is reinvested back into ACON's services. Pride Counselling counsellors are Medicare providers allowing those with a current GP Mental Health Plan can receive a Medicare rebate. Pride Counselling also has Victims Services-approved counsellors. Individuals with NDIS funding are also able to access sessions through Pride Counselling.

Pride Counselling programs also includes Pride EAP (Employee Assistance Program), which provides inclusive and affirming counselling to employees of member organisations. In 2024, Pride EAP

has continued to expand and we are providing specialised EAP support to more organisations. This year, Pride Counselling Programs delivered over 750 occasions of service.

CARE COORDINATION FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Our Care Coordination Service provides support to community members experiencing a range of health, personal and social barriers. People may need support with mental health issues, sexual, domestic and family violence, substance use or support with gender affirmation. Other may also be experiencing suicidal crisis or require suicide prevention or aftercare services. Through our Care Coordination Service, clients with multiple and/or complex needs are teamed up with allied health professional to assist them to build a care plan and access relevant healthcare and support services and increase their ability to manage their care and treatment. This work has been funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

WHAT'S NEXT

Our Suicide Prevention Program will deliver new training on building capacity within our communities to recognise and respond to distress and/or suicidal thoughts. We will also deliver peer education on grief and bereavement, as well as a social media campaign sharing stories from lived and living experiences of suicide in our communities.

You can find out more about our work about our work in mental health by visiting acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/mental-health/

HIV SUPPORT



ACON staff and volunteers supporting the Friday Lunch Club

We're here to help sexuality and gender diverse people living with HIV take control of their health, as well as the health of their partners, by providing up-to-date information as well as a range of workshops, one-on-one peer support, counselling support groups, meals, care coordination, home-based care and health retreats.

HIV PEER SUPPORT

ACON remains committed to providing peer support for gay, bisexual, and queer men (cis or trans) who are living with HIV. These vital services assist individuals who have recently been diagnosed or have been living with HIV for an extended period. They address important topics, including accessing quality healthcare and HIV treatments, managing HIV disclosure, fostering resilience, combating stigma, and fostering social connections.

In collaboration with Positive Life NSW, we host a[STARTx], a peer workshop for people who have received a HIV diagnosis in the last two years. This year, we conducted two a[STARTx] workshops attended by 16 people.

As well as group work programs, ACON delivered one-on-one support for people living with HIV. This year ACON delivered 98 individual peer sessions for 52 men living with HIV. Our HIV peer support workers are dedicated to offering care in English as well as other languages, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility.

Positive Life NSW and ACON collaborated on the delivery of four community forums for people living with HIV. One forum addressed healthy lifestyles focusing on diet and exercise, another provided education and guidance for migration with HIV. The most popular forum was regarding treatment updates, which was hosted twice, one online and the other in person. Thirty people attended in the treatment update forum person and 10 attended the online version, which was held to reach those living in regional areas.

The Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI), a program that aims to build the resilience and leadership capacities of people living with HIV, hosted one workshop, attended by 12 people. ACON also

supported the National Association of People Living with HIV Australia with their pilot workshop for leadership and governance training.

COUNSELLING SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV

ACON is here to ensure people from our communities living with, affected by or at risk of HIV can easily access support for their mental health. This includes free priority counselling for people living with HIV. This year, we provided 637 counselling occasions of service to people living with HIV.

Our Care Coordination Service of specialist LGBTQ+ social workers and psychologists continued to assist people living with HIV experiencing multiple and complex needs. This year, the Care Coordination Service delivered over 890 care coordination occasions of service to 115 people living with HIV across NSW. Linking clients with long term services and social and service support networks, ACON's Care Coordination team are focussed on creating lasting life changing solutions for our clients.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

2024 marks the 40th birthday of the Community Support Network (CSN). Started by volunteers in 1984, it mobilised gay and lesbian communities, and allies, to provide direct care and practical support to people living with HIV, and the many people dying of AIDS-related illnesses.

That CSN continues to be an integral part of the care ACON provides to those living with HIV is a testament to the culture of care created by those original volunteers and is a living memorial to those we have lost to AIDS. This year, our CSN team of volunteers and Client Support Officers provided a total of 770 occasions of service, which includes home visits and check-ins via telehealth support.

Furthermore, 40 essential transport services were coordinated to ensure recipients could attend important medical appointments.

MEAL SERVICE

ACON provides access to food and provisions to people living with HIV through our Weekly Meal Service in Surry Hills. The aim of this service is to provide vulnerable community members with freshly cooked healthy meals and facilitate social connections and reduce isolation.

Through our weekly service – dubbed Friday Lunch Club – ACON provides essential health information, community connection, food and provisions for people living with HIV. This service operates from ACON's Sydney office in Surry Hills and offers up-to-date information on HIV and LGBTQ+ health, and healthy eating, as well as facilitating social connection to reduce isolation while providing sit-down or take-away freshly cooked healthy meals for some of our communities' most vulnerable. Over the course of the year, we served 1595 meals.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we will review our support programs and resources for people newly diagnosed with HIV. Our aim is to ensure they remain culturally safe and accessible. We will tailor our services to better address the needs of those currently most affected, including people born overseas.

You can find out more about our work in HIV support at acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/hiv-support

Participants attending ACON's Silver Sessions, an event series for LGBTQ+ women aged 55 and over.



LGBTQ+ WOMEN'S HEALTH

We're here to help LGBTQ+ women and non-binary people in New South Wales take control of their health by providing information and a range of sexual health resources, workshops and engagement programs as well as support services.

SUPPORTING THE HEALTH OF LGBTQ+ WOMEN

We know that LGBTQ+ women experience a number of health disparities when compared to the general population, including in mental health, sexual health, substance use and experiences of sexual, domestic and family violence. We also know that there is limited information on the health needs of LGBTQ+ women, due to a lack of research and data collection in service provision.

ACON's LGBTQ+ Women's Health project works to empower LGBTQ+

women to take control of their health and to increase their connection to community. The project focus on engaging women around sexual health, and general health and wellbeing, by running community events and peer education workshops to facilitate connection and resilience, engaging in outreach initiatives at events relevant to our communities, and supplying safe sex packs.

WORD ON THE SHEETS

In 2023, the LGBTQ+ Women's Health team launched *Word on the Sheets*, ACON's latest women-

led initiative designed to improve the sexual health knowledge and practices of LGBTQ+ women.

The first-of-its-kind in Australia, *Word on the Sheets* aims to serve as an online hub for accessible, inclusive and relevant sexual and reproductive health information for LGBTQ+ women and their partners.

By providing tailored information on STI, blood-borne viruses, cancer screening and testing, *Word on the Sheets* will boost sexual health literacy and knowledge, sexual health testing and cancer screening rates among LGBTQ+ women. And it will

provide access to health provision that is inclusive of diverse genders and sexualities and empower LGBTQ+ women to navigate healthcare systems and institutions.

ACON has received funding from the Australian Government to expand *Word on the Sheets* into a national resource.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women and also marks as a call to action for accelerating gender parity. This year, ACON marked IWD with a community event at Museum of Contemporary Art in Circular Quay.

Around 300 community members and stakeholders attended the event, which featured live music, performances and creative engagement led by diverse artists from our communities. The event provided ACON with an important opportunity to engage our communities with our work and programs on LGBTQ+ women's health. It also served as the launch

for our new sexual health resource for women, *Word on the Sheets*. ACON acknowledges Women NSW as part of the NSW Government for providing funding support for this event.

SYDNEY WOMEN & SEXUAL HEALTH SURVEY

The Sydney Women and Sexual Health (SWASH) survey is an important research project for ACON. SWASH helps to inform our programs and policy work around LGBTQ women's health. Run in partnership with the University of Sydney, it provides a biennial snapshot on issues such as sexual and gender identity, sexual health, mental health, violence, tobacco and drug use, alcohol consumption, cancer screening behaviours and more. ACON coordinates the data collection, which was collected during the 2024 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras festival period. This year, we collected 1,400 survey responses.

SILVER SESSIONS

In partnership with the City of Sydney, ACON runs Silver Sessions, an event series to promote social and community connection for older LGBTQ+ women aged 55+. This year Silver Sessions highlights included a panel event at The Bearded Tit in Redfern, exploring women's spaces

and sexual culture from the 1970s to the 1990s. The event drew around 120 people and featured C.Moore Hardy, Lisa Salmon, Lesley Hudson and Jax North.

In June, Silver Sessions chartered a cruise to learn about Aboriginal history and culture. Around 70 older LGBTQ+ women, their friends and allies sailed around Sydney Harbour to learn about Australia's First Nations peoples and culture as shared by guides from the Tribal Warrior Cultural Cruise.

PEER EDUCATION WORKSHOPS & SAFE SEX PACKING GROUPS

In 2023, ACON's LGBTQ+ Women's Health project ran workshops exploring health relationship. Developed with the support of ACON DSFV team, pilot workshops were held in Parramatta, Surry Hills, and Newcastle. The team is planning to expand these initiatives, to create and deliver an additional workshop focused on the sexual health needs of LGBTQ+ women.

The LGBTQ+ Women's Health team also continued to run our monthly LGBTQ+ women and non-binary volunteer Packing Group, where we facilitate a space for the community to connect with ACON and each other while packing sexual health resources for ACON to distribute to the wider community. The LGBTQ+ Women's Health team distributed over 2700 safe-sex packs for women and non-binary people.

WHAT'S NEXT

In 2025, ACON will participate in NSW Government-funded Proud and Ready internship program. This will increase employment pathway opportunities for our community by employing 13 LGBTQ+ women at ACON over 12 months prioritising Aboriginal women, women from multicultural backgrounds, women in regional NSW, and young women. This program aims to empower participants to develop practical, work-ready skills while addressing the unique barriers faced by LGBTQ+ women in our communities who experience marginalisation along multiple intersections.

You can find out more about our work about our work in LGBTQ+ women's health at acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/women

CANCER PROGRAMS

We're here to increase screening participation and reduce cancer risk among LGBTQ+ people through community engagement, targeted health promotion, and inclusive practice training for the cancer sector.



CAN WE's Know Yourself campaign

Now in its fifth year, this groundbreaking program continues to build on its successes in reducing the impact of cancer among LGBTQ+ communities in NSW and beyond. The core work of the program is focused on our continued partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW, which seeks to increase screening participation and reduce cancer risk among LGBTQ+ people through community engagement, targeted health promotion, and inclusive practice training for the cancer sector. We have also received national funding for new projects for an LGBTQ+ cancer information resource and to adapt the successful *Own It* Cervical Screening campaign for a national audience.

Highlights in 2023-2024 included:

- ACON and Cancer Institute NSW continued to deliver LGBTQ+ diversity and inclusion training to Cancer Institute NSW, BreastScreen NSW and NSW Quitline staff and cancer services across Australia through Cancer Institute NSW's eviQ Learning platform.
- We hosted a photoshoot at Newcastle Pride to engage communities in the Hunter region about cancer risk and screening.
- Building on the insights gathered in a 2022 survey on alcohol-related cancer risk, we continued to partner with the National Drug and Alcohol

Research Centre at UNSW to conduct qualitative research with 30 LGBTQ+ people in NSW. This research provided more in-depth understandings about perceptions of risky alcohol use, health risks related to alcohol, and alcohol-related help-seeking among LGBTQ+ adults in NSW. The research informed the new "Be Unapologetic" alcohol and cancer risk campaign.

Through funding under the NSW LGBTQ+ Health Strategy, ACON and Cancer Institute NSW have commissioned researchers at UNSW and the University of Sydney to investigate the current state of LGBTQ+ inclusion in cancer clinical trials.

- As part of a Cancer Australia Supporting People with Cancer grant, we are co-designing an LGBTQ+ cancer information resource to meet the unique information needs of LGBTQ+ people through their cancer experience.

ACON'S CANCER COMMUNICATION CHANNEL, CAN WE

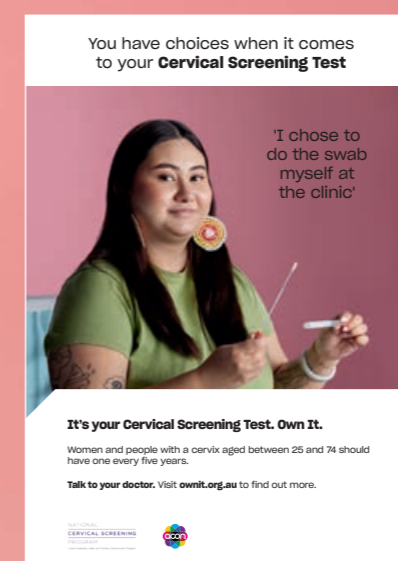
CAN WE, ACON's dedicated cancer screening and prevention resource designed specifically for sexuality and gender diverse communities, has reached 180,000 new users since June 2023. Launched in 2021, CAN WE was developed in partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW to provide evidence-based information in an authentic and engaging LGBTQ+ voice.

This year, we ran our first omnibus cancer risk campaign, called *Know Yourself*, aimed to reinforce cancer screening and prevention messaging previously released by Can We. The campaign targeted 18- to 75-year-old LGBTQ+ people living in NSW. It directed viewers to the "In the Know" quiz which provides personalised cancer information based on a user's demographic and cancer risk behaviours. *Know Yourself* resulted in 134,375 page views on the Can We website and 2,438 quiz completions.

OWN IT

ACON's 2023 *Own It* cervical screening campaign demonstrated that an inclusive, equity-first approach can successfully communicate with a broad audience and achieve stronger outcomes for priority populations, such as LGBTQ+ people. Based on the its success, ACON received funding from the Australian Government to adapt and implement the campaign on a national scale in 2024-2025.

This national campaign is focused on women and people with a cervix aged 25-74 years. The campaign targets Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, those



The national cervical screening campaign, OWN IT

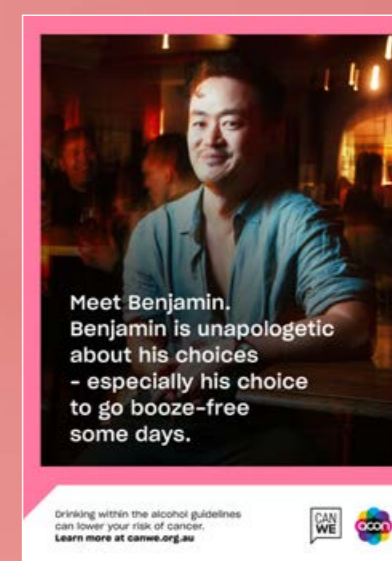
from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQ+ communities, people with a disability, and those in regional and remote areas. It has been co-designed in partnership with the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, the Australian Multicultural Health Collaborative, and the Australian Centre for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer.

The national campaign features experiences of more than 20 diverse community members from the target audiences. They share their experiences with cervical screening and how they've overcome barriers to screening.

The campaign runs from September 2024 to June 2025 and will include paid media, news coverage, influencer relations, health care professional education, and community engagement initiatives.

BE UNAPOLOGETIC

ACON, in partnership with Cancer Institute NSW and the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW, researched the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of LGBTQ+ people regarding alcohol and cancer risk. This research identified an education need to increase awareness of the cancer risk of alcohol consumption and normalise drinking within the Australian alcohol guidelines.



The cancer risk from alcohol campaign, Be Unapologetic

Through focus testing with LGBTQ+ people we landed on a concept that celebrates being unapologetically you! An already celebrated concept within LGBTQ+ communities, this idea aims to portray community members as unapologetically confident in their mindful drinking habits.

The *Be Unapologetic* campaign showcases four prominent LGBTQ+ content contributors who already embody living unapologetically. The contributors each produced a video that depicts them unapologetically normalising not drinking or drinking in moderation in different settings.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we will be shining a light on LGBTQ+ inclusion in bowel screening and lung cancer screening. Implementation of the national *Own It* cervical screening campaign will also progress, including setting up pop-up self-swab cervical screening at queer pride events.

You can learn more about our Cancer Programs work at canwe.org.au



SUBSTANCE SUPPORT COUNSELLING

Most LGBTQ+ people, and people living with HIV, who use alcohol and drugs do so in a non-problematic way. Others require support and look to ACON and our Substance Support Counsellors for best practice, evidence based, trauma-informed, person-centred treatment approaches. Our client outcome data demonstrates consistently that 70% of clients using our Substance Support Service achieve improvements either because of decreased substance dependence and/or substance use, decreases in mental health symptoms and an increased sense of satisfaction in their health, social and personal relationships and circumstances.

Funded by Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, this year we provided 1725 occasions of service to 102 people. In addition, our Substance Support counsellors work closely with the M3THOD project peers and their delivery of brief interventions and the facilitation of the M3THOD Peer Group Workshop.

HARM REDUCTION CAMPAIGNS AND MESSAGING

Through the summer season and in the lead up to the 2024 Sydney

Gay & Les (bian Mardi Gras festival, ACON developed and implemented a campaign on harm reduction. Funded by NSW Health, the campaign – titled *Take Care xoxo* – provided harm reduction information across 11 key messages, responding to our community’s needs and trends, and encouraged a culture of care across Mardi Gras. It was distributed via social media reaching over 165,000 people, and through printed posters displayed at dozens of events and venues around metropolitan Sydney, the inner west and Newcastle.

To ensure our communities remained informed about high-risk drugs, we published and distributed 12 drug alerts from NSW Health on our social media channels and other communication networks. These drug alerts organically reached over 260,000 people on social media, providing vital information about dose and known adulterants in the drug supply, as well as practical information on how to be safer, and when and how to get help.

ROVERS

For over 20 years, ACON has operated the Rovers as a volunteer-based community-led initiative that promotes a culture of care at LGBTQ+ dance parties and events.

Rovers provide lifesaving, early, on-the-spot intervention, including responding to overdose. In 2023-2024:

- 109 volunteers completed a shift with the Rover program
- 27 ACON Rovers were trained in Naloxone through the take-home naloxone program, and were able to carry naloxone during their shifts, with training in how to spot and respond to an opioid overdose.
- ACON Rovers attended two major festival events – Mardi Gras After Party and Bondi Beach Party – as well as smaller festival parties such as Tropical Fruits in Lismore, and circuit events in Sydney such as Apollo.
- The Rovers interacted with over 2640 party goers and provided 898 separate occasions of brief interventions including longer care interventions in a Rover run harm reduction care space, and shorter interventions such as facilitating access to fresh air and water or facilitating access to medical care.

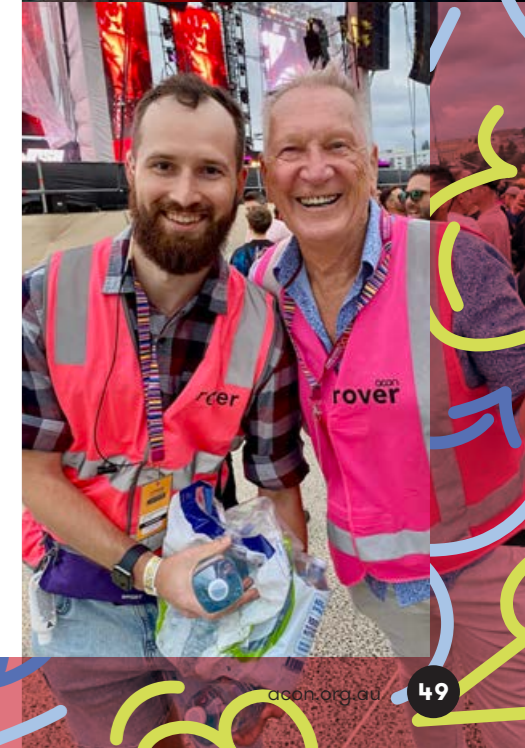
NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAM (NSP)

ACON operates three NSPs providing safe and free access to sterile injecting equipment in Surry Hills, Newcastle and Lismore. The

NSPs also provide a nonjudgmental space for conversation, connection and brief interventions around a range of health and mental health issues. Across our three NSP sites, over 562,990 needles were distributed this financial year.

In addition to equipment, our NSPs also:

- Dispensed 233 units of Naloxone, a life-saving drug that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. This is an increase on previous years due to growing naloxone knowledge in community and increased opioid overdose risks due to an adulterated drug supply.
- Displayed and distributed 12 drug alerts as notified by NSW Health, and published for our communities by the ACON Harm Reduction team
- Conducted DBS tests for HIV and hep C
- Provided disposal of used equipment
- Provided access to advice, support and relevant health information including safer injecting practices, HIV and Hep C treatment and information
- Referred many community members to internal and external services



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

We’re here to help sexuality and gender diverse people reduce the harms associated with the use of alcohol and other drugs by providing a range of resources and support services. We also work with service providers to help them better support the needs of LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV.

WHAT’S NEXT

The NSW Drug Summit presents an important opportunity to advocate for reform and increased resourcing for harm reduction, alcohol and other drug services and treatment options. ACON will be collaborating with the wider sector and working closely with our communities to advocate for strong outcomes for LGBTQ+ people who use drugs. We will be expanding our harm reduction campaign work and increasing our impact in the digital space via our online harm reduction hub and social media. We will also work to provide new capacity-building opportunities for community members to be equipped with practical tools and skills that can keep them and their communities safe when it comes to alcohol and other drugs.

You can find out more about our work about our work in alcohol and other drugs support and harm reduction at acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/alcohol-drugs

SEXUAL, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

We're here to help LGBTQ+ people who have experienced sexual, domestic and family violence (SDFV) by providing a range of resources and support services to address issues specific to our communities.

SAY IT OUT LOUD: NATIONAL SDFV DIGITAL RESOURCE

ACON's Say It Out Loud website is the only national online sexual, domestic and family violence resource for LGBTQ+ people, professionals and allies, creating a safe and inclusive space for seeking support, information and services. The site delivered blog posts, added new services, resources, and distributed over 2,100 printed resources to services across Australia. During 2023-2024, SIOL recorded over 64,000 views.

SHARING & SHOWCASING FAMILY PRIDE STORIES

This year, ACON released our Family Pride Stories campaign, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. This campaign featured seven inspiring families (families of origin and chosen family) from across the nation who shared their stories of celebrating one another. This campaign aimed to challenge stigma and shame around relationships, spreading the message that people of all genders and sexualities do have healthy, happy and secure family relationships.

THE LOUD WAY HOME: NEW RESOURCE FOR RECOVERY & HEALING

This year, ACON began working with LGBTQ+ victim-survivors of sexual violence to create an anthology of written and visual stories. Funded by NSW Government, the goal of this project is to support participants on their recovery and healing journeys – providing the space to connect with community, enhance their confidence in creative expression through workshops and engage in therapeutic expression through art. *The Loud Way Home* anthology will be published in 2024-2025.

STRENGTHENING LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO DISCLOSURES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

We developed a video series and workshop to support community members on responding to a disclosure of sexual violence in a safe way. This work will expand across NSW in 2024-2025. This project has been made possible with funding by NSW Government.

SURVIVOR GROUP: PROVIDING COMFORT & SUPPORT

ACON ran two Survivor Groups, an 8-week group program for any LGBTQ+ person who has experienced or is currently experiencing intimate partner, family and/or sexual violence. Funded by the NSW Government, these groups provide survivors of violence an opportunity to share experiences, understand more about intimate partner, family and sexual violence in LGBTQ+ communities, and to reconnect with community support.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE CONSULT SERVICE

This service aims to foster safer, more inclusive spaces for LGBTQ+ victim-survivors that have experienced sexual violence. The service offers free one-on-one consultations, organisational reviews and staff training to services that support LGBTQ+ communities. Through the project we are also developing inclusive and affirming practice guidelines for services supporting LGBTQ+ people who have experienced sexual violence. Funded by NSW Government.

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS WORKSHOPS

ACON ran three iterations of our new peer education workshops on health relationships. Co-designed with community, the workshops focus specifically on the areas of respect, values, communication, boundaries, sex, consent, and healthy conflict resolution. The workshops took place in Sydney, Western Sydney and Newcastle, and were funded by NSW Government.

EXPLORING RELATIONSHIPS & BEHAVIOURS: PROUD PARTNERS PROGRAM

This year ACON partnered with Men and Family Centre to deliver an online version of our Proud Partners program, a 10-week therapeutic behaviour change program for any LGBTQ+ person who may be concerned about their behaviours in a relationship.

SUPPORT SERVICE FOR PEOPLE IMPACTED BY SDFV

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice continued our funding in 2023-2024 to deliver statewide specialist SDFV counselling and care coordination support. We delivered 1,155 occasions of service to 82 clients.

POLICY AND ADVOCACY ON LGBTQ SDFV

ACON is continuing to fulfil its advocacy and advisory role to a number of government and sector initiatives related to sexual, domestic and family violence. This included being a member of the coercive control NGO training advisory group and our ongoing work on the National Plan advisory group. We also made a submission to the Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we will be rolling out more support groups and workshops for community members impacted by SDFV. We will also be doing a book tour across regional NSW to promote *The Loud Way Home* as a health promotion resource.

You can find out more about our work about our work in sexual, domestic and family violence at acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/domestic-family-violence/



Say It Out Loud's Family Pride Stories campaign

FOCUS AREA 3

GIVING VOICE TO OUR COMMUNITY AND STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

We ensure that ACON maintains meaningful involvement of people living with HIV, and ensures their strengths and concerns are shared with decision makers and the broader community.

We amplify the voices of those we serve to ensure that decision makers are working with us to create opportunities for our communities to live their healthiest lives.

We advocate for the meaningful inclusion, support and participation of our communities and the reduction of discrimination and stigma.

We build strong partnerships and exemplify and share best practice models for inclusion and participation.

We participate in and support research and strive for a strong evidence base to inform decisions made about our communities' health.

IN THIS SECTION

Policy, Strategy & Research

Safety, Inclusion & Justice

Trans Health Equity

LGBTQ+ People with Disability

Healthy Ageing

Regional Services

Pride Inclusion Programs

POLICY, STRATEGY AND RESEARCH

We're here to work with legislators, policymakers, researchers, and service providers to address the health needs of sexuality and gender diverse people, and people living with HIV.

POLICY SUBMISSIONS AND POSITION PAPERS

Our policy work remains committed to ending HIV transmissions and HIV stigma, as well as improving health outcomes for all LGBTQ+ people in NSW.

This year, we produced several major policy papers alongside our ongoing advocacy work including *HIV in Greater Western Sydney*; *Opt-out testing position paper*; *HIV Decriminalisation in NSW*; and *Achieving the goals of the Fast-Track Cities Initiative*.

We also provided 32 submissions to government inquiries, reviews of legislation, policy, and strategies, and advocacy letters to key decision makers.

We provided submissions and evidence to inquiries including the *NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into Healthcare Funding*, the *NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into mental health care*; the *Australian Law Reform Commission's review of Justice Responses to Sexual Violence*; and the *Australian Human Rights Commission review of*

Current and emerging threats to trans and gender diverse human rights in Australia.

We provided feedback and advice to a number of legislative reviews and government policies, including the *National HIV Strategy*, the *NSW Law Reform Commission's Reviews of the Anti-Discrimination Act and of the Crimes Act*, the *NSW Government's Conversion Practices Ban Act*, the *NSW Ombudsman's Review of the Mandatory Disease Testing Act*, applications to the *Medical Services Advisory Committee's* regarding anal cancer screening and gender affirming surgery, and the *Review of the Mental Health Commission*.

EQUALITY BILL ADVOCACY

In August 2023, Independent Sydney MP Alex Greenwich introduced the *Equality Legislation Amendment (LGBTQIA+) Bill* to the NSW Parliament. The Bill aims to amend laws to protect LGBTQIA+ communities from discrimination. ACON submitted to the Inquiry

into the Bill and provided supporting evidence in April. Following amendments, the Bill was passed by NSW Parliament in October 2024, an important step for equality in NSW.

As part of the Equality Bill, Mr Greenwich also introduced his *Conversion Practices Prohibition Bill*. In March, the NSW Government introduced its own *Conversion Practices Ban Bill*, which ACON provided feedback on. The Bill passed parliament on Friday 22 March with no amendments, an important step forward in demonstrating that our communities deserve to be loved and supported as they are.

COMMUNITY ADVOCACY TO DECRIMINALISE HIV IN NSW

In December 2023, the Australian Government released the *National HIV Taskforce Report*. The report recommends that all governments use current HIV science to inform the development and review of new and existing laws and policies to reduce stigma negatively impacting people living with HIV.

ACON and our partners HIV/AIDS Legal Centre, Positive Life NSW, and Bobby Goldsmith Foundation leveraged these recommendations to continue our advocacy to remove laws that criminalise HIV and perpetuate stigma.

KEY POLICY PARTNERSHIPS

We collaborated and worked with SafeWork NSW to update *SafeWork Blood Borne Virus Code of Practice*; the *NSW Health PRISM Working Groups*; and *Sydney University* to develop a student program on HIV prevention and other health responses for our communities.

In January, we partnered with *Positive Life NSW*, *ASHM*, *NAPWHA*, *Queensland Positive People*, *Living Positive Victoria* and *St Vincent's Hospital Sydney* to provide a submission to the *National Health and Medical Research Council's* research project on anal cancer.



Recruiters for the Sydney GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey

RESEARCH SUPPORT

ACON is committed to evidence-based policy and programs to improve health outcomes and HIV responses for our communities. Research is critical to building the evidence base that underpins our work, helping us to understand our communities' needs and design effective programmatic and policy responses.

ACON continues to support research outcomes in several ways. Our Research Ethics Review Committee, which is committed to ensuring our communities are meaningfully and ethically included in research, reviewed 43 research projects from 23 research institutions.

ACON staff also provided input into many research projects this year across the span of HIV and sexual health, women's health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, cancer screening and prevention, and experiences of LGBTQ+ people from culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse communities.

We also presented the findings of research projects to ACON staff and key stakeholders at eight research forums and seminars ACON hosted on HIV-related topics.

GBQ+ COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

Delivered in partnership with the UNSW's Centre for Social Research in Health, the Kirby Institute, Positive Life NSW and the NSW Ministry of Health, the *Sydney GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey (SGCPS)* is an annual cross-sectional survey of GBMSM and non-binary people who have sex with men recruited throughout NSW.

ACON worked with our partners to train 30 peer recruiters, who collected surveys during the *Mardi Gras* festivities. Despite the cancellation of *Fair Day*, our biggest recruiting event, the recruiters managed to collect 2761 surveys.

We also continued to support our community surveys via our regular community of practice, bringing together ACON teams and researchers from GCPS, SWASH, BiSHH, and the *Gay Asian Men's Survey*.

WHAT'S NEXT

Among our key focus areas in the coming year include collaborating with the *Trans Health Equity* team to develop a new *Trans and Gender Diverse Blueprint*. We are also working on the development of our new *Strategic Plan for 2025-2030*.

You can find out more about our work in policy, strategy and research at acon.org.au/whatwe-are-here-for/policy-research/

We're here to help LGBTQ+ people who have experienced violence and discrimination, and to help improve safety and security of our community by providing information and a range of programs and services.

SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LGBTIQ HATE CRIMES

ACON continued our work in seeking truth and justice into historical hate crimes and providing support to those impacted by hate and violence.

After 18 months, the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes released its final report in December 2023. The report called for new inquests into a number of unsolved cases, as well as a clear set of actions to improve shortcomings in the NSW Police Force's investigative and record-keeping practices.

In September this year, the NSW Government announced it would accept all of the inquiry's public recommendation in full. The government has also issued an

apology to the victims, survivors, loved ones and broader LGBTQ+ communities.

ACON commends the NSW Government for its response to the Special Commission of Inquiry, and we thank the Commission and all the stakeholders who, with much courage and fortitude, have worked together to shine a light into the darkness of this era for many people in our communities.

ACON acknowledges the many people and organisations who have worked tirelessly over many years in bringing attention to past fatal violence and facilitating justice to those impacted by these crimes.

We look forward to working with the NSW Government and other agencies to fully implement the reforms necessary to protect our communities,

as we continue to advocate for justice and work towards improved response to hate crimes.

MARKS PARK SUNRISE SERVICE OF REFLECTION

During 2024's Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival, we held a commemorative service at sunrise at the Rise Memorial at Marks Park in Tamarama to remember those in our communities we have lost to violence, and to also reflect on the immense progress we've made towards a stronger society, and to commit to ending bigotry and prejudice in all its forms. The event was well-attended and is now likely to be an annual addition to the Mardi Gras festival calendar. Speakers included Special Commissioner Justice John Sackar, ACON President Justin Koonin, Sydney MP Alex Greenwich and Waverley Mayor Paula Masselos.

We acknowledge Waverley Council, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and Ivan Power from Bronte Surf Club for their support towards this event.

SAFETY WORKSHOPS & SAFETY SUMMIT

This year ACON, in partnership with the City of Sydney, delivered a series of safety workshops for local government staff and LGBTQ+ community members across NSW. The workshops provided practical advice on dealing with disruption and intimidation targeted at rainbow communities at events, and fostered collaboration among key stakeholders. It was part of a range of actions designed to address the increasing violence against rainbow communities.

ACON also developed guides to support safe event planning for LGBTQ+ community members and local council workers, as well as other safety material.

Earlier in the year ACON attended the City of Sydney's LGBTIQ+ Safety Summit, which brought together 120 people from sexuality and gender diverse communities, academic experts, allied organisations and all three levels

of government to discuss ways on ensuring community safety.

ACON acknowledges the City of Sydney for their leadership in convening the summit, as well as the efforts of many people and organisations in ensuring the safety of rainbow communities.

WELCOME HERE PROJECT

We continued to provide support to many businesses, organisations, and services across Australia in creating spaces that are more welcoming and inclusive of LGBTQ+ people through our Welcome Here Project. Over the past year, the project saw continued growth with 705 businesses accounting for 2,254 sites joining the project, bringing us to a total of 3,443 member businesses and 13,037 sites. We thank the many businesses and services across Australia for proudly displaying Welcome Here stickers and committing to the first step of providing a welcoming space for people from LGBTQ+ communities.

DIVERSITY DAY GRANTS

Our Diversity Days Grants allow us to directly resource and empower our communities to host events on LGBTQ+ days of significance. This year, \$10,000 in grants was distributed to various community groups and organisations throughout NSW, with a particular focus on GWS, regional and rural areas, as well as events for LGBTQ+ First Nations and CALD communities.

WHAT'S NEXT

We will work to fostering more inclusive environments by building capacity and developing community partnerships to promote LGBTQ+ diversity. In the coming year, we will collaborate with C3West and the Museum of Contemporary Art for an innovative community-led art project that promotes visibility and inclusion of LGBTQ+ communities. We will also deliver a series of safety workshops with the Inner City Legal Centre to provide critical legal resources to LGBTQ+ community members.

You can find out more about our work in safety and inclusion at acon.org.au/what-we-are-herefor/safety-inclusion/

Honouring victims and survivors of hate crimes at the Sunrise Service of Reflection at the Rise Memorial

SAFETY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE

TRANS HEALTH EQUITY

We are here to help trans people of all genders - binary and non-binary - take control of their health.

IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF TRANS PEOPLE

Established in 2019, ACON's Trans Health Equity Unit works to deliver projects and initiatives that support the health and wellbeing of trans people. Our work in trans health is led by the priority action areas outlined in ACON's landmark *Blueprint for Improving the Health and Wellbeing of the Trans and Gender Diverse Community in NSW*.

TRANSHUB

Launched in 2020, TransHub continues to be one of the most important online portals for trans health and gender affirmation support across NSW. Since its launch, TransHub's active visitors and engagement continues to be strong. Over the past year, TransHub recorded 1.3 million page views and a total of 194,000 users across Australia.

Sections and information on TransHub continue to be enhanced by the Trans Health Equity team to ensure it remains a leading evidence-based resource on trans and gender diverse health and wellbeing.

Work is under way on the national expansion of TransHub.

TRANS VITALITY

Trans Vitality is a suicide prevention program designed by and for trans people of all genders. The program includes workshops and a toolkit to reflect the techniques and strategies that trans communities were already using to combat transphobia and take control of their own health.

This year, the Trans Health Equity team trained eight trans-peer facilitators to run workshops, including face-to-face workshops in the Hunter region and Western Sydney. Four workshop streams were delivered, including workshops specifically for brotherboys, sistergirls, trans mob and trans people of colour. Shorter one-off workshops were also held, including a workshop in collaboration with the

Inner City Legal Centre, an online hang-out and a clothes swap for trans people.

Feedback from these workshops emphasised the benefits of greater connections with trans community members.

TRANS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

ACON's Trans Mental Health Service aims to improve the mental health, wellbeing and quality of life of trans people and people questioning their gender, through the delivery of affirming and inclusive care coordination, counselling, peer navigation and peer support. All peer workers delivering this essential service are also trans. This year our Trans Mental Health team delivered over 2200 occasions of service to more than 200 people across NSW.

WHAT'S NEXT

The Trans Health Equity team are working on the national expansion project for TransHub, engaging community-controlled organisations in each state and territory to ensure a nationally consistent and central repository for social, medical and legal affirmation information and resources.

You can find out more about our work on trans and gender diverse health at acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/tgd-people

NDIS GUIDE FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

This year ACON's LGBTQ+ People With Disability project worked to update and enhance its digital resource on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) tailored specifically for sexuality and gender diverse communities. The NDIS Guide for LGBTQ+ people provides vital culturally-specific information as well as helpful tips for the broader community on how to be effective allies to LGBTQ+ people with disability.

ACON also delivered virtual workshops to LGBTQ+ people with disability nationally, to provide people with information about navigating the NDIS and on rights, advocacy and community building. We welcomed guest presenters from LGBTQ+ disability communities, who shared their invaluable experiences in building inclusive communities and advocating for disability rights and justice. More than 150 LGBTQ+ people with disability attended these workshops.

This work was funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

DISABILITY JUSTICE SOCIAL GROUP

In 2023, ACON launched the Disability Justice Social Group with funding from the NSW Government. This initiative serves 88 members through fortnightly online gatherings, fostering a supportive community for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities in NSW. The program aims to build a robust social network to promote community engagement, enhance support systems for LGBTQ+ individuals

WHAT'S NEXT

Following a positive response, we will bolster our Disability Justice Social Group with a robust engagement program including two social events, a visit to QTopia and a larger social connections event during Mardi Gras for all LGBTQ+ people with disability to share interests, design zines, and learn craft skills from peers.

You can learn more about our work in supporting LGBTQ+ people with disability at acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/people-with-disability

with disabilities, and strengthen community resilience while developing advocacy skills. Through these efforts, the Disability Justice Social Group strives to empower its members and create an inclusive social group.

This program exemplifies ACON's commitment to addressing the intersectional needs of the LGBTQ+ community. By providing tailored resources and fostering community engagement, ACON continues to ensure that LGBTQ+ people with disability have access to support, information and spaces to build community connections.

LGBTQ+ PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

We're here to support, build capacity, advocate for sexuality and gender diverse people with disabilities across Australia.



The LOVE Project ... supporting the health and wellbeing of older members of our communities

AGEING

We're here to offer support, companionship and advice for older sexuality and gender diverse community members by providing health information and a range of programs and services.

LOVE PROJECT

The LOVE Project (Living Older Visibly and Engaged), ACON's ageing initiative, aims to empower older LGBTQ+ communities, including people living with HIV, to lead healthy, active and more socially connected lives. ACON runs several activities under our LOVE Project umbrella supported by community allies and funders.

LOVE CLUB GATHERING

The LOVE Club Gatherings are a once-a-month activity responding to older LGBTQ+ community members wanting more safe spaces to socialise, more opportunities to stay connected and greater access to current health information and inclusive service providers.

LOVE SOCIAL CELEBRATION

This year, we hosted the second LOVE Social Celebration, a gathering to honour our fabulous trailblazing older community. Held at The Beresford in Surry Hills in August, the event brought LGBTQ+ community members and allies – young and old. We acknowledge the event's platinum sponsor Dowson Turco Lawyers for the generous support and our event partners Inner West Council and Seniors Rights Service.

QUEER ART + ORIGAMI FOR LOVE

The Art Gallery of NSW extended a special invite to LOVE Project members and all older LGBTQ+ communities, carers and friends, to a queer art tour, creative workshop and afternoon tea, prior to the

annual Art After Hours Mardi Gras event commencing.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

With support from the City of Sydney, ACON's LOVE Project held several activities focusing on bringing older people together. These included:

- Our annual movie matinee, Afternoon Delight, presented in association with Queer Screen as part of Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival. We held a movie screening and afternoon tea for the older LGBTQ+ community, friends, and allies.
- An Aged Care Update and Community Discussion for LGBTQ+ people, carers and friends. This was an opportunity for community members to listen to the latest information about aged care in NSW, their rights, quality standards and safety.
- LOVE Connections: an intergenerational art experience.

The LOVE project brought together LGBTQ+ people of all ages to explore their creativity with artists Peta-Joy Williams and Wayde Clarke.

- Technology and Tea – Digital Technology event. Together with YourLink, the LOVE Project invited older LGBTQ+ people to explore technology and connect with likeminded community members.

LIVING OLDER VISIBLY AND ENGAGED IN THE REGIONS

ACON's LOVE in the Regions project, funded by NSW Government, allows ACON to enhance our offerings to older LGBTQ+ people in regional areas. This hybrid program was launched in December 2023 and includes in-person and online activities through a partnership between the LOVE Project and ACON's Northern Rivers office.

AGED CARE VOLUNTEER VISITORS SCHEME (ACVVS)

ACVVS, funded by the Australian Government, provides much needed social support to older LGBTQ+ adults experiencing loneliness or isolation. Trained volunteers make weekly or fortnightly one-on-one visits to older LGBTQ+ people for social interaction and support. Over the year, 44 volunteers provided social support for 55 recipients. The program has received further funding for three years, enabling it to expand to the Hunter region.

WHAT'S NEXT

With funding from NSW Health, ACON will develop a comprehensive end of life and palliative care program, building on the existing co-designed toolkit, Taking Control, ACON's resource to assist LGBTQ+ communities with palliative care and end-of-life decisions. The program will provide information about advance care planning, death and grief, and enable access to bereavement support for LGBTQ+ families and carers in NSW.

You can find out more about our work in ageing at acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/ageing/

REGIONAL SERVICES

We're here to help sexuality and gender diverse people, and people with HIV in regional NSW take control of their health by providing a range of local services and supporting a variety of local community groups. We have offices in the Northern Rivers and the Hunter, along with outreach services operating across Western and Southern NSW.

SUPPORTING RAINBOW COMMUNITIES IN REGIONAL NSW

Our regional teams engage with community members and people living with HIV in providing care coordination and counselling services, delivering health promotion campaigns, undertaking community development and peer education initiatives, supporting community groups and events, providing training and support to mainstream services, and providing access to needle and syringe programs. Our regional teams also provide face-to-face and off-site counselling via phone and the internet.



Broken Heel Festival, Broken Hill

ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

The ACON Northern Rivers office is based in Lismore and works with sexuality and gender diverse communities and people living with HIV. They provide services throughout the Northern NSW and the Mid North Coast – from Tweed Heads in the North to Port Macquarie in the south and out to Tabulam and Drake in the west. Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivered ACON's HIV prevention campaign and sexual health messages at local events throughout the Northern Rivers and Mid-North Coast. We promoted ACON's HIV awareness campaigns at community events including World AIDS Day, Tropical Fruits Fair Day, R U OK Day at Southern Cross University, It's OK on the Macleay, AIDS Candlelight Memorial, and NAIDOC Events across the Northern Rivers.
- Provided 11 In-Service training sessions that provide information for correct pronoun usage, HIV treatment, prevention and testing, and ACON services. These are free to community and aim to reduce stigma and discrimination for LGBTQ+ community and people living with HIV.
- Delivered 1,133 occasions of service to community members seeking counselling



Flashback Friday's Christmas in July, Lismore

and care coordination in the Northern Rivers region. This was delivered by our three full-time social workers.

- Supported domestic violence and suicide prevention.
- Our Client Services team and Health Promotion team worked together to continue a Community of Practice for clinicians to improve the care they provide to trans and gender diverse people. Over 50 people actively participate in this group.
- Supported mental health initiatives through our membership in Lismore Suicide Prevention Collaborative, TRISP Working Group and attending R U OK Day events across the region.
- Conducted 11 outreach trips to towns and cities across the Northern Rivers, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities.
- Attended 15 events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included events at local support groups for gay, bi+ and men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV.
- Continued to partner with local community organisations and support LGBTQ+ groups and people living with HIV, including Lismore Lads and Brunswick Lunch Club. While continuing to grow relationships with Rainbow Coffs Harbour, Out Loud Port Macquarie and Cheers Queers.
- Supported SWOP by hosting LGBTQ+ sex workers forum while their workers visited our region.
- Continued to work with and build relationships with the 8 Aboriginal Medical Services across our region and created tailored HIV LET'S TEST campaign posters.
- Distributed 11,552 free condoms.
- Distributed 17,702 sterile needles and syringes and provided 182 brief interventions via our Needle Syringe Program outlet.
- Partnered with Uniting using Fair Treatment framework to successfully lobby local council to install and maintain additional community sharps disposal bins.



Based in Newcastle, ACON Hunter works with the community and partner organisations throughout the Hunter, New England, Central Coast and Western NSW Regions. Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivered ACON's HIV prevention and sexual health campaigns, including the LET'S TEST and mpox campaigns via our online platforms and through local networks.
- Engaged communities in regional NSW on ACON's LGBTQ+ health campaigns and resources, including the Red Ribbon Appeal for World AIDS Day, Mpox vaccination, PrEP guides, Cancer Prevention, and Safety and Inclusion.
- Partnered with Hunter New England Sexual Health to offer a twice-weekly drop-in sexual health service that provided HIV and STI testing and treatment to over 419 clients.
- Partnered with SWOP to conduct 4 outreach visits to brothels and provided HIV and STI testing for 68 sex workers.
- Distributed 27,852 free condoms.
- Partnered with the Newcastle Libraries to deliver inclusion and wellbeing events and workshops.
- Partnered with HNE Sexual Health to provide HIV/STI testing at Newcastle Pride Fair Day for our communities. The collaboration saw a record 50 people complete sexual health testing.
- Attended events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These

ACON HUNTER

included regional pride events, SHAG week with the University of Newcastle, Queer social and arts-based events, service provider expos, and outreach community catchups.

- Hit the road and brought 'Gari', the WorldPride First Nations Rainbow Serpent, to Armidale's Winter Blooming Festival. She was displayed across the weekend at the New England Regional Art Museum.
- Attended and supported Orange's first ever pride event, the Orange Rainbow Festival.
- Delivered a World AIDS Day forum HIV 'Then & Now' bringing different perspectives to the conversation around HIV and highlighting the changes we have seen over the years.
- Continued to deliver both peer education and training to local service providers working with our communities. In total, we delivered 35 education and capacity-building sessions to 426 participants from a broad section of our regional communities. Our Community Health Promotion Officers also provided an additional 8,226 occasions of health education to our LGBTQ+ peers.
- Conducted 26 outreach trips to towns and cities across the region, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities that were attended by more than 5,000 people. An additional 18,000 people attended Newcastle, Central Coast, and Lake Macquarie pride festivals, where ACON had activator stalls.
- Provided counselling, care coordination, and peer support to over 1,926 occasions of service directly to clients from the ACON Hunter Client Services Team and achieved a >95% client satisfaction rating.
- Maintained the peer-led Needle and Syringe Outreach Service and delivered 44,790 needles and syringes, and other sterile injecting equipment to people in regional areas with limited or no access to existing NSP outlets.
- Distributing a further 248,969 needles and syringes and providing community brief interventions and referrals at our Maitland Road NSP outlet
- Provided no-cost take-home Naloxone, a lifesaving medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an overdose, to 79 people.
- Developed and distributed regionally focused HIV, sexual health, and harm minimisation health promotion resources

ACON REGIONAL OUTREACH

ACON's Regional Outreach team works with partners and services throughout the Illawarra Shoalhaven, Southern NSW, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee and Far West Local Health Districts. Among the highlights this year the team:

- Delivered ACONs HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at local events in Wollongong, Albury, Wagga, Hay, Katoomba, Penrith, Bega, Young, Queanbeyan, Jindabyne and Nowra.
- Hosted a regional HIV testing week forum and a regional 'Treatments Update' forum.
- Presented 2 workshops focusing on sexual health and wellbeing.
- Delivered 21 in-service sessions to regional service providers and community groups.
- Hosted a rapid HIV testing pop up clinic at the Broken Heel Festival.
- Delivered 10,410 safe packs to community events, organisations and venues in Southern, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions.
- Delivered World AIDS Day events in Wagga and Wollongong.
- Delivered ACON resources to 96 services and organisations in the Southern, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions.
- Partnered with local GPs, and Primary Health Networks to develop ACON PrEP guides for the Blue Mountains, Wagga Wagga and the Southeast Coast, to improve access to PrEP in regional NSW.
- Supported and attended key events marking LGBTQ+ days of significance in Bowral, Wollongong, Leeton, Wagga, Hay, Katoomba and Penrith.
- Strengthened partnerships to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people and people living with HIV. Including Illawarra Rainbow Community, Leeton Pride, Wagga Mardi Gras, Rainbow on the Plains, Broken Heel, Rainbow Wave Bega, Sexual

Health Centres, Aboriginal Medical Services, Charles Sturt University, University of Wollongong, Western Sydney University, Primary Health Networks, Local Health Districts, youth services, councils, women's centres, community hubs, pubs and clubs.

- Attended or ran over 20 events and initiatives to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness.
- These included Broken Heel Festival, University of Wollongong RUOK Day, Western Sydney Rainbow Connection speaker series Penrith, Leeton Pride festival, Wollongong 'Say No to Bullying' event, Parramatta Pride Picnic, Queerstories at Thirroul Library, Trans and Friends festival Illawarra, Rainbow on the Plains festival Hay, World AIDS Day Red Party Wollongong, Wagga World AIDS Day luncheon and webinar, Wagga Mardi Gras Festival, University of Wollongong IDAHOBIT event, IDAHOBIT stall and workshop Leeton, Albury Pride short Film Festival, Bent Art festival Katoomba, Wollongong pride market, Mittagong pride event, NBMLHD refugee mental health week event and University of Wollongong Open Day.
- Conducted 38 outreach trips to towns and cities across the region including Lithgow, Katoomba, Penrith, Hawksbury, Albury, Wagga, Hay, Broken Hill, Nowra, Wollongong, Eden, Queanbeyan, Goulburn, Kiama, Jindabyne, Young, Batemans Bay, Illawarra, Port Kembla, Yass, Cootamundra, Pambula, Moruya, Temora, Griffith, Deniliquin and the South Coast.





Coastal Twist



Orange Rainbow Festival



Hunter Homeless Connect Day



Wagga Mardi Gras



Newcastle Pride



Coffs Harbour Pride March



Rainbow on the Plains, Hay



Pride 'N' Stride, Bathurst



It's Ok on the Macleay, Kempsey



Tropical Fruits



Newcastle Pride



Primex Field Days, Casino



Broken Hill Festival

WHAT'S NEXT: REGIONAL SERVICES

With new funding from NSW Health, ACON's Regional Services Division will expand counselling and peer work support for people identifying as LGBTQ+ at risk of suicide.

ACON Northern Rivers will collaborate with the HIV and Related Programs Service Divisions of the Northern and Mid Northern Coast Local Health Districts to provide tailored response to Aboriginal communities across the region, aiming to reduce the transmission rates of blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections for these communities.

Our Regional Outreach team will work with communities to update the Wollongong AIDS memorial to include all of those in the Illawarra Shoalhaven who were lost to an AIDS-related illness. You can find out more about our work in regional NSW at acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/regional-nsw/



PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

We're here to help make the places where our community members live, work, study, play and heal more inclusive of people of diverse sexualities and genders.

PRIDE INCLUSION PROGRAMS

Pride Inclusion Programs is a fully self-funded division within ACON that works across multiple programs to ensure LGBTQ+ inclusion within Australian workplaces, Australian Sport and Health and Wellbeing settings. The division not only provides bespoke year-round support via its multiple membership options, but

also provides leading international benchmarking instruments and survey tools that can be used to access and benchmark national activity in this space.

Pride Training, a bespoke LGBTQ+ training program within the division, provides both face-to-face programs and customised online content over and above that provided by membership programs.

All programs are evidence based driven by annual benchmarking data, survey analytics collected from over 47,000 respondents annually and academic journal participation and contribution.

PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

Pride in Diversity (PID) welcomed 46 new members this year closing the financial year with a membership of 515 organisations (growth of 9.8%), representing approximately 4,000,000 Australian employees. In addition to year-round support for these members, PID delivered 770 hours of member training, released a publication on Cracking the Rainbow Glass Ceiling and produced several trans and gender diverse recruitment factsheets.

Executive engagement also stepped up this year with the delivery of 12 in-person Executive Leader events attended by more than 550 executives across the country. In addition, members were brought together across seven states and territories to participate in roundtable discussions and best practice forums.

PRIDE IN SPORT

Pride in Sport now works with over 100 major sporting organisations to assist them at all levels with the inclusion of employees, athletes, coaches, volunteers and spectators with diverse sexualities and genders through its membership program and major projects.

Highlights this year include gaining a strategic position on the Diversity & Inclusion in Sport Alliance, the launch of the inaugural Australian Pride in Sport Summit, with over 200 attendees nationwide and the hosting of its first CEO Forum.

Pride in Sport continues to build on partnerships with the Australian Sports Commission, the Australian Human Rights Commission, and Sport Integrity.

PRIDE IN HEALTH + WELLBEING

The Pride in Health + Wellbeing (PIHW) program supports health and wellbeing organisations with inclusive service delivery, and it sits within a broader health sector team. This team includes PID expertise and collaborates with ACON programs, enabling it to offer comprehensive inclusion support in health settings, currently servicing 71 PIHW members and 48 PID members.

This year PIHW launched a new advisory group, a National Community of Practice and a webinar series, with a presence at various key conferences and roundtables, and a growing number of collaborative research projects.

PRIDE TRAINING

Pride Training saw significant growth this year in training delivered, reach, and profit. Facilitated training (both in-person and webinars) increased by 22%. Learner reach increased by 33% and hours of learning by 32%.

While individual eLearning seats purchased decreased to 2,023 (-57%), the program saw a huge upsurge in licenced eLearning agreements – an increase of 84% and a reach

of approximately 8,000 learners. The overall satisfaction score of all training remained steady at 9.3/10. In addition, the team was contracted to develop bespoke eLearning courses for NSW Ambulance, Origin Energy, and The Federal Circuit Family Court of Australia.

QUALITY TRAINING & RESEARCH

The Quality Training and Research (QTR) team manages the national indices and surveys for all programs, internal training quality & compliance as well as all academic research activity.

All programmatic indices set the national benchmark for LGBTQ+ inclusion within their respective areas. This year 164 Employers submitted for the Australian Workplace Equality Index, (AWEI), 29 Health organisations for the Health + Wellbeing Index (HWEI) and 47 Sporting organisations for the Sports Index (PSI). These indices set the national benchmark for LGBTQ+ inclusion and are internationally viewed as Gold standard indices.

In terms of programmatic surveys, the AWEI saw 41,219 responses, the HWEI 2,399 and the PSI 1,197 responses. This data is analysed throughout the year providing annual Australian data to both inform and drive practice nationally.

The QTR team works closely with academic consultants and engages PhD candidates to complete internships within the programs. The team has published several academic papers utilising internal data and is currently extending its research capability with multiple universities.

OPERATIONS, EVENTS & PARTNERSHIPS

Our Operations, Events & Partnerships team not only ensures the smooth running of the division but is also responsible for the execution of programmatic events and sponsorships. This year, sponsorships for the LGBTQ+ Inclusion Awards rose by 39% with an attendance of 1,010, and sponsorships for the Sports Awards increased by 34%.

Pride in Sport held its inaugural Pride in Sport Summit attracting 200 attendees from across the country, alongside the first Sports CEO Summit.

Pride in Health & Wellbeing held its awards online this year with plans to seek funding for an in-person celebration of achievements going forward.

The annual Pride in Practice conference held this year in Sydney attracted 876 delegates, showcasing 56 sessions across the three days achieving \$115,000 in sponsorship for the three-day event.

WHAT'S NEXT

Pride Inclusion Programs will this year launch two new initiatives to meet the ongoing needs of member organisations. The first will be Pride Pathways, a talent development program that will provide leadership development for future LGBTQ+ leaders as well as support for their employers to create cultures of ongoing professional development. The second initiative will be Pride Consulting, an opportunity for member and non-member organisations alike to engage Senior Relationship Managers and executive within the division, for finite consulting projects that focus on the work of each of the respective program areas.

You can find out more about our work in LGBTQ inclusion at prideinclusionprograms.com.au

FOCUS AREA

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DEVELOPING FINANCIAL DIVERSITY, STRENGTH AND GROWTH

We ensure that the health of our communities is a funded priority in mainstream health provision.

We deliver bold and exciting revenue generation activities that appeal to our communities.

We ensure diversification of our income sources to ensure that we can deliver against the health needs of our communities which may be underfunded.

We make prudent decisions about investing our resources, and ensure that these investments are ethically sound.

We endeavour to find efficiencies in spending and source talent and resources which are cost effective while upholding the standards of our organisation.

IN THIS SECTION

Finance Operations

Fundraising & Philanthropy



FINANCE OPERATIONS

We're here to build ACON's financial diversity, strength, and growth. We do this through sound financial planning, diversifying income streams, innovative fundraising, and strong risk management and compliance.

FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT

Effective financial risk management remains a top priority for our organisation. Throughout the year, we have diligently assessed and managed various financial risks to protect our financial position and ensure the sustainability of our operations. We have implemented comprehensive risk management frameworks and practices to identify, measure, monitor, and control financial risks.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

ACON's risk management framework is informed by the principles and guidelines set out in the Australian Risk Management Standard (AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018). The framework comprises policies, procedures, guidelines and operational tools to support decision-making for the management of risks. Each business unit maintains a risk register and these registers feed into the organisational wide risk register, as and when required.

ACON maintains a Compliance Framework, which also comprises policies, procedures and guidelines. A breach register is maintained to ensure that any breaches of legislation or policies are documented and resolved.

Senior managers continue to have access to a legislative alert system to ensure they remain up to date with all current legislation relevant to their business unit. Risk management and compliance reports are provided to the Finance and Audit Committee and the Board on a quarterly basis.

FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

ACON has a Finance & Audit Committee, which is responsible, on behalf of the organisation, for ensuring that ACON's organisational culture, capabilities, systems and processes are appropriate to protect the financial health and the reputation of ACON in all audit related areas.

The Committee, composed of experienced financial professionals and independent directors, provides oversight and guidance on many financial, risk and compliance matters. The Committee meets bi-monthly and their diligent oversight and independent perspective contributes to the integrity and transparency of ACON's operations.

The Committee's work includes reviewing the financial reporting processes, the systems and internal controls, risk management, compliance and audit processes, as well as reviewing and analysing the quarterly financial and investment reports; monitoring ACON's internal and external auditors' findings and recommendations with regard to ACON's capability and performance in all audit areas, ensuring that appropriate corrective actions are taken in a timely manner when deficiencies are identified; playing a significant role in advising the Board of Directors in relation to the investment portfolio and its performance.

It ensures that ACON's resources are properly utilised to maintain returns, while managing portfolio risks, within parameters approved by the Board.

IMPROVED FINANCE SYSTEM AND PROCESSES

This year marked a significant milestone for ACON's Finance unit as we transitioned from Sun Systems to Sage Intacct Systems. This strategic move has brought forth a multitude of benefits that have transformed our financial operations. The key advantages of Sage Intacct Systems include:

- Enhanced efficiency: The automation of key financial processes has reduced manual entry and increased operational efficiency.
- Real-time financial reporting: With Sage Intacct's cloud-based platform, we now have access to real-time financial data, enabling timely and informed decision-making.
- Scalability: As ACON Finance grows, Sage Intacct Systems can easily scale to meet our expanding business needs without compromising performance.

In addition to upgrading our core

financial systems, we have also integrated Adaptive Systems. This will enable streamlined budgeting processes and dynamic reporting.

The implementation of these new systems is expected to significantly improve our operational efficiency and enhance the accuracy of our financial data. This, in turn, will empower our decision-making process, allowing us to make more informed, strategic decisions that will drive the success of ACON.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PRO BONO ASSISTANCE

During the course of ACON's operations, it is often necessary to seek the advice and guidance of specialist legal organisations in matters such as commercial law and intellectual property, employee relations, as well as Workplace, Health and Safety.

We gratefully acknowledge the pro bono support provided during 2023-2024 by the following legal advisers:

- Allens
- KL Gates
- Norton Rose Fulbright
- Dowson Turco Lawyers

The assistance provided so willingly and professionally by these organisations has been invaluable in assisting ACON achieve its strategic goals and further our work in our communities.

WHAT'S NEXT

We will further enhance our financial management system. Additional functions will provide efficiencies through invoice automation, fraud detection capabilities, and advanced reporting systems to support informed decision-making and strategic planning.

FUNDRAISING & PHILANTHROPY

We're here to deliver bold, innovative and sustainable fundraising initiatives and activities that connect with and appeal to our communities to help continue funding our work.

Our efforts to achieve our objectives in improving the health and wellbeing of our communities is significantly enhanced through fundraising and philanthropy. We simply would not have the impact or reach that we do without the hundreds of dedicated supporters who donate and raise funds for us every year, in what continues to be a very challenging fundraising environment.

CELEBRATE FOR ACON, CELEBRATE WITH PRIDE

Celebrate With Pride is ACON's year-round peer-to-peer fundraising campaign. The campaign provides a platform for people and businesses to raise funds for ACON during special occasions and days of significance, as well as during key periods such as the Mardi Gras season and Pride Month. Supporters can access a range of resources and support from ACON's fundraising team

to help make their fundraiser a success. Over the year, more than 15 fundraisers were registered with Celebrate With Pride, raising around \$24,000. We express our sincerest thanks to all who got involved with, or donated to, our Celebrate With Pride campaign.

SUPPORTING THE RED RIBBON APPEAL

Our communities continued to show wonderful support for our long-running and much-loved World AIDS Day campaign, the Red Ribbon Appeal. We collected donations at trains stations in the CBD and at theatre productions. We provided support to local LGBTQ+ venues in Sydney, Newcastle and Lismore that hosted fundraising events. And we assisted several businesses, corporates and community organisations in holding Red Ribbon Appeal benefits. We express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported the Red Ribbon Appeal.

ACON FUNDRAISING AT COMMUNITY EVENTS

Over the year, we continued to raise funds at community events and we're grateful to all who made a donation to ACON over the past year. Our annual gala event Honour Awards drew a strong crowd, and we thank everyone who attended the event, participated in the silent auction, bought a raffle ticket or made a donation.

Bingay, ACON's long-running community engagement event, continues to be popular and well-attended. Held monthly at The Beresford, funds raised at Bingay goes towards supporting ACON's programs and services.

Local LGBTQ venues continued their fundraising efforts for ACON and we extend our sincerest thanks for their support, including Universal, The Beresford and Stonewall Hotel.

SUPPORTING ACON THROUGH EXTERNAL FUNDRAISERS

There are many ways to donate to ACON and this year, we express our thanks to those that supported us via external fundraisers.

In August, ACON provided assistance and resources to a number of supporters participating in the City2Surf. Altogether, the ACON team raised around \$3,794 for ACON.

For GiveOUT Day in 2023, we raised funds for our Rovers Program. Through donations and GiveOUT Day's matching program, we raised around \$2600.

We thank everyone who got involved and made a donation to ACON through external fundraising initiatives.

BUILDING FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS

We continued to grow our valued fundraising partnerships with corporates, businesses and organisations. We extend our deepest thanks to the many organisations for contributing to our Red Ribbon Appeal, Celebrate With Pride and Honour Awards campaigns, or for holding fundraisers for ACON, including Jean Paul Gaultier, ABSOLUT, Merivale, people2people, OUT@NBCUniversal, Universal Hotels, Deutsche Bank, Allens Lawyers, CBRE NSW, N-Able, Asics, I Equals Change and many more. We thank all our fundraising partners for their incredible support.

THANK YOU!

We thank the many hundreds of supporters who continue to make ACON's work possible through fundraising and philanthropy. We are truly humbled by the generosity shown by our communities and allies. We thank all our amazing volunteers whose time and efforts make our events so special. We thank all our donors and partners for your kind assistance, as well as all those who supported us through community events, appeals, fundraising drives and in-kind contributions.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we will develop and implement a multi-year fundraising strategic plan, enabling ACON to better meet its goals and support the communities we serve.



ACON's Celebrate With Pride campaign



FOCUS AREA

5

BUILDING A WORKPLACE THAT ATTRACTS AND DEVELOPS THE BEST PEOPLE

We create opportunities for staff and volunteers to develop their skills, ensuring a passionate, authentic and committed team.

We provide a positive working environment in which staff and volunteers feel supported and justly recognised for the work they do.

We are committed to creating an effective, efficient and healthy workplace, which will best serve our clients and communities.

We develop strategic responses to ensure that staff and volunteers who are living with HIV, trans and gender diverse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse or living with a disability are supported towards excellence.

We foster an environment of respect in which staff and volunteers feel supported to provide and receive feedback on their work.

IN THIS SECTION

Organisational Development

Reconciliation Action Plan

Community Engagement

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We're here to build ACON's operational capacity and effectiveness. We do this through planning, evaluation and knowledge management and our finance, human resources, facilities management, information technology services, marketing and communications.

CORPORATE SERVICES

ACON's Corporate Services division continues its high performance of operational functions that are key to the organisation's effectiveness and success, including people and culture, finance and payroll, information technology, and facilities management.

In 2023-24, we continued to enhance our organisational capacity and operations by driving efficiency improvements, establishing new systems, streamlining processes, implementing new technology initiatives, and strengthening organisational and financial governance.

This years' highlights include:

- Front of House provided a total of 17,842 occasions of service, both face to face and via telephone. The team provide much more than receptionist services, having an enormous knowledge of the services ACON provides and other services available in the community.
- The Facilities Team continued the maintenance and efficient operation of facilities, safeguarding the health of all in the Sydney building. The lift refurbishment commenced in October 2023, entering service in January 2024. The modernisation included an energy efficient motor and updated interior, providing enhanced reliability, accessibility, and safety.
- Information Technology had a continued focus on security, strengthening identity management to build towards a zero-trust environment. Device administration was consolidated into the cloud, part of the initial process to push all ACON operations into the cloud. A considerable amount of time has been allocated this past financial year to work on cyber security to align with ACSC's Essential Eight strategies for cyber security mitigation.

PEOPLE & CULTURE

ACON's is committed to building an employee base that reflects all aspects of diversity and intersectionality to bring a range of perspectives ideas, insights and lived experiences to everything we do.

Our focus continues to be on the development of our people from underrepresented groups at all levels and enhancing our recruitment and other talent attraction and retention strategies, enabling us to achieve this pipeline of talent management.

ACON continues its work to increase representation of women, gender diverse people and those from CALD communities. We continue to enhance internal processes to better understand our workforce composition and improve practices to attract a diversity of candidates.

In 2023 -2024 we continued to attract, develop and retain a skilled, diverse and engaged workforce. To support this work, the following actions continue to be developed and implemented:

- On-going review of all policies, processes and people related practices ensuring they reflect leading practice of the diverse workforce employed at ACON
 - Review and implementation of an end-to-end volunteer on-boarding and engagement program
 - Ongoing work in the space of Diversity and Inclusion
- The People and Culture team are currently investigating a new HRM system, to more efficiently integrate employee records and payroll with the financial management system.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT, LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

This year, the ACON employee engagement survey yielded a participation rate of 85%.

Notable highlights include:

- Stand-out results were in the areas of values (86%), flexibility (82%) and teamwork (89%).
- Overall employee engagement was strong and delivered 81% engagement

ACON remains committed to purpose-led learning and development of its workforce, ensuring that learning and development is targeted to the individual needs of employees.

This commitment to learning and development includes:

- Ensuring each staff member continues to have access to personal development each year to support them in their role at ACON.

- The ongoing success of the annual ACON professional Development Scholarship Program that provides two successful staff applicants a scholarship grant to further develop and grow their skills in their chosen role.
- Continued access to generous education leave provisions, where managers provide the ongoing support to their staff through their study in undergraduate and post graduate studies
- The monthly presentation at the general staff meeting of updated policies and leading practice procedures within ACON.

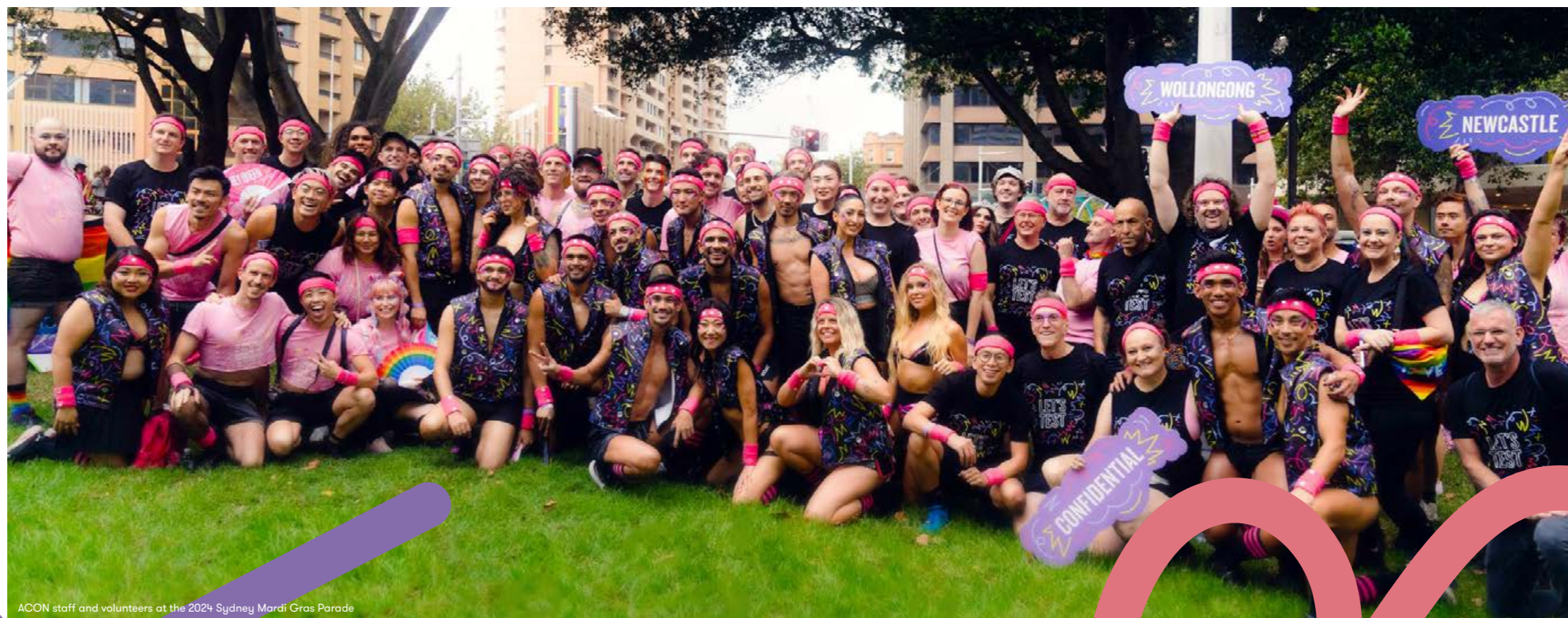
QUALITY INNOVATION PERFORMANCE (QIP)

ACON was awarded and re-accredited as a QIP accredited organisation under the QIC standards.

The QIC Standards support various health and community organisations to maximise continuous quality improvement opportunities by undertaking a 'whole-of-organisation' approach to assessment. Key areas of the QIC Standards support organisations in improving consumer and community engagement, diversity and cultural appropriateness, management systems, governance and service delivery.

QIP accreditation against QIC Standards highlights an organisation's strength, however it also shows areas for improvement and assists to identify areas that need to be prioritised.

The re-accreditation was awarded to ACON in December 2023 and is for a period of three years.



ACON staff and volunteers at the 2024 Sydney Mardi Gras Parade

WOMEN'S EQUITY TASKFORCE

ACON's Women's Health, Safety & Equity Taskforce (WHSET) was established in 2021 to start conversations about what more ACON could be doing both internally and externally for our communities to better address issues surrounding gender equity.

During the 2023 Big Days In, the WHSET presented a session exploring barriers in career progression for women; in particular, women of colour. Following that session, ACON is now a participant in the RISE program. Developed in partnership between Diversity Council Australia, Settlement Services International and Chief Executive Women, the program aims to help organisations in identifying and addressing barriers and developing direct leadership pathways for culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) women and non-binary people.

Work has also continued on the gender equity e-learning module.

MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Guided by our Multicultural Engagement Plan 2021-2024, ACON delivered several initiatives to increase the inclusion, capacity and health outcomes for LGBTQ+ people from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse migrant and refugee backgrounds, and people of colour.

ACON partnered with the Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators to deliver *Lost in Translation: LGBTQ Inclusion and Safety Training for Translators and Interpreters*, a free training program to upskill translators and interpreters in NSW on LGBTIQ+ terminology, and safety and inclusion practices in order to provide a respectful and safe environment when working with LGBTQ+ community members from CALD backgrounds.

ACON collaborated with the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia to inform the creation of the National Anti-Racism Framework by the Australian Human Rights Commission. To this end, ACON sought out community members and led five consultation sessions to target different segments of the multicultural LGBTQ+ community.

In partnership with Western Sydney University and the City of Sydney, ACON developed *Local LGBTQ+ Legacies: Uncovering Migrant and Multicultural Contributions to Sydney's LGBTQ+ History*, which documents the stories of multicultural LGBTQ+ community leaders who have contributed to Sydney's queer community.

ACON also collaborated with Cultural Perspectives to develop videos, consistent with the Australian Government's 'Beforeplay' campaign, promoting HIV and sexual health testing methods aimed at young multicultural LGBTQ+ people.



ACON staff engaging with multicultural communities at FLAGCOM's Miss Mardi Gras International Queen

MEDIA, COMMUNICATIONS & DIGITAL INFORMATION

We continued to increase ACON's profile and extend the reach of our health promotion messages through our corporate marketing and strategic communications activities. Key highlights include:

- The year 2023-2024 saw ACON in the media for a broad range of topics and programs. Particularly widespread stories were about the announcement of the Kaleido Health Centre, the release of the report into gay hate crimes and the re-emergence of MPOX cases in NSW.
- With a total of 836 media mentions in those 12 months, 664 were online, 90 on radio, 49 on television and 33 in print. Altogether across all mentions, the potential audience reach was 61.1 million.
- Total pageviews across all ACON websites over July 2023 – June 2024 added up to 8.9 million.

- Traffic to the ACON website reached over half a million pageviews in the 2023/24 financial year – a total of 504,456.
- Social media remains a key communication channel for ACON with our main accounts across key platforms such as Facebook and Instagram recording strong growth in reach and engagement. ACON Facebook page followers grew by 8% year-on-year.
- Instagram continues to be a significant area of growth for ACON. Our collective Instagram accounts – across all accounts including ACON, TransHub, Welcome Here, Ending HIV, Honour Awards, and ACON Women – recorded a 32% rise in followers compared to the previous year.
- We continued to deliver a range of regular external and internal electronic newsletters to keep supporters and staff engaged with ACON's work and

activities. Our external digital subscribers continued to grow across our mailing lists.

We continued to enhance ACON's digital information and engagement capabilities. Key highlights from ACON's Digital Information unit include:

- Managed 443 helpdesk requests, streamlining digital support and service delivery.
- Strengthened organisational collaboration through the integration of Microsoft Teams and OneDrive with SharePoint 365, enhancing seamless internal communication and document management.
- Undertook extensive research into new CRM solutions to meet evolving organisational needs, currently trialling two platforms to enhance engagement and streamline supporter-to-volunteer transitions.
- Enhanced cybersecurity measures, safeguarding our digital assets and ensuring compliance.
- Digitised ACON Annual Report and launched website to improve access and engagement.
- Launched the Kaleido Health website, providing a digital platform to support the services and community engagement of the new health centre, enhancing accessibility to health resources and information
- Introduced optimised digital workflows, boosting operational efficiency.
- Implemented Acknowledgement of Country popup across all ACON websites, demonstrating the organisation's commitment to reconciliation and cultural recognition as part of the Reconciliation Action Plan.
- Digital Information team has also introduced and implemented new ACON membership application processes to better align with the ACON's updated constitution.
- We continued maintenance across all ACON websites, consolidating platforms and launching new campaign websites to support ongoing initiatives.
- Developed and championed a Digital Governance Policy and related guidelines, securing the future of our digital infrastructure and ensuring compliance and strategic alignment with organisational goals.

WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, we will be implementing a new Human Resource Management Information System to digitalise, automate and centralise core People & Culture processes. It will also enable talent management functions such as recruiting, on-boarding, performance management, goal planning and training.

RAP IMPLEMENTATION

This year, our focus has been on implementing our second Innovate RAP, embedding the importance of our RAP across all areas of ACON. Every division in the organisation is working towards achieving key outcomes in the RAP and designated staff – RAP Champions – are helping to ensure deliverables and timelines are being met.

RAP WORKING GROUP

Implementation of the RAP is guided and overseen by ACON's RAP Working Group, the organisation's internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee made up of staff and community representatives.

Over the last year, our RAP Working Group has seen an increase in the number of First Nations community members. Jane Yettica continues to serve as co-chair and internally we have had a greater focus on structuring how the RAP working group engages ACON. The implementation of our engagement strategy includes an increased focus on how RAP Champions can support the work we do and provide assistance to divisions in meeting their RAP objectives.

VOICE TO PARLIAMENT REFERENDUM

ACON's approach to the Voice Referendum was informed by consultation with First Nations community members and staff. We heard that First Nations communities did not want non-Indigenous people and organisations speaking on their behalf and we committed to listening to and honouring that. ACON has committed itself to always listen to, celebrate, support, and uplift First Nations LGBTQ+SB communities. This year, that meant providing acknowledgement and support during the Voice Referendum, but also crucially post Referendum, by continuing to listen to and centre First Nations voices, to reflect on what we've heard, and to support and celebrate communities after the disappointing result.

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

This year, we continued the implementation of our second Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which builds on ACON's ongoing commitment to ensuring health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities.

FIRST NATIONS LISTENING AND TRUTH TELLING PROJECT

ACON is committed to a listening and truth telling process, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are heard, and a healing process can begin. This year, we launched the First Nations Listening and Truth Telling Project, which is designed to amplify First Nation voices within our organisation, and to improve our capacity to address the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This initiative aims to create a culture of meaningful listening within the organisation, to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are amplified, and their needs are more effectively prioritised.

FIRST NATIONS HEALTH PROGRAMS

Our First Nations Health Programs continued to engage people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on LGBTQ+ health, HIV prevention, sexual health and wellbeing.

Highlights of the year include:

- 'Gari', the iconic WorldPride Rainbow Serpent went on her first regional road show. The team travelled to Armidale's Winter Blooming Festival at the New England Regional Art Museum where Gari was at the centre of conversation and connections.
- We led the delivery of the First Nations Float at the 2024 Mardi Gras parade, which was a dedication to previous iconic First Nations floats. Four mini floats were produced during community workshops regularly seeing 20+ community members attending.

- We attended Koori Knockout Central Coast partnering with SWOP, Hepatitis NSW and Positive Life NSW. The stall drew strong engagement, visited by 1000 community members.
- We hosted a stall at Coastal Twist on the Central Coast with over 100 community members visiting the stall.
- We supported ACON's LGBTQ Women's Health Programs Team to deliver SWASH surveys at various community events during the Mardi Gras Festival, as well as ACON's International Women's Day at the Museum of Contemporary Art in March.
- We partnered with BlaQ to host an event after the Mardi Gras Parade for First Nations community members and allies. The event drew around 250 community members who received ACON health information and resources.
- The First Nations Health Program and ACON's Ending HIV team collaborated to launch the HEY MOB, LET'S TEST HIV and STI campaign, which has been a huge success within the community. Campaign collateral have been implemented in Sydney and Redfern, as well as in regional centres such as Newcastle and Lismore. 'Hey Mob, Let's Test' resources and merchandise have proved popular with community members.

- During NAIDOC week, we attended the Redfern Aboriginal Medical Service event at Redfern Community Centre and the National Centre for Community Excellence. We had a strong presence at these events, and many community conversations around the HEY MOB, LET'S TEST campaign, as well as distributing campaign merchandise.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

This year, ACON participated in various events to mark National Reconciliation Week, including:

- We hosted Deadly Trivia, which featured Jinny-Jane Smith and Matty Mills with drag star Jojo Zaho. Attended by community members, ACON employees and allies, it was a great success raising \$3000 for First Nations Health Programs.
- ACON hosted a 'Weaving in Solidarity' workshop, enabling a safe space for dialogue with and between multicultural and First Nations staff. With weaving led by Wiradjuri artist Peta-Joy Williams, and robust and thoughtful discussions around colonisation, privilege, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, it was a compelling workshop where allies were able to cultivate a curious and non-judgemental space to explore how multicultural folks can show up and be better allies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- ACON staff undertook the Royal Botanic Gardens Aboriginal Harbour Heritage Walking Tour, learning about the traditional practices of Gadigal people, native flora and fauna and their uses, and the geography of the land.
- ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs team held a 'Learn and Yarn' session to gain a deeper understanding of why National Reconciliation Week exists and what we can do to support reconciliation.

WHAT'S NEXT

Our biggest focus for the next year is to progress work on our RAP objectives, supporting each division of ACON to deliver on their actions and working with First Nations community members to deliver on our RAP commitments.

You can find out more about ACON's Reconciliation Action plan at acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/aboriginal-people/

ACON's Deadly Trivia Night held during National Reconciliation Week at The Beresford in Sydney



Celebrating 25 years ... Bingay

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We're here to bring people together, providing opportunities for our staff, volunteers and people in our communities to get involved, connect, contribute and celebrate.

THANK YOU TO OUR AMAZING VOLUNTEERS!

ACON's work would simply not be possible without the incredible passion and efforts of hundreds of volunteers across NSW who play a critical role helping us run programs and services to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities. Our volunteers help with many programs and activities including delivering education programs, packing safe sex packs, providing governance and guidance at the board level, assisting with care and support services, helping us run community events and raising much-needed funds. ACON's foundation is built on the commitment and

actions of volunteers and we are extremely grateful for their contributions. Each year ACON hosts a Volunteer Thank You Event during National Volunteers Week in Sydney to express our gratitude, which was attended by over 120 volunteers and supporters.

WORLD AIDS DAY: ACON EVENTS, INITIATIVES & ACTIVITIES

World AIDS Day (1 December) provides us with a valuable opportunity to honour people who have died from an AIDS-related illness, educate our communities about how we can end HIV transmission and fight

HIV stigma in NSW, and raise money for programs and services that are vital to ending HIV. This year our World AIDS Day-related activities included our Red Ribbon Appeal, theatre and venue collections, and a series of special benefit events and memorial ceremonies in Sydney and regional NSW. In Sydney, we teamed up with Stonewall Hotel, The Beresford and Universal for their World AIDS Day events, while gatherings to mark the day were held in Lismore, Newcastle, Wagga Wagga and Wollongong, among others. We thank everyone in our communities for their support in commemorating World AIDS Day.

HELPING OUR COMMUNITIES STAY SAFE AT SYDNEY MARDI GRAS

Every year at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, ACON executes a range of activities to promote key health messages. The annual festival provides us with an important opportunity to further amplify our work and raise awareness of issues affecting our communities. While Fair Day was cancelled, we engaged with community members at various other events including the Sunrise Service of Reflection at the Rise Memorial at Marks Parks in honour of people lost

to violence; FLAGCOM's Miss Mardi Gras International Queen Pageant in Campsie; and the Bondi Beach Party. Throughout the festival, we provided harm reduction services such as our ACON Rovers and engaged community members on important research with the Sydney GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey. Over 150 people participated in the ACON float at the Mardi Gras Parade, which showcased important HIV prevention messages.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY FOR 25 YEARS AT BINGAY

ACON's long-running and much-loved community engagement and fundraising event, Bingay, marked its 25th anniversary this year. Held monthly at The Beresford in Surry Hills, it provides a space for community members and allies to come together while raising funds for ACON at the same time. Special super-sized editions – Big Bingay – were also held at Paddo RSL. We express our gratitude to all the generous supporters who have donated prizes, the volunteer team at the events, and Bingay's co-hosts Charisma Belle and Naomi Palmer, and of course, all of Bingay's fans – regular and new.



ACON supporters at City2Surf

HONOUR AWARDS: CELEBRATING UNSUNG LOCAL COMMUNITY HEROES

The Honour Awards is an annual gala event produced by ACON to recognise and celebrate outstanding service and achievements within NSW's LGBTQ+ communities. This event is a key community-building opportunity and is also a fundraiser for ACON. This year, the event drew a record number of nominations for the awards, and over 400 guests attended the night, which was held for the first time at Doltone House Sydney. We acknowledge the incredible support of our presenting partners people2people, Universal Hotels and OUT@NBCUniversal, as well as our community and event partners. We are also grateful for all the local businesses and supporters who donated to the silent auction, and to all the volunteers, crew and presenters. And of course, to all our guests – thank you for supporting the Honour Awards!

REMEMBER & REFLECT: SYDNEY CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Co-presented by Positive Life NSW and ACON, the Sydney AIDS Candlelight Memorial is a time for the community to remember those who have passed away from HIV/AIDS. It is held on International AIDS Candlelight Memorial Day, which is on the 3rd Sunday of May. At the memorial, names of those who have passed are read by a cross-section of the community. 2024's Candlelight Memorial was held at the Eternity Playhouse in Darlinghurst on Sunday 19 May.



Award recipients at Honour Awards 2024

FUN, FRIENDSHIP & FITNESS AT CITY2SURF

This year, ACON staff, volunteers and supporters participated in the City2Surf, marking the return of an official ACON team in the annual fun run for many years. The event enabled us to engage community members on fitness and keeping active, while also raising the profile of ACON to the broader community. Participants in City2Surf also have the opportunity to raise funds and this year's ACON team raised over \$3,700. Our presence at this year's City2Surf has prompted significant interest in the community and we look forward to entering an even bigger team in 2025. Thank you to everyone who joined the ACON team at City2Surf.



Sydney AIDS Candlelight Memorial

HEALTH MESSAGES AT QUEER SCREEN FILM FESTIVAL

At Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival in February and at the Queer Screen Film Fest in August, ACON co-presents a range of films to promote our health and wellbeing messages and engage community members on important health issues. This year, ACON presented a series of films spanning a diverse range of health areas including Asian gay men's health, healthy ageing, HIV prevention, young gay men's health, women's health, and trans and gender diverse health. We acknowledge Queer Screen and thank them for their ongoing partnership and support.

WHAT'S NEXT

In 2025, ACON will celebrate its 40th anniversary and we look forward to marking this important milestone with our communities through various events and activities.

You can find out how you can get involved with ACON at acon.org.au/get-involved/



The Red Ribbon Appeal

OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



Michael Woodhouse Chief Executive Officer

Michael has been an executive leader in health and human services for over 20 years with roles in both the government and not-for-profit sectors. He has a strong interest in community-led services and programs, and in better outcomes for marginalised communities. Michael has experience in primary health care, disability support, aged care, child and

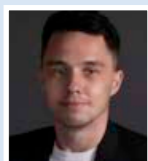
family services and inclusion strategies. Michael has been involved in many LGBTQ+ community organisations over the years, including a stint as Co-Chair of Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. He was added to the Mardi Gras Hall of Fame in 2023. Michael was appointed as CEO of ACON in September 2024.



Karen Price Deputy CEO

Karen Price has over 25 years' experience in the health sector, in roles across Federal and State Government, and the NGO sector. Karen has experience across HIV and sexual health, mental health, aged care, drug and alcohol, and anti-doping in sport. Karen has extensive experience in policy and program development; advocacy; business development; partnerships; integrated clinical service design and management;

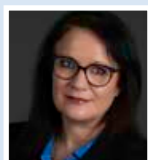
health promotion; digital communications; regulatory and statutory functions; community development; and research, monitoring and evaluation. Karen has international, national, and state representative experience; implementation and strategy advisory roles; and governance experience. Karen has also been involved in national and state research projects of significance in an investigator and advisory capacity.



Matthew Vaughan Director, HIV & Sexual Health

Matthew is the Director for HIV Sexual Health and ACON's Principal Campaign Planner, where he leads the strategy and development of the multi award-winning campaign Ending HIV, which seeks to end HIV transmissions in NSW. Matthew has been working within the community services sector for the past 15

years working in a variety of roles within government, non-government and community-based organisations at state, national and international levels. Matthew has a love of technology and digital media, and specialises in how that passion can be used to build effective behaviour change interventions.



Dawn-Emsen Hough Director, Pride Inclusion Programs

Dawn is the Director of ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs. Dawn started with ACON in 2009 with the remit of building a national Pride in Diversity Program and to develop a national benchmarking tool for LGBTQ+ workplace Inclusion in Australia (AWEI). Since that time, the program has grown to incorporate Pride in Sport, Pride in Health + Wellbeing and Pride Training. Pride in Diversity

has also gained an international reputation for its leading practice and gold standard index. Dawn has a background in financial services, talent management and OD with academic qualifications in adult education and cognitive science. Dawn was appointed Adjunct Senior Fellow at University of Queensland 2021 and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



Eloise Layard Acting Director, Community Health

Eloise Layard (she/her) is ACON's Acting Director, Community Health. Eloise began her career as a social worker in the federal public service, before commencing at ACON over five years ago to coordinate ACON's sexual, domestic and family violence program. Eloise is a member of a number of NSW and national sexual, domestic and family

violence related advisory groups, including the National Plan Advisory Group. The Community Health Division includes ACON's Gadigal Sydney-based Client Services programs, including counselling, care coordination and peer support; as well as NSW-wide and national LGBTQ+ health, equity and harm reduction programs.



Daniel McCarthy Director, Regional Services

Daniel has 18 years' experience in the health sector, including clinical healthcare delivery, HIV and sexual health, population health, clinical governance, and health service management. Daniel has a Master of International and Community Development as well as a Bachelor of Nursing. Daniel has significant experience

in policy/program development and implementation, quality improvement, clinical services redesign, and community/client-centred healthcare. Daniel's interests are in grass-roots community development and innovative approaches to wellbeing among LGBTQ+ people in rural, regional and remote settings.



Susan Culverston Director, Corporate Services and Company Secretary

Susan has more than 20 years' experience in management, administration and leadership across a range of environments including the corporate sector, not-for-profit organisations and both Commonwealth and State public sectors. Susan has a Doctorate in

Business Administration with the focus of her thesis being 'Collaborations in the Not for Profit Sector'. She is passionate about ensuring that organisations in the sector continue to adopt leading practices in governance and business management.



Brent Mackie Director, Policy, Strategy & Research

During his more than 30-year career Brent Mackie's work has included communications, media and social marketing, management, population health, social research, and policy and program development. Brent has worked in numerous senior leadership roles in both government and non-

government organisations. Brent has a Master of Arts by Research in Health and Sexuality as well as degrees in sociology and communications. Brent has extensive experience in health research and is a passionate community advocate and volunteer.



Reg Domingo Director, Marketing, Communications & Fundraising

Reg is ACON's Director of Marketing, Communications and Fundraising. He has over 15 years' experience in journalism, publishing, public relations and strategic communications. He has a background in news and feature writing, as well as

radio broadcasting and digital media, specialising in LGBTQ issues. Over the years, he has held a number of senior roles in publishing overseeing editorial strategy, marketing, partnerships and business development.



Sabine D'Haeseleer EA to CEO

Sabine joined ACON in 2013 in the role of Executive Assistant to the CEO. Sabine is originally from Belgium, where she studied business administration/secretariat and languages. She has spent most of her

working life in Canada, Norway and Angola before moving to Sydney in 2001 where she continued to build her career in different sectors and industries as a Senior Executive Assistant.

OUR BOARD



Justin Koonin, President

BSc (Hons), PhD, CFA, FAICD

Justin has worked within LGBTQ community organisations for almost twenty years. Internationally, he is a member of the Universal Health Coverage Political Panel and a former co-chair of UHC2030, the global multistakeholder partnership for Universal Health Coverage, as well as a member of multiple WHO expert panels. Justin is Distinguished Fellow and Honorary Professorial Fellow at The George Institute for Global Health, and Adjunct Associate Professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Health at the

University of New South Wales. He is also an Advisory Governor of the Commonwealth Foundation, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-Profit Chairs Advisory Forum. He is trained as a mathematician, and currently works as an investment analyst. He has also worked as a postdoctoral research associate (at the University of Sydney), and as a consultant in the areas of predictive analytics and data.

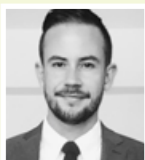


Louisa Degenhardt AO, Vice President

BA (Hons), MPsychology (Clinical), PhD

Louisa is UNSW Scientia Professor, NHMRC Senior Principal Research Fellow and Deputy Director at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW. She was awarded her PhD in 2003, examining the comorbidity of drug use and mental disorders in the Australian population. She has honorary Professorial appointments at University of Melbourne's School of Population and Global Health, Murdoch Children's Research Institute, and University of Washington's Department of Global Health in the School of Public Health. Louisa conducts diverse

epidemiological studies including data linkage studies focusing on people with extra-medical or dependent opioid use, chronic pain, analysis of large-scale community and clinical surveys, and cohorts of young people. She is currently CI with CI Dore and Farrell on an NHMRC Program Grant focussed on drug dependence and viral hepatitis. In 2023, Louisa was announced as an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) in recognition of her distinguished services to medical research, particularly addiction and mental disorders, to psychology, and to professional associations.



Atari Metcalf

MD, BSc

Atari is an openly trans Specialist General Practitioner with a focus on sexual and reproductive health. He completed his internship and residency at St Vincent's Hospital Sydney working across a variety of medical and surgical specialties in addition to completing secondments in paediatrics and Aboriginal health before going on to complete his Fellowship with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners. Prior to practising medicine Atari spent 15 years working

in health promotion research, policy and strategy within community and digital mental and sexual health services, as well as working as an analyst on national inquiries into asylum seeker, transgender and intersex health and human rights for the Australian Human Rights Commission. Before joining ACON's Board Atari also served as a Board Director at Suicide Prevention Australia and as co-chair of Twenty10 incorporating NSW Gay and Lesbian Counselling Services.



Benjamin Bavinton

BA (Hons), MPH, PhD

Benjamin has worked in the field of HIV prevention and research for 20 years in Australia and internationally. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, and leads the Biobehavioural HIV Prevention Research Group. His research focuses on the biomedical, behavioural and epidemiological

aspects of HIV prevention among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men and transgender women in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region. He worked at ACON in peer education with gay, bisexual and queer men from 2004 to 2010, which also included 12 months working at UNAIDS in Bangkok, Thailand.



Christian Dunk

BA (IR) Hons

Christian has extensive experience in political advisory roles after nearly a decade of service with the NSW Government. In these roles, Christian developed expertise in sustainability, nature and climate policy development and implementation.

He now works in the energy sector on regulation and market development. Christian is an alumnus of Sydney University and the Australian National University where he completed Masters and Honours degrees, respectively.



Jason Glanville

Jason is a Wiradjuri start-up founder with extensive governance expertise and experience across community, corporate, government and philanthropy. He works as an adviser on strategy, leadership, governance and systems transformation working with leaders across the commercial, for-purpose, and creative sectors to create platforms for sustainable change. Jason is a Co-founder and Director of Native Foodways, was the inaugural Executive Director of the Atlantic Fellows for Social Equity program and creator and inaugural CEO of the National Centre

of Indigenous Excellence. He was part of the start-up team that built Reconciliation Australia and served on its Board for five years. He is currently Chair of the Foundation for Young Australians and a member of the Board of the GO Foundation and, until recently, was Chair of PwC Indigenous Consulting and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute. Jason is an Adjunct Professor at the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research at University of Technology Sydney and a member of the Indigenous Advisory Group at the Art Gallery of NSW.



Somali Cerise

BA, MSc

Somali Cerise is a gender equality and human rights expert with 20 years' experience leading policy and research initiatives across Australia and globally. She currently works on a range of gender equality initiatives with the Elizabeth Broderick & Co, Champions of Change Coalition, UN Women, and the University of Sydney. She has previously been a Convener of the NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby,

a board member of the Inner City Legal Centre and Aurora Foundation. Somali is also a Member of the Policy and Advisory Committee for the National Women's Safety Alliance and an Honorary Associate Professor at the Australian National University Gender Institute. She has a BA (UTS) and a Master of Science (Human Rights) (London School of Economics and Political Science).



Steven Berveling

SJD, BSc, LLB

Steven is a barrister specialising in town planning and environmental law. He has been HIV+ since May 1996, and lives life to the full. He is an avid competitive cyclist and amongst other races has competed 3x in the Race Across America, has won numerous golds in Gay Games, and holds

the Australian record for the Hour Record (age). Steven seeks to confirm that HIV is no barrier to sport, both physically and socially, and that stigma and discrimination against HIV+ people is totally unwarranted. Steven speaks regularly to a range of groups about living with HIV.



Zoé de Saram PSM

BAGrEc, MAICD

Zoé is a highly respected professional with considerable experience in the design and execution of strategy, policy, and service delivery. She has held a number of senior executive roles in the NSW Government and has a deep understanding of the architecture of government and the way it operates. She is also very well connected to a diverse range of key personnel across Federal, State and Local governments. In February 2021, Zoé was appointed

to the role of Director, Performance Audit, at the Audit Office of NSW. Prior to that she was Executive Advisor, Public Sector Practice at the North Point Consulting Group, a boutique firm specialising in designing and executing strategy, digitally enabled business models and business transformation. She is actively involved in raising awareness about breast cancer and supporting women recovering from breast cancer.

FINANCIAL REPORT

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

ACON HEALTH LIMITED
ABN38136883915

The financial statements cover ACON Health Limited as a Consolidated entity consisting of ACON Health Limited and the entities it controlled at the end of, or during, the year. The financial statements are presented in Australian dollars, which is ACON Health Limited's functional and presentation currency.

ACON Health Limited is a not-for-profit unlisted public company limited by guarantee, incorporated and domiciled in Australia. Its registered office and principal place of business is:

414 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW 2010.

A description of the nature of the Consolidated entity's operations and its principal activities are included in the Directors' report, which is not part of the financial statements.

The financial statements were authorised for issue, in accordance with a resolution of Directors, on 11 September 2024. The Directors have the power to amend and reissue the financial statements.

The Directors present their report, together with the financial statements, on the consolidated entity (referred to hereafter as the ‘Consolidated entity’) consisting of ACON Health Limited (referred to hereafter as the ‘Company’ or ‘parent entity’) and the entities it controlled at the end of, or during, the year ended 30 June 2024.

DIRECTORS

The following persons were directors of ACON Health Limited during the whole of the financial year and up to the date of this report:

- Justin Koonin
 - Louisa Degenhardt
 - Atari Metcalf
 - Benjamin Bavinton
- Christian Dunk
 - Jason Glanville
 - Julie Mooney-Somers
 - Somali Cerise
- Steven Berveling
 - Zo   de Saram

ACON BOARD

Meetings of Directors

The number of meetings of the Company’s Board of Directors (‘the Board’) held during the year ended 30 June 2024, and the number of meetings attended by each Director were:

ACON Health Board meetings - Attendance From 1 July 2023 - 30 June 2024		
Board member	Meetings Held	Meetings Attended
Justin Koonin	7	7
Louisa Degenhardt	7	7
Atari Metcalf	7	5
Benjamin Bavinton	7	7
Christian Dunk	7	6
Jason Glanville*	7	4
Julie Mooney-Somers**	3	3
Somali Cerise	7	4
Steven Berveling	7	7
Zo�� de Saram	7	7

Held: represents the number of meetings held during the time the Director held office.

*Jason Glanville was elected at 2023 ACON Health AGM.

**Julie Mooney-Somers’ Director term expired at the 2023 ACON Health AGM.

PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES

During the financial year the principal continuing activities of the Consolidated entity consisted of:

Ending HIV transmission among gay men and other homosexually active men by:

- Increasing the knowledge of gay men and other men who have sex with men about when to seek a HIV and STI test.
- Using innovative, targeted engagement strategies to motivate gay men and other men who have sex with men to test more regularly.
- Increasing the number of HIV positive gay men who understand the benefits of accessing treatment earlier.
- Sustaining the safe sex knowledge of gay men and men who have sex with men utilising both condom and non-condom- based risk reduction strategies.
- Advocating for better access to home-based or self-administered HIV testing and access to Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis for those who would most benefit.
- Reducing psychosocial barriers to testing and treatment uptake for people who are newly diagnosed through education, counselling, and peer support.
- Ensure the range of HIV Health Promotion programs continues to relevant and useful for people with HIV.
- Developing a HIV Health Promotion Strategy focussing on post diagnosis support, living well with HIV and planning for healthy ageing.

Promoting the health throughout life of LGBTQ people and people with HIV by:

- Providing HIV Care and Support services including: Counselling, Enhanced Primary Care, Community Support Network Newly Diagnosed Service
- Reviewing our current care and support programs to ensure they continue to meet the needs of people with HIV.
- Intensifying our focus on immediate post diagnosis care and support to prevent infection rates and improve the health outcomes for newly diagnosed.
- Enhancing our intake and case management processes to ensure person centred, tailored responses.
- Enhancing our treatments advice and adherence support capacity to educate people with HIV about the benefits of earlier and increased treatment uptake.
- Developing programs to address the health areas that have the most negative health impact on people living with HIV, e.g Enhanced Primary Care.
- Addressing substance support use co-morbidities through counselling from the substance use service, Needle Syringe Programs, harm minimisation support and referrals to drug and alcohol treatment services.
- Addressing the health disparities experienced by the LGBTQ community and to reduce the impacts of negative health determinants including: Alcohol and Other Drugs Mental Health and Wellbeing Smoking, Homophobic and Transphobic Violence Healthy Ageing and Aged Care, Domestic and Family Violence

Continuing to strengthen organisational capacity and sustainability by:

- Ensuring our infrastructure and systems enable staff to effectively deliver programs and services to rural and remote NSW.
- Investigating and implementing new partnerships, fee for service models and social enterprise approaches to diversify our funding base.
- Exploring opportunities to grow discretionary revenue through fundraising, new grants and fee for service.
- Continuing to invest in building our data collection, analysis evaluation and knowledge management capacity.
- Building the research capacity of our staff through seeding grants and partnerships with academic institutions.
- Continuing to build our presence, capacity and effectiveness in the digital space to increase reach and impact.

Advocating and Promoting Social Inclusion by:

- Providing LGBTQ employees within Australian workplaces targeted initiatives via education and benchmarking and through the Pride in Diversity Program.
- Establishing Partnerships with government, other NGO's, health care providers, researchers, and affected communities
- Ensuring all direct LGBTQ services are sensitive to the needs of and available to all of our communities,
- Ensuring all of our training packages for service providers are inclusive of our populations,
- Ensuring our advocacy work in the areas of discrimination and human rights are inclusive of the needs and views of all our communities and is conducted in consultation with relevant stakeholders,
- Developing strategies, in collaboration with key partners to maximise inclusiveness and reach of health promotion strategies.
- Developing 'population specific' communication strategies to ensure our programs are visible to all of the communities they are intended to reach.

Performance measures (key performance indicators)

- A decrease in HIV infections among gay men and other MSM in NSW
- An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by people with HIV
- A reduction in the number of people in our communities who experience negative health and other outcomes as a result drug and alcohol use.
- An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by women in our communities
- An increase in reported levels of health and wellbeing by older people in our communities
- An increase in ACON's involvement with LGBTQ health and HIV/AIDS policy and programs delivery at the local, national, and international levels.
- Increase the capacity of ACON to effectively use and manage its resources.

Review of operations

Operations for the year ended 30 June 2024 resulted in a reportable surplus of \$44,119 (30 June 2023: reportable deficit of \$257,735). The adjusted net surplus after accounting for AASB 16 Leases adopted in 2021 is as follows:

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Net surplus under old accounting standard AASB 117 Leases	202,703	62,008
Impact of new accounting standard AASB 16 Leases	(326,000)	(446,000)
Net Deficit	(123,297)	(383,992)
Gain on fair value of investment	167,416	126,257
Reportable surplus/ (deficit)	44,119	(257,735)

ACON Health Limited has navigated a challenging financial year, marked by increased salary expenditures due to a competitive job market and inflationary pressures impacting operational costs.

The acquisition of new grants for critical initiatives and strategic partnerships significantly bolstered our financial position. Additionally, self-generated funds from Pride Inclusion Program memberships, fee-for-service activities, and fundraising efforts provided substantial income, offsetting expenditures not covered by grants. This enabled us to enhance our service coverage for LGBTQ communities.

ACON concluded the financial year with a net surplus of \$202,703 before adjustment of Lease accounting of \$326,000. The Net deficit after lease accounting is \$123,297. After considering the Gain in fair value adjustment of \$167,416, the reportable surplus is \$44,119.

This report is made in accordance with a resolution of Directors.

On behalf of the Directors



Justin Koonin
President



Louisa Degenhardt
Vice President

11 September 2024

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Income			
Revenue	3	26,056,112	23,010,288
Fundraising income		812,873	567,912
Other Income	4	1,097,989	938,171
Total		27,966,974	24,516,371
Expenditure			
Salaries & associated costs		(18,223,568)	(15,934,245)
Depreciation and amortisation expense	5	(2,421,242)	(2,409,967)
Campaigns & Education		(1,602,629)	(1,688,373)
Communications		(146,359)	(134,577)
Finance costs	5	(585,104)	(614,548)
Cost of goods sold		(19,632)	(59,263)
Building maintenance		(481,176)	(436,056)
Donations given		(192,811)	(75,108)
Outgoings and property costs		(512,144)	(602,943)
Travel and representation		(424,265)	(388,562)
Administrative costs		(2,768,826)	(2,056,532)
Events and activities		(712,515)	(500,189)
Total		(28,090,271)	(24,900,363)
Net deficit for the year	16	(123,297)	(383,992)
Other comprehensive income			
<i>Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss</i>			
Gain on fair value of investment		167,416	126,257
Other comprehensive income for the year		167,416	126,257
Operating surplus / (deficit) of ACON Health Limited		44,119	(257,735)

The above consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	6	17,567,735	14,377,414
Trade and other receivables	7	1,886,306	1,112,119
Contract assets		204,140	55,636
Inventories		3,206	3,380
Prepayments		298,374	342,341
Total Current Assets		19,959,761	15,890,890
Non-Current Assets			
Other financial assets	8	4,642,750	4,281,513
Property, plant and equipment	9	669,799	623,282
Right-of-use assets	10	12,759,660	14,125,426
Total Non-Current Assets		18,072,209	19,030,221
Total Assets		38,031,970	34,921,111
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	11	722,428	709,689
Lease liabilities	12	1,905,625	1,812,881
Employee benefits	13	2,834,925	2,645,365
Contract liabilities	14	15,429,565	11,510,194
Total Current Liabilities		20,892,543	16,678,129
Non-current Liabilities			
Lease Liability	12	12,871,545	14,019,219
Total Non-current Liabilities		12,871,545	14,019,219
Total Liabilities		33,764,088	30,697,348
Net Assets		4,267,882	4,223,763
Accumulated Funds			
Reserves	15	2,822,728	2,655,312
Retained Surplus	16	1,445,154	1,568,451
Total Accumulated Funds		4,267,882	4,223,763

The above consolidated statement of financial position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN STAKEHOLDERS' FUNDS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Investment revaluation reserve \$	Funds reserve \$	Retained surplus \$	Total funds \$
Consolidated				
Balance at 1 July 2022	(63,757)	2,530,804	2,014,451	4,481,498
Net deficit for the year	-	-	(383,992)	(383,992)
Other comprehensive income for the year	126,257	-	-	126,257
Total comprehensive income for the year	126,257	-	(383,992)	(257,735)
Transfer to funds reserve	-	62,008	(62,008)	-
Balance at 30 June 2023	62,500	2,592,812	1,568,451	4,223,763

Consolidated				
Balance at 1 July 2023	62,500	2,592,812	1,568,451	4,223,763
Net deficit for the year	-	-	(123,297)	(123,297)
Other comprehensive income for the year	167,416	-	-	167,416
Total comprehensive income for the year	167,416	-	(123,297)	44,119
Balance at 30 June 2024	229,916	2,592,812	1,445,154	4,267,882

The above consolidated statement of changes in stakeholders' funds should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from customers, granting bodies & fundraising (inclusive of goods & services tax)		28,861,825	28,255,119
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods & services tax)		(23,506,518)	(24,031,888)
		5,355,307	4,223,231
Interest received		577,041	305,332
Interest and other finance costs paid		(585,104)	(614,548)
Net cash from operating activities		5,347,244	3,914,015
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, plant & equipment	9	(378,255)	(228,306)
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment	9	63,435	-
Net cash used in investing activities		(314,820)	(228,306)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Principal repayments for leases		(1,842,103)	(2,291,157)
Net cash used in financing activities		(1,842,103)	(2,291,157)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		3,190,321	1,394,552
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		14,377,414	12,982,862
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	6	17,567,735	14,377,414

The above consolidated statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Note 1. Material accounting policy information

The pThe accounting policies that are material to the Consolidated entity are set out either in the respective notes or below. The accounting policies adopted are consistent with those of the previous financial year, unless otherwise stated.

NEW OR AMENDED ACCOUNTING STANDARDS AND INTERPRETATIONS ADOPTED

The Consolidated entity has adopted all of the new or amended Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (‘AASB’) that are mandatory for the current reporting period.

Any new or amended Accounting Standards or Interpretations that are not yet mandatory have not been early adopted.

The adoption of these Accounting Standards and Interpretations did not have any significant impact on the financial performance or position of the Consolidated entity.

BASIS OF PREPARATION

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (‘AASB’) and the Australian Charities and Not- For-Profits Commission Act 2022, as appropriate for not for-profit oriented entities.

Historical cost convention

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention, except for, where applicable, the revaluation of financial assets and liabilities at fair value through profit or loss, financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income, investment properties, certain classes of property, plant and equipment and derivative financial instruments.

Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the Consolidated entity’s accounting policies. The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements, are disclosed in note 2.

PRINCIPLES OF CONSOLIDATION

The consolidated financial statements incorporate the assets and liabilities of all subsidiaries of ACON Health Limited (‘Company’ or ‘parent entity’) as at 30 June 2024 and the results of all subsidiaries for the year then ended. ACON Health Limited and its subsidiaries together are referred to in these financial statements as the ‘Consolidated entity’.

Subsidiaries are all those entities over which the Consolidated entity has control. The Consolidated entity controls an entity when the Consolidated entity is exposed to, or has rights to, variable returns from its involvement with the entity and has the ability to affect those returns through its power to direct the activities of the entity. Subsidiaries are fully consolidated from the date on which control is transferred to the Consolidated entity. They are de-consolidated from the date that control ceases.

Intercompany transactions, balances and unrealised gains on transactions between entities in the Consolidated entity are eliminated. Unrealised losses are also eliminated unless the transaction provides evidence of the impairment of the asset transferred. Accounting policies of subsidiaries have been changed where necessary to ensure consistency with the policies adopted by the Consolidated entity.

The acquisition of subsidiaries is accounted for using the acquisition method of accounting. A change in ownership interest, without the loss of control, is accounted for as an equity transaction, where the difference between the consideration transferred and the book value of the share of the non-controlling interest acquired is recognised directly in equity attributable to the parent.

Where the Consolidated entity loses control over a subsidiary, it derecognises the assets including goodwill, liabilities and non-controlling interest in the subsidiary together with any cumulative translation differences recognised in equity. The Consolidated entity recognises the fair value of the consideration received and the fair value of any investment retained together with any gain or loss in profit or loss.

REVENUE RECOGNITION

The Consolidated entity recognises revenue as follows:

Revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the Consolidated entity is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the Consolidated entity: identifies the contract with a customer; identifies the performance obligations in the contract; determines the transaction price which takes into account estimates of variable consideration and the time value of money; allocates the transaction price to the separate performance obligations on the basis of the relative stand-alone selling price of each distinct good or service to be delivered; and recognises revenue when or as each performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods or services promised.

Variable consideration within the transaction price, if any, reflects concessions provided to the customer such as discounts, rebates and refunds, any potential bonuses receivable from the customer and any other contingent events. Such estimates are determined using either the ‘expected value’ or ‘most likely amount’ method. The measurement of variable consideration is subject to a constraining principle whereby revenue will only be recognised to the extent that it is highly probable that a significant reversal in the amount of cumulative revenue recognised will not occur. The measurement constraint continues until the uncertainty associated with the variable consideration is subsequently resolved. Amounts received that are subject to the constraining principle are recognised as a refund liability.

Sales revenue

Events, fundraising and raffles recognised when received or receivable.

Donations

Donations recognised at the time the pledge is made.

Grants

Grant revenue is recognised in profit or loss when the company satisfies the performance obligations stated within the funding agreements.

If conditions are attached to the grant which must be satisfied before the company is eligible to retain the contribution, the grant will be recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until those conditions are satisfied.

Fundraising income

When the Consolidated entity receives donations or bequests, it assesses whether the funding has an enforceable contract and has sufficiently specific performance obligations in accordance with AASB 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers. Where the funding has no enforceable contract or does not have sufficiently specific performance obligations, the Consolidated entity recognises revenue in accordance with he recognition requirements of AASB 1058 Income of Not-for-Profit Entities.

Interest

Interest revenue is recognised as interest accrues using the effective interest method. This is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and allocating the interest income over the relevant period using the effective interest rate, which is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset to the net carrying amount of the financial asset.

Other revenue

Other revenue is recognised when it is received or when the right to receive payment is established.

Voluntary services

The Consolidated entity has elected to not recognise volunteer services as either revenue or other form of contribution received. As such, any related consumption or capitalisation of such resources received is also not recognised.

INCOME TAX

ACON Health Limited is a Health Promotion Charity and the AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated is a Public Benevolent Institution. As such, both are exempt from paying income tax.

CURRENT AND NON-CURRENT CLASSIFICATION

Assets and liabilities are presented in the statement of financial position based on current and non-current classification.

An asset is classified as current when: it is either expected to be realised or intended to be sold or consumed in the Consolidated entity’s normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting period; or the asset is cash or cash equivalent unless restricted from being exchanged or used to settle a liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other assets are classified as non-current.

A liability is classified as current when: it is either expected to be settled in the Consolidated entity’s normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting period; or there is no unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other liabilities are classified as non-current.

Inventories are represented by vitamin stock and are stated at the lower of cost or net realisable value on the basis of first in first out.

INVESTMENTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL ASSETS

Investments and other financial assets are initially measured at fair value. Transaction costs are included as part of the initial measurement, except for financial assets at fair value through profit or loss. Such assets are subsequently measured at either amortised cost or fair value depending on their classification. Classification is determined based on both the business model within which such assets are held and the contractual cash flow characteristics of the financial asset unless an accounting mismatch is being avoided.

Financial assets are derecognised when the rights to receive cash flows have expired or have been transferred and the Consolidated entity has transferred substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership. When there is no reasonable expectation of recovering part or all of a financial asset, its carrying value is written off.

Loans and receivables are subsequently carried at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss are financial assets held for trading. A financial asset is classified in this category if acquired principally for the purpose of selling in the short term. Derivatives are classified as held for trading unless they are designated as hedges. Assets in this category are classified as current assets if they are expected to be settled within 12 months; otherwise they are classified as non-current.

Loans and receivables

Loans and receivables are non-derivative financial assets with fixed or determinable payments that are not quoted in an active market. They are included in current assets, except for those with maturities greater than 12 months after the reporting period which are classified as non-current assets.

Financial assets at amortised cost

For loans and receivables, the amount of the loss is measured as the difference between the asset’s carrying amount and the present value of estimated future cash flows (excluding future credit losses that have not been incurred) discounted at the financial asset’s original effective interest rate. The carrying amount of the asset is reduced and the amount of the loss is recognised in the profit or loss. If a loan has a variable interest rate, the discount rate for measuring any impairment loss is the current effective interest rate determined under the contract. As a practical expedient, the Group may measure impairment on the basis of an instrument’s fair value using an observable market price. If, in a subsequent period, the amount of the impairment loss decreases and the decrease can be related objectively to an event occurring after the impairment was recognised (such as an improvement in the debtor’s credit rating), the reversal of the previously recognised impairment loss is recognised in the profit or loss.

Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income

Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income include equity investments which the Consolidated entity intends to hold for the foreseeable future and has irrevocably elected to classify them as such upon initial recognition.

Impairment of financial assets

The Consolidated entity recognises a loss allowance for expected credit losses on financial assets which are either measured at amortised cost or fair value through other comprehensive income. The measurement of the loss allowance depends upon the Consolidated entity’s assessment at the end of each reporting period as to whether the financial instrument’s credit risk has increased significantly since initial recognition, based on reasonable and supportable information that is available, without undue cost or effort to obtain.

Where there has not been a significant increase in exposure to credit risk since initial recognition, a 12-month expected credit loss allowance is estimated. This represents a portion of the asset’s lifetime expected credit losses that is attributable to a default event that is possible within the next 12 months. Where a financial asset has become credit impaired or where it is determined that credit risk has increased significantly, the loss allowance is based on the asset’s lifetime expected credit losses. The amount of expected credit loss recognised is measured on the basis of the probability weighted present value of anticipated cash shortfalls over the life of the instrument discounted at the original effective interest rate.

For financial assets mandatorily measured at fair value through other comprehensive income, the loss allowance is recognised in other comprehensive income with a corresponding expense through profit or loss. In all other cases, the loss allowance reduces the asset’s carrying value with a corresponding expense through profit or loss.

The Consolidated entity is gifted works of art from time to time. Works gifted are valued at the time of the gift and are capitalised at that amount. Works of Art are valued at regular intervals at the Directors’ discretion. Revaluations reflect independent assessments of the fair market value of works of art.

IMPAIRMENT OF NON-FINANCIAL ASSETS

Non-financial assets are reviewed for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognised for the amount by which the asset’s carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount.

Recoverable amount is the higher of an asset’s fair value less costs of disposal and value-in-use. The value-in-use is the present value of the estimated future cash flows relating to the asset using a pre-tax discount rate specific to the asset or cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs. Assets that do not have independent cash flows are grouped together to form a cash-generating unit.

Comparatives

Where necessary, comparative figures have been reclassified to conform with the changes in presentation in the current year.

Note 2. Critical accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts in the financial statements. Management continually evaluates its judgements and estimates in relation to assets, liabilities, contingent liabilities, revenue and expenses. Management bases its judgements, estimates and assumptions on historical experience and on other various factors, including expectations of future events, management believes to be reasonable under the circumstances. The resulting accounting judgements and estimates will seldom equal the related actual results. The judgements, estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities (refer to the respective notes) within the next financial year are discussed below.

Revenue recognition

To determine if a grant contract should be accounted for under AASB 1058 or AASB 15, the Group has to determine if the contract is 'enforceable' and contains 'sufficiently specific' performance obligations. When assessing if the performance obligations are 'sufficiently specific', the Group has applied significant judgement in this regard by performing a detailed analysis of the terms and conditions contained in the grant contracts, review of accompanying documentation (e.g. activity work plans) and holding discussions with relevant parties.

Income recognition from grants received by the Group has been appropriately accounted for under AASB 1058 or AASB 15 based on the assessment performed.

Employee benefits provision

As discussed in note 1, the liability for employee benefits expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date are recognised and measured at the present value of the estimated future cash flows to be made in respect of all employees at the reporting date. In determining the present value of the liability, estimates of attrition rates and pay increases through promotion and inflation have been taken into account.

Note 3. Revenue

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Revenue under AASB 15 (recognised over time):		
NSW Department of Health grants	15,918,348	13,782,740
Local health districts grants	2,130,532	861,132
Other grants	2,133,544	3,267,292
Membership	3,089	3,397
Total	20,185,513	17,914,561
Revenue from contracts with customers under AASB 15 (recognised at a point in time)		
Sale of materials	118,880	192,669
Sale of vitamins	6,406	6,388
Fee for service	5,408,997	4,503,088
	5,534,283	4,702,145
Rental revenue	336,316	393,582
Total	26,056,112	23,010,288

Note 4. Other income

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Interest income	806,260	463,370
Other income	291,729	474,801
Total	1,097,989	938,171

Note 5. Expenses

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Net deficit includes the following specific expenses:		
Depreciation		
Right-of-use asset	2,152,939	2,152,491
Plant and equipment	268,303	257,476
Total depreciation	2,421,242	2,409,967
Finance costs		
Interest and finance charges paid/payable on lease liabilities	585,104	614,548

Note 6. Cash and cash equivalents

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current assets		
Cash on hand	3,425	3,425
Cash at bank	17,564,310	14,373,989
Total	17,567,735	14,377,414

Accounting policy for cash and cash equivalents

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions, other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

Note 7. Trade and other receivables

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current assets		
Trade receivables	1,886,306	1,112,119

The amount of the provision for doubtful debts was \$nil (30 June 2023: \$nil). All of the group's trade and other receivables have been reviewed for indicators of impairment. Certain trade receivables were found to be written off \$nil (30 June 2023: \$24,751) has been recorded accordingly within other expenses.

Accounting policy for trade and other receivables

Trade receivables are initially recognised at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any allowance for expected credit losses. Trade receivables are generally due for settlement within 30 days.

The Consolidated entity has applied the simplified approach to measuring expected credit losses, which uses a lifetime expected loss allowance. To measure the expected credit losses, trade receivables have been grouped based on days overdue.

Collectability of trade debtors is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Debts which are known to be uncollectible are written off by reducing the carrying amount directly. The group makes use of a simplified approach in accounting for trade and other receivables as well as contract assets and records the loss allowance at the amount equal to the expected lifetime credit losses. In using this practical expedient, the group uses its historical experience, external indicators and forward-looking information to calculate the expected credit losses using a provision matrix. A provision for impairment of trade receivables is used when there is objective evidence that the group will not be able to collect all amounts due according to the original terms of the receivables.

The amount of the impairment loss is recognised in profit or loss within other expenses. When a trade receivable for which an impairment allowance had been recognised becomes uncollectible in a subsequent period, it is written off against the allowance account.

Note 8. Other financial assets

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Non-current assets		
Investment portfolio	4,610,396	4,249,159
Term deposit	32,354	32,354
Total	4,642,750	4,281,513

The investment portfolio represents a managed fund and has been valued based on their quoted unit price.

Note 9. Property, plant and equipment

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Non-current assets		
Leasehold improvements - at cost	1,747,878	1,794,015
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(1,636,498)	(1,564,167)
Total	111,380	229,848
Office and IT equipment - at cost	1,040,643	1,058,454
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(999,516)	(991,321)
Total	41,127	67,133
Office and IT equipment - at cost	2,661,996	2,311,706
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(2,291,354)	(2,132,055)
Total	370,642	179,651
Library works of art - at cost	146,650	146,650
Total	669,799	623,282

Reconciliations

Reconciliations of the written down values at the beginning and end of the current financial year are set out below:

	Leasehold improvements \$	Furniture & fittings \$	Office & IT equipment \$	Library works of art \$	Totals \$
Balance at 1 July 2023	229,848	67,133	179,651	146,650	623,282
Additions	17,300	1,166	359,789	-	378,255
Disposals	(63,435)	-	-	-	(63,435)
Depreciation expense	(72,333)	(27,171)	(168,799)	-	(268,303)
Balance at 30 June 2024	111,380	41,128	370,641	146,650	669,799

Accounting policy for property, plant and equipment

Plant and equipment is stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the items.

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis to write off the net cost of each item of property, plant and equipment (excluding land) over their expected useful lives as follows:

Class of asset	Useful life
Leasehold improvements	10 years
Furniture and Fittings	2-5 years
Office and IT Equipment	2-5 years
Library works of art	The residual value is equal to the cost

The residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at each reporting date.

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when there is no future economic benefit to the Consolidated entity. Gains and losses between the carrying amount and the disposal proceeds are taken to profit or loss. Any revaluation surplus reserve relating to the item disposed of is transferred directly to retained profits.

Leasehold improvements

The cost of fit out of ACON’s head office leased at 414 Elizabeth St, Surry Hills, has been capitalised to leasehold improvement and is being amortised over the lease term of 10 years.

The cost of extensions to the Hunter branch on premises leased at 129 Maitland Road, Islington has been capitalised to Leasehold Improvements and is being amortised over the lease term of 10 years.

Leasehold improvements are depreciated over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the assets, whichever is shorter.

Note 10. Right-of-use assets

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Non-current assets		
Land and buildings - right-of-use	23,108,177	22,321,004
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(10,348,517)	(8,195,578)
Total	12,759,660	14,125,426

Reconciliations

Reconciliations of the written down values at the beginning and end of the current financial year are set out below:

	Land and buildings \$
Balance at 1 July 2023	14,125,426
Additions	787,173
Depreciation expense	(2,152,939)
Balance at 30 June 2024	12,759,660

Accounting policy for right-of-use assets

A right-of-use asset is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The right-of-use asset is measured at cost, which comprises the initial amount of the lease liability, adjusted for, as applicable, any lease payments made at or before the commencement date net of any lease incentives received, any initial direct costs incurred, and, except where included in the cost of inventories, an estimate of costs expected to be incurred for dismantling and removing the underlying asset, and restoring the site or asset.

Right-of-use assets are depreciated on a straight-line basis over the unexpired period of the lease or the estimated useful life of the asset, whichever is the shorter. Where the Consolidated entity expects to obtain ownership of the leased asset at the end of the lease term, the depreciation is over its estimated useful life. Right-of use assets are subject to impairment or adjusted for any remeasurement of lease liabilities.

The Consolidated entity has elected not to recognise a right-of-use asset and corresponding lease liability for short-term leases with terms of 12 months or less and leases of low-value assets. Lease payments on these assets are expensed to profit or loss as incurred.

Note 11. Trade and other payables

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current liabilities		
Trade payables	152,417	162,120
Accrued expenses	176,259	88,018
Goods & services tax net payable	393,752	459,551
Total	722,428	709,689

Accounting policy for trade and other payables

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the Consolidated entity prior to the end of the financial year and which are unpaid. Due to their short-term nature they are measured at amortised cost and are not discounted. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

Included is the Pride in Diversity program includes annual membership paid by participating organisations. The revenue is recognised over the membership period and hence the deferred/(unearned) revenue represents that which is yet to meet the performance criteria.

Note 12. Lease liabilities

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current liabilities		
Lease liability	1,905,625	1,812,881
Non-current liabilities		
Sale of materials	12,871,545	14,019,219
Total	14,777,170	15,832,100
Future lease payments		
Within one year	2,548,542	2,386,753
One to five years	10,312,181	9,562,585
More than five years	2,547,255	6,553,325
Total	15,407,978	18,502,663

Accounting policy for lease liabilities

A lease liability is recognised at the commencement date of a lease. The lease liability is initially recognised at the present value of the lease payments to be made over the term of the lease, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease or, if that rate cannot be readily determined, the Consolidated entity's incremental borrowing rate. Lease payments comprise of fixed payments less any lease incentives receivable, variable lease payments that depend on an index or a rate, amounts expected to be paid under residual value guarantees, exercise price of a purchase option when the exercise of the option is reasonably certain to occur, and any anticipated termination penalties. The variable lease payments that do not depend on an index or a rate are expensed in the period in which they are incurred.

Lease liabilities are measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method. The carrying amounts are remeasured if there is a change in the following: future lease payments arising from a change in an index or a rate used; residual guarantee; lease term; certainty of a purchase option and termination penalties. When a lease liability is remeasured, an adjustment is made to the corresponding right-of use asset, or to profit or loss if the carrying amount of the right-of-use asset is fully written down.

Note 13. Employee benefits

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current liabilities		
Annual leave	1,196,713	1,259,111
Long service leave	1,638,212	1,386,254
Total	2,834,925	2,645,365

Accounting policy for employee benefits

Short-term employee benefits

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and long service leave expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled.

Note 14. Contract liabilities

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Current liabilities		
Grants in advance	13,148,733	9,371,338
Deferred revenue	2,280,832	2,138,856
Total	15,429,565	11,510,194

Accounting policy for contract liabilities

Contract liabilities represent the Consolidated entity's obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer and are recognised when a customer pays consideration, or when the Consolidated entity recognises a receivable to reflect its unconditional right to consideration (whichever is earlier) before the Consolidated entity has transferred the goods or services to the customer.

Note 15. Reserves

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Investment revaluation reserve	229,916	62,500
Funds Reserve	2,592,812	2,592,812
Total	2,822,728	2,655,312

Investment revaluation reserve

This reserve reflects the changes in the fair value of the Escala investment and artwork.

Funds reserve

This reserve contains funds set aside for unexpected obligations or emergencies.

Movements in reserves

Movements in each class of reserve during the current financial year are set out below:

	Investment revaluation reserve \$	Funds reserve \$	Total \$
Balance at 1 July 2023	62,500	2,592,812	2,655,312
Revaluation	167,416	-	167,416
Balance at 30 June 2024	229,916	2,592,812	2,822,728

Note 16. Retained surplus

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Retained surplus at the beginning of the financial year	1,568,451	1,952,443
Net deficit for the year	(123,297)	(383,992)
Retained surplus at the end of the financial year	1,445,154	1,568,451

Note 17. Remuneration of auditors

During the financial year the following fees were paid or payable for services provided by Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd, the auditor of the Company:

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Audit services - Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd		
Lease liability Audit of the financial statements	48,925	42,715
Other services - Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd		
Assistance with compilation of financial statements	5,279	-
Total	54,204	42,715

Note 18. Related party transactions

Parent entity

ACON Health Limited is the parent entity.

Subsidiaries

Interests in subsidiaries are set out in note 20.

Transactions with related parties

There were no transactions with related parties during the current and previous financial year.

Receivable from and payable to related parties

There were no trade receivables from or trade payables to related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

Loans to/from related parties

There were no loans to or from related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

Note 19. Charitable fundraising act 1991

Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (the Act) prescribes the manner in which fundraising appeals are conducted, controlled and reported. ACON Health Limited was issued with an authority to fundraise by the Office of Charities to fundraise for the period 4 May 2022 to 3 May 2027.

The Entity has disclosed the income statement, balance sheet and related notes below in respect of fundraising appeals it conducted during the year. These disclosures have been made in accordance with Section 6 of the Charitable Fundraising Authority Conditions, which have been issued to the Entity under section 19 of the Act.

Information and declarations to be furnished under the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991.

The information disclosed below is in relation to fundraising activities undertaken by ACON Health Limited.

Income statemen

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Gross income received from fundraising	812,828	567,912
Cost of fundraising	(282,401)	(296,000)
Net proceeds from fundraising	530,427	271,912
Application of net proceeds	(530,427)	(271,912)
Net surplus from fundraising	-	-

	2024	
	Red Ribbon \$	General \$
Gross income received from fundraising	82,144	730,684
Cost of fundraising	(11,274)	(271,127)
Net proceeds from fundraising	70,870	459,557
Application of net proceeds	(70,870)	(459,557)
Net surplus from fundraising	-	-

Forms of general fundraising activities conducted during the year covered by these financial statements were: Concerts, Appeals, Bingo, Dinners and Special Nights at Venues.

The net proceeds from the Red Ribbon Appeal, and General Appeal were used for general purposes throughout the year as part of ACON Health Limited’s daily operation.

Balance sheet

	Consolidated	
	2024 \$	2023 \$
Cash at bank	-	-
Total assets	-	-
Other payables	-	-
Total liabilities	-	-
Net assets	-	-

Note 20. Interests in subsidiaries

The consolidated financial statements incorporate the assets, liabilities and results of the following subsidiary in accordance with the accounting policy described in note 1:

	Principal place of business /Country of incorporation	2024 %	2023 %
AIDS Council of New South Wales	Australia	100.00	100.00

Note 21. Economic dependency

The major source of funding for the group is an annual grant from the NSW Ministry of Health. The NSW Ministry of Health has agreed to maintain current funding levels in the 2024/2025 financial year.

Note 22. Events after the reporting period

No matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2024 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect the Consolidated entity’s operations, the results of those operations, or the Consolidated entity’s state of affairs in future financial years.

DIRECTOR’S DECLARATION

In the directors’ opinion:

- 1. The consolidated financial statements and notes are in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012, including:
 - a) giving a true and fair view of the Group’s financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its performance for the financial year ended on that date; and
 - b) comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures (including Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission Regulation 2022; and
 - c) there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Group will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.
- 2.
 - a) the financial statements and notes are in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW) and the Charitable Fundraising Regulations 1993 (NSW);
 - b) the provisions of the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW) and the regulations under this Act and the conditions attached to the authority to fundraise have been complied with; and
 - c) the internal controls exercised by the group are appropriate and effective in accounting for all income received.

This declaration is made in accordance with a resolution of the board, and is signed for and on behalf of the board by:



Justin Koonin
President



Louisa Degenhardt
Vice President

11 September 2024



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Auditor’s Independence Declaration

To the Directors of ACON Health Limited

In accordance with the requirements of section 60-40 of the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012, as lead auditor for the audit of ACON for the year ended 30 June 2024, I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there have been no contraventions of any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.



GRANT THORNTON AUDIT PTY LTD
Chartered Accountants



L J Te-Wierik
Partner - Audit & Assurance
Sydney, 11 September 2024

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Independent Auditor's Report

To the Members of ACON Health Limited

Report on the audit of the financial report

Opinion

We have audited the financial report of ACON Health Limited (the "Registered Entity") and its subsidiaries ("the Group"), which comprises the consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024, and the consolidated statement of comprehensive income, consolidated statement of changes in equity and consolidated statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies and the Directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the financial report of ACON Health Limited has been prepared in accordance with Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012*, including:

- giving a true and fair view of the Registered Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2024 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
- complying with Australian Accounting Standards *AASB 1060 General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities* and Division 60 of the *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Regulation 2013*.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the registered entity in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Information other than the financial report and auditor's report thereon

Those charged with governance are responsible for the other information. The other information comprises the information included in the Directors' Report for the year ended 30 June 2024, and the Declaration in accordance with the Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2021 (NSW) but does not include the financial report and our auditor's report thereon.

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Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial report, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial report or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated.

If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact. We have nothing to report in this regard.

Responsibilities of the Directors for the financial report

The Directors of the Registered Entity are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards *AASB 1060 General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities*, the ACNC Act, the Charitable Fundraising Act 1991 (NSW), the Charitable Fundraising Regulation 2021 (NSW), and for such internal control as the Directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the Directors are responsible for assessing the Registered Entity's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intend to liquidate the Registered Entity or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Registered Entity's financial reporting process.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial report is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: https://www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf. This description forms part of our auditor's report.



GRANT THORNTON AUDIT PTY LTD
Chartered Accountants



L J Te-Wierik
Partner – Audit & Assurance

Sydney, 11 September 2024

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OUR VISION

WE STRIVE TO BE A GLOBAL
LEADER IN COMMUNITY HEALTH,
INCLUSION AND HIV RESPONSES
FOR PEOPLE OF DIVERSE
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