

# Annual Report 2022-2023



[ACON.ORG.AU](https://www.acon.org.au)

WITH  
LOVE



# OUR PURPOSE

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

# ABOUT US



ACON acknowledges and pays respects to the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we work.

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 communities, 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](http://acon.org.au).

## ABOUT OUR COVER

The cover and design of the ACON Annual Report 2022-2023 takes its inspiration from our large-scale social marketing campaign, *With Love*, launched and implemented during Sydney WorldPride.

The campaign was a community-driven endeavour featuring local community members across the LGBTQ spectrum. We thank all those who participated and engaged with the campaign during Sydney WorldPride.

Learn more about the campaign on page 20.



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ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill (left) and  
ACON President Justin Koonin

# PRESIDENT & CEO MESSAGE

This year, we have continued to be inspired by our communities' strength, resilience, compassion, empathy and generosity of spirit.

We saw this on full display at Sydney WorldPride, where hundreds of volunteers answered the call to help us support our communities' health, safety and welfare during the festivities.

In the weeks that followed, when LGBTQ people were once again targeted with hate and violence, especially our trans kin, our communities rallied to support each other.

As we responded to mpox, which for much of the year was a global public health emergency, our communities moved to protect their health and that of their partners.

During difficult and challenging times, we rise. We are stronger together.

We thank everyone in our communities for always looking out for each other, for standing up when it matters, and for giving help and comfort when it is needed.

Thank you, too, for engaging and connecting with ACON throughout the year. Your support continues to inspire us as we work to improve the health and wellbeing of sexuality and gender diverse communities and fulfil our mission.

As we turn the page of our Strategic Plan over from the third year to the fourth, we reflect on our achievements that have contributed towards meeting our objectives.

In 2022/23, we continued to make progress towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmissions.

Testing rates and PrEP use are rebounding to pre-pandemic levels

and data shows early-stage infections continue to decline. This is good news. However, HIV notifications continue to be driven largely by late diagnoses and among those born overseas.

ACON is continuing to work with the NSW Ministry of Health and other partners in implementing strategies that ensure prevention, testing and treatment messages and services are reaching all populations in our communities.

On delivering excellent, client-centred care and innovative community health programming, we also made positive strides. We continued to develop programs and deliver services to meet the health needs of our communities in areas such as LGBTQ health, alcohol and other drugs, domestic and family violence, cancer prevention and screening, and mental health and wellbeing.

This year has seen an increased demand for our counselling, care coordination and support services and ACON staff, counsellors and peer workers have stepped up to the mark to ensure our communities are getting the help and support they need.

Giving voice to our communities and strengthening inclusion is another key strategic focus for ACON and this year, we continued to deliver initiatives and make progress in trans health, community safety, healthy ageing, policy and research, and social inclusion.

Reaching LGBTQ communities in areas outside inner Sydney is key to achieving our objectives and throughout the year, we continued to support sexuality and gender diverse people in Greater Western Sydney and regional NSW.

And we forged ahead with efforts to build a strong and resilient

organisation by continuing to develop financial diversity, strength and growth, and implementing best-practice policies and processes. We remain steadfast in our commitment to making ACON a better place for all our staff, volunteers and communities.

We are excited about the coming year and what it will bring with new initiatives and programs on the horizon. We particularly look forward to progressing work towards the establishment of the ACON Health Centre, which we hope will shine a light in NSW as the state's first community-led, integrated and multidisciplinary health care service for sexuality and gender diverse people.

Of course, all of this would not be possible without our people and once again, our staff, board, members and volunteers continue to go above and beyond to support our communities. We thank them for the care, commitment and contribution they've shown throughout the year.

We also acknowledge the support of our many sector partners, corporations, community organisations and other federal, state and local government agencies, for their collaboration and partnership. We particularly honour the NSW Government for their ongoing commitment to delivering comprehensive responses to HIV and LGBTQ health.

Finally, we thank our clients, supporters and community members for their continued support and helping us create opportunities for people in our communities to live their healthiest lives.

Dr Justin Koonin  
ACON President

Nicolas Parkhill AM  
ACON CEO

# HIGHLIGHTS: 2022-2023

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

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

**1.1m**  
visitors to the Ending HIV website

**1,000+**  
placements of our *With Love* 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

**1.2m**  
online interactions raising awareness of HIV and STI prevention

**214,695**  
safe sex packs distributed across Sydney and regional NSW

**164**  
venues and services that received and displayed HIV and STI prevention resources

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

**182,971**  
Online interactions promoting HIV and STI testing

**6,238**  
client sessions at ACON's a[TEST] testing facilities

**650**  
HIV self-test kits distributed by ACON at key community events and festivals

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

**14,000+**  
occasions of services provided across our counselling, care coordination, substance support, suicide prevention and aftercare support, and client services

**1,507**  
free meals served to vulnerable people living with HIV

**7,700+**  
patrons supported by ACON Rovers at LGBTQ festivals and events in NSW

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

**48,000+**  
pageviews on ACON's harm reduction digital resource, Pivot Point

**42,000+**  
pageviews on ACON's national SDFV digital support hub *Say It Out Loud*

**HERE**  
Launched a new digital resource on suicide prevention, *Here.org.au*

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

**716,000**  
people reached on social media by ACON's cancer prevention resource, CAN WE

**75,000**  
users visited the CAN WE website throughout the year

**300,000**  
video views on CAN WE's highly-successful cervical screening campaign, Own It

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

**1.4m**  
pageviews on leading digital health resource for trans people, *TransHub*

**5,064**  
new locations signed up for the Welcome Here Project - bringing the total to over 10,600

**3,395**  
responses collected from Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey - 38% increase year-on-year

## HERE FOR 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.

**960**  
delegates attended Australia's leading conference for LGBTQ inclusion, *Pride In Practice*

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

**\$3.2m**  
grants awarded for programs and services to support our communities

**\$567k**  
raised in fundraising during 2022/23 financial year

**300+**  
volunteers supported ACON during Sydney WorldPride

## INNOVATE RAP

We forged ahead on our reconciliation journey with the launch of the second iteration of our Innovate RAP

**1000+**  
media mentions across print and digital about our programs and services

**94%**  
participation rate for ACON employee engagement survey with Supervision, Values and Teamwork rating amongst highest areas at 94%, 92% and 90%



FROM SYDNEY

WITH LOVE



From left: ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill, former ACON President Mark Orr, current ACON President Justin Koonin and Deputy CEO Karen Price

# ACON AT SYDNEY WORLDPRIDE

WorldPride was the biggest pride celebration Sydney had ever seen and ACON was there every step of the way to ensure the health and safety of locals and visitors alike.

Sydney WorldPride took place in February and March 2023, attracting locals and visitors from all over Australia and across the globe. More than 470 events were held across the Harbour City over 17 days, drawing a festival audience of over one million.

To ensure our communities remained healthy and safe, ACON undertook a range of health promotion and harm reduction activities. Distributing tens of thousands of resources,

deploying hundreds of volunteers and supporting dozens of events and activities, Sydney WorldPride was the biggest health promotion exercise we have ever undertaken.

We're proud community partners of Sydney WorldPride and we thank our communities for engaging with ACON throughout the festival and for looking after each other.

Here are some of our festival highlights:

- We implemented *With Love*, a large-scale social marketing health campaign on HIV and STI prevention, harm reduction, street safety, consent, and COVID-19 and mpox safety. The campaign was featured in over 1000 placements across print, digital, social media, radio, cinema, and out-of-home and outdoor media. Read more on page 20.
- We mobilised over 300 health promotion volunteers to deliver health information and safe sex resources at all major WorldPride events.
- In partnership with the NSW Users and AIDS Association's (NUAA) DanceWize program, we activated our ACON Rovers program to provide harm reduction services at WorldPride's major events.
- At WorldPride's key festival events including Bondi Beach Party, Domain Dance Party, Live & Proud: Opening Concert, Rainbow Republic and Pride Villages, we hosted ACON Info Booths to provide revellers with access to health information and resources.
- We printed the *ACON Health & Safety Guide to Sydney* to provide visitors with information and links to support services. More than 11,000 copies were distributed.
- At Fair Day, the ACON Village featured 11 stalls showcasing our work in HIV, LGBTQ community health and inclusion.
- At the Mardi Gras Parade, over 150 staff and volunteers marched in the ACON float, showcasing our health promotion messages.
- We supported the production of the First Nations Float, which featured a 20-metre inflatable rainbow serpent. The serpent, which led the parade to snake its way through Oxford and Flinders Streets, would later lead the Pride March over the Sydney Harbour Bridge.
- We supported NSW Health and St Vincent's Hospital in the operation of sexual health and vaccination hubs including in Surry Hills, Darlinghurst and Camperdown.
- We supported WorldPride's Human Rights Conference with our First Nations Health project, LGBTQ Women's Health project and Peer Education Programs all running sessions. ACON staff also sat on several panels and workshops. And at the exhibition space, ACON hosted an activation and information booth for visitors.
- Our Pride Inclusion Programs division supported over 60 events and activations held by members during the season.
- ACON also supported The Coming Back Out Salon, Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival, SPARK's Youth History Walk, Trikone's Bar Bombay, Minus18's Queer Formal, FLAGCOM's Mardi Gras Miss International Queen, FAGLA's Miss Pride Queen Pageant, YCollab's Safe Space Launch and ANTRA's 'Coming Out, Coming Home' Exhibition.

11,000+

The number of copies of the *ACON Health and Safety Guide* printed and distributed during Sydney WorldPride

300+

The number of volunteers ACON mobilised and deployed to deliver health promotion and harm reduction services

150+

The number of events ACON supported, attended, produced, co-hosted and/or delivered during Sydney WorldPride



# 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.



## Our Purpose

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



## Our Vision

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



## Our Values

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### 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



## Our Work is Focused on

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- 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



# FOCUS AREA 1

Our work is focused on

## 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



PEP with love ... ACON volunteer Jessie

# HIV PREVENTION

To drive down new HIV notifications, we must continue to effectively engage and mobilise people in our communities to test often, treat early and stay safe. We continue to 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 IN NSW: THE STATE OF PLAY

Data from the NSW Ministry of Health show that the HIV response in NSW continues to bounce back from the impacts of COVID disruptions with HIV testing and PrEP intake returning to pre-pandemic levels. New HIV notifications remained low but there was an increase among people with evidence of late diagnosis.

Between January and March 2023, there was a 32% drop in diagnoses with evidence of early infection compared to the five-year average. Among gay, bisexual and men who have sex with men (MSM), HIV notifications were 2% lower

compared with new diagnoses for the same quarter for the last five years. Overall, however, HIV diagnoses increased by 11% largely driven by overseas MSM and heterosexual people, particularly those being diagnosed late.

HIV testing rose by 16% in January to March 2023 compared to the previous year. This increase brings the testing rate almost back to pre-pandemic levels.

PrEP use, too, is bouncing back. The number of unique NSW residents prescribed PrEP under the PBS rose from 9,612 in October to December 2022 to 10,348 people in January to March 2023 – an 8% increase. This result also marks a 15% increase compared to same quarter in 2022.

## ENDING HIV

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. With all eyes on Sydney during WorldPride, we elevated Ending HIV's key messages of staying safe, treating early and testing through our *With Love* campaign, digital marketing initiatives, online forums, peer education workshops and other activities. Over the year, we also

delivered messages and information on other emerging sexual health issues, such as shigella and mpox.

## EMEN8

Emen8 is our national digital HIV prevention and sexual health resource for gay, bisexual and other MSM. It's produced in partnership with Thorne Harbour Health and funded by the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care. Emen8 adopts an innovative 'stealth health' approach to reach its target audience, utilising social media and leveraging community connection to amplify sexual health and wellbeing messages. 2022/23 saw Emen8's biggest campaign to date, which encouraged uptake of the mpox vaccine. It promoted a combination of digital and print assets across the country, driving over 1 million views to campaign videos and over 400k page views of related content. It was with this campaign that we helped gay, bisexual and other MSM in Australia to stay informed, benefit from the government's swift vaccine rollout, and avoid the impact of outbreaks experienced by other countries.

## WHAT'S NEXT

While we are seeing HIV notifications drop, we are not seeing the same level of declines among those living in outer and regional areas with lower concentrations of gay-identified men. Overseas-born gay, bisexual and MSM also account for the largest group being diagnosed late.

ACON continues to work with NSW Health and other partners in engaging all groups at risk of HIV transmission, in HIV prevention, testing and care messaging and services, as well as ensuring greater and earlier uptake of treatment among those living with HIV.

Read more about our work in HIV prevention at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/hiv-prevention](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/hiv-prevention)

**1.1M**

Users that visited Ending HIV

**1M**

Views on Emen8's campaign videos on social media

**2,148**

Occasions of service providing HIV prevention and risk reduction counselling



## HIV PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

Key to engaging our communities with vital HIV prevention messages is our social marketing campaigns. ACON has a proud history of developing community-led and inclusive campaigns that speak directly to our audiences. Combination prevention and PEP awareness were among the health messages featured in this year's major campaign, *With Love*. Read more about the *With Love* campaign on page 20.



Shanje as featured in our *With Love* campaign

# HIV CAMPAIGNS

Getting people in our communities to test more, treat early and stay safe is crucial in our efforts towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmissions. As well as delivering programs and services, we develop and deliver innovative social marketing campaigns that engages our communities on HIV and sexual health.

## WORLDPRIDE WITH LOVE

WorldPride took over Sydney in February and March, drawing an estimated festival audience of one million.

WorldPride was held concurrently with Sydney Gay and Lesbian

Mardi Gras. As Australia's largest LGBTQ health organisation, it was vital for ACON to ensure locals and visitors alike remained healthy and safe throughout the celebrations with access to appropriate health messages, information and resources.

To help achieve this, this year's large-scale health promotion campaign *With Love* featured messaging that highlighted important health and safety issues relevant to our communities, including HIV prevention and sexual health.

## REACHING OUT WITH LOVE

Among the key health messages featured in the campaign were around HIV and STI prevention. These include streams on combination prevention strategies including condoms, PrEP, and undetectable viral load. The campaign also raised awareness of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for emergencies. In addition, there were harm reduction messages for alcohol and partying safety, street safety, sexual consent, as well as strong public health advice to reduce the spread of mpox and COVID-19.

The campaign unfolded across NSW with a particular focus on Sydney and surrounding areas. A carefully crafted media strategy saw *With Love* disseminated to more than a thousand placements spanning print, digital, out-of-home, cinema and radio.

The health messages of *With Love* were further amplified by in-person activations at WorldPride's major events including Fair Day, Domain Dance Party, Human Rights Conference, Mardi Gras Parade, Mardi Gras Party, Bondi Beach Party, Rainbow Republic, Ultraviolet and Pride Villages on Oxford Street and Crown Street and dozens of other satellite events during the festival.

A legion of community volunteers passionately supported ACON's efforts at these events, engaging with revellers and distributed safe sex packs, essential health and safety information and resources.

**1,000+**

Campaign placements across print, digital, out-of-home, cinema and radio

**844,607**

Views of the *With Love* campaign video on social media

**70%**

Survey respondents who attended WorldPride events recalled the campaign

## FEELING THE LOVE

The success of the campaign was highlighted by the countless event attendees interacting with our volunteers. Furthermore, we conducted an online evaluation survey, collecting feedback from 462 members of the LGBTQ+ community:

- Over half (55%) recalled the campaign prior to participating in the survey.
- 70% of respondents who attended Sydney WorldPride events could recall the campaign.
- An impressive 85% affirmed that the advertisements effectively conveyed the intended message.
- A staggering 99% deemed the *With Love* campaign video engaging. This video garnered over 844,607 views on social media and garnered 4.2 million digital impressions.



# 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 project continued engage to gay, bi+ and queer men on HIV prevention, sexual health, relationships and community connection. This year, we conducted the popular ACON workshops 'Looking for Mr Right' and 'Arse Class'. We also collaborated with ACON's young gay, bi+ and queer men's program, SPARK, to design an exciting new forum called 'The Art of Connection'. In total, Peer Education engaged around 1,000 participants in its workshops. Throughout the year, Peer Education also continued to promote ACON's HIV prevention and sexual health messages through outreach efforts at various Sydney WorldPride events, community activations and universities.

## ASIAN GAY, BI+ & QUEER MEN

ACON's Asian Gay Men's Project continued to provide support for gay, bi+, and queer men from Asian cultural backgrounds through regular events, peer-led forums ConversAsians and SocialisAsians, and other community outreach work. 'Good Vibes - For Fun' was ACON's first ConversAsians event conducted entirely in the Thai language to connect Thai gay, bi+ and queer men with the latest sexual health

and HIV information. 'Chai Chat' provides a space for South Asian gay, bi+ and queer men to meet and share their experiences with other community members from South Asian backgrounds. Additionally, we provided support for events such as Bar Bombay, the Taiwanese Community Forum, ANTRA and Filipino LGBTQ social group, FLAGCOM.

## YOUNG GAY, BI+ & QUEER MEN

ACON's SPARK project continued its efforts in delivering volunteer-led community workshops, forums and outreach programs to address the sexual health needs of young gay, bi+ and queer men. This year, SPARK launched 'The Art of Connection', a new workshop that engages participants on art while receiving important sexual health education. During Sydney WorldPride, SPARK held its annual Youth History Walk and engaged community members at Fair Day and Minus18's Queer Formal. Throughout the year, SPARK conducted outreach activities at The University of New South Wales' Hump Day and 'Sextember' events, as well as at Macquarie University, The University of Sydney and Western Sydney University. In total, these outreach efforts led to interactions with 265 community members.

 **1.3M**

Online interactions that raised awareness of HIV and STI prevention

 **214,695**

Safe sex packs distributed across Sydney and regional NSW

 **152**

In-person outreach sessions on HIV and STI prevention at community events and venues



ACON's HIV & Sexual Health staff and peers

**FIRST NATIONS HEALTH PROJECT**

Engaging LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities remains a strong focus of our health promotion work. This year, we supported several important community events where we delivered vital health messages including at the Yabun Festival in Sydney and Koori Knockout in Nowra; at National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events; at conferences including Pride in Practice in Melbourne; and at Sydney WorldPride including Fair Day and the Mardi Gras Parade.

The project was involved in the production of the First Nations Float, which featured a 20-metre Rainbow Serpent dubbed 'Gari'. ACON facilitated community consultation and supported its construction to see it proudly snake its way at the Mardi Gras Parade and the Pride March on the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Our Fair Day activation welcomed Gadigal person Nadeena Dixon who ran weaving interactions with community members at the First Nations Circle, which resulted in having around 500 conversations with community throughout the course of the day. The project also had a presence at the First Nations Gathering Space, 'Muri Murrang But But', held through the WorldPride season.

ACON is also continuing on its reconciliation journey. To learn more about ACON's Reconciliation Action Plan, turn to page 74.

**SEXUALISED DRUG USE**

ACON's M3THOD program continues to support the people who use drugs like crystal methamphetamine and GHB when having sex. Our M3THOD 1-on-1 peer service worked with 34 clients, seeking to learn how to party safely, change their relationship to 'party and play' (PnP) or reduce the frequency of their drug use.

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.

 **1,000**

**Participants engaged across ACON's Peer Education workshops**

 **164**

**Venues and services that received and displayed HIV and STI prevention resources**

 **20**

**Peer-led HIV and STI prevention community workshops held**

**SEXPERTS**

ACON's Sexperts program, delivered in partnership with sex-on-premises venues, provides sexual health promotion focusing on testing, HIV prevention and risk reduction. ACON Sexperts operated in venues throughout the year and volunteers recorded 64 hours of attendance during 32 shifts and provided 97 occasions of service to community members who received information on combination prevention, PrEP, and undetectable viral load, as well as testing, PEP and general sexual health and mpox vaccination.

**MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT**

Engaging with LGBTQ+ people from culturally, linguistically and ethnically diverse migrant and refugee backgrounds, and people of colour, is an important part of our health promotion work and community development efforts.

During Sydney WorldPride, ACON partnered with Sweatshop to publish *Stories Out West*, an anthology of short stories by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally diverse LGBTQ+ writers from Western Sydney.

ACON also supported multicultural LGBTQ+ community events during Sydney WorldPride, including FLAGCOM's 'Miss Mardi Gras International Queen Pageant', FAGLA's 'Miss Pride Queen Pageant', and the Queer Displacement Conference by the Forcibly Displaced People Network.

ACON and the West Ball collaborated again this year to promote HIV and sexual health among queer and trans people of colour in Western Sydney. This year the West Ball was hosted at Street University Liverpool and we partnered with South Western Sydney Local Health Districts and the Liverpool Sexual Health Clinic to provide sexual health information and resources to attendees.

**WHAT'S NEXT**

A key area of focus for ACON in the coming year is supporting communities in Greater Western Sydney. There is a thriving and resilient LGBTQ+ community in Greater Western Sydney, however these communities experience higher psychological distress and poorer health outcomes, especially in HIV and sexual health, than LGBTQ+ people in inner Sydney. In 2023/24, ACON will explore and develop peer education programs for gay, bi+ and queer men in Greater Western Sydney. We will also be exploring adapting new technologies and methods to further the reach of our sexual health messages.

**You can find out more about our work in HIV and sexual health at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/sexual-health/](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/sexual-health/)**



The First Nations float at the Mardi Gras Parade featuring 'Gari' the Rainbow Serpent

# 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.



ACON a[TEST] peer Justin Xiao

## HIV TESTING IN NSW

The latest data from NSW Health indicate that HIV testing rates among gay, bi+ and queer men is returning to pre-pandemic levels, which is crucial in our efforts to end the transmission of HIV in NSW. In the first quarter of 2023, HIV testing in NSW was 16% higher compared to the same quarter in 2022. Similarly, the number of HIV tests performed in publicly funded sexual health clinics during the first quarter of 2023 was 56% higher than the same quarter in 2022. ACON's community engagement and mobilisation efforts throughout Sydney WorldPride contributed to collective efforts to raise awareness of the importance of regular HIV testing and prompt gay, bisexual and other MSM to get tested for HIV.

## THE SUCCESS OF A[TEST]

a[TEST] Oxford Street, Surry Hills, and the a[TEST] Chinese Clinic, community-based rapid HIV and STI testing facilities continue to record high demand. Collectively our a[TEST] sites delivered 6,238 occasions of service throughout the year. As well as HIV and STI screenings, clients at a[TEST] are also given access to sexual health information and resources. The service further acts as an active referral pathway into other ACON services such as counselling peer education workshops and more.

During WorldPride, ACON and Sydney Sexual Health Centre took several measures to ensure that the community received accessible sexual health services via a[TEST]. Nursing staff at the Oxford Street location increased by 50% and changes were made to a[TEST] procedures to increase accessibility and reduce barriers to care. These included enabling travellers and those unfamiliar with the booking system to attend without an appointment. Additionally, the team implemented the NSW nurse

**6,238**

Occasions of service at a[TEST] during 2022-2023

**5,434**

Unique clients that accessed a[TEST] during 2022

**650**

HIV self-test kits distributed throughout 2022/23

**182,971**

Online interactions that promote HIV and STI testing

protocol, which allowed nurse led dispensing and supply to initiate PrEP and provide PEP without a doctor's prescription.

a[TEST] Oxford Street, a[TEST] Surry Hills and a[TEST] Chinese Clinic would not be possible without the support of our clinical partner, the Sydney Sexual Health Centre and South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. We acknowledge their partnership and thank them for the ongoing support.

## HIV TESTING IN REGIONAL NSW

Crucial to efforts towards the virtual elimination of HIV transmission is

increasing HIV testing in regional areas. 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 Hunter New England Sexual Health to provide a free, drop-in HIV and STI testing service.

A pop-up HIV testing service was provided during Broken Hill's Broken Heel Festival in September 2022. We also continue to provide HIV and sexual health outreach across the Northern Rivers region as well as Southern and Far West NSW, providing community members with information and resources on HIV testing, STI screenings, as well as sexual health, PrEP and PEP.

## REMOVING BARRIERS WITH HIV SELF-TESTING

Key to getting more people to test for HIV is providing more HIV testing options, such as the ability to conduct self-tests.

ACON's you[TEST] service allows people to test for HIV at home with either a HIV self-test kit or a Dried Blood Spot test. Clients get access to peers and further information and referrals via video call.

Throughout the year, ACON distributed over 650 HIV self-test kits.

We also continued to provide our communities with information and resources on NSW Health's Dried Blood Spot test service, which allows people to test for HIV at home and send off dried blood samples by mail for laboratory testing.

## WHAT'S NEXT

As we shift to a post-pandemic environment, ACON will continue its work in encouraging our communities to test for HIV and make it part of their regular sexual health screening routine. We will be launching a campaign to raise awareness of the importance of regular HIV testing. We are also progressing work towards the re-opening of a[TEST] in Newtown, which was closed in 2020 because of COVID.

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

Charisma Belle as featured in Emen8's Prick - Pause - Play campaign

# MPOX PREVENTION

ACON continues to work with the NSW Ministry of Health and other partners to develop and implement strategies to prevent the transmission of mpox.

## MPOX IN AUSTRALIA

ACON has been working closely with NSW Health, the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care and our other partners to ensure our communities remained informed about mpox. Over the year, we implemented strategies to prevent transmission and minimise the spread of mpox in NSW and nationally.

As we now know, the substantial increases in mpox cases did not eventuate in Australia and this is testament to the strength of our public health infrastructure and the well-established HIV partnership network.

- Public forums to provide information on mpox, allowing for targeted messaging to community based on local epidemiology and build confidence in the vaccine and testing.
- Forums for target populations, including bi+ community members in collaboration with Sydney Bi+ Network.
- Partnership work with SOPVs, providing critical information, education, and support.
- Targeted social media campaigns encouraging revellers to get vaccinated and stay at home if they contract mpox.

## DELIVERING COMMUNITY MESSAGING

In the past year, ACON has delivered a suite of communication activities designed to inform affected communities about mpox. These include:

- Communications delivered through culturally relevant platforms including social media, hook-up apps and LGBTQ online news and media outlets.
- Dedicated webpages with information about mpox including transmission, risk reduction and important information about vaccinations.
- Targeted social marketing campaigns tailored specifically for GBMSM such as Emen8's Prick - Pause - Play.
- Media releases and updates from trusted ACON leaders.

During WorldPride, which saw hundreds of thousands of international visitors descend to Sydney, ACON and our partners ramped up our mpox response. These included:

- Scaling up mpox communications in the lead up to Sydney WorldPride.
- Making vaccines available to international visitors.
- Creating vaccination pop ups at Sydney WorldPride events and at locations frequented by GBMSM.
- Continuing to push out messaging throughout the festival to remind people to stay at home if they felt unwell or developed symptoms.

## ASSISTING THE VACCINE ROLLOUT

The first doses of JYNNEOS arrived in early August 2022 and ACON has provided ongoing support

in the rollout of NSW's mpox vaccination program.

As well as developing communications and campaigns on the mpox vaccination, we provide operational support to South East Sydney Local Health District, Sydney Local Health District and other districts in the establishment of vaccinations hubs. These include the Crown Street Mpox Vaccination Hub, followed by mpox vaccination hubs at Mallet Street, Camperdown, Blacktown and St Vincent's Hospital Darlinghurst and Wallsend in Newcastle.

Due to the global shortages in the JYNNEOS vaccine, we provided guidance and support in ensuring a highly targeted enrolment for vaccination with eligibility identified by NSW Health.

ACON also provided trained peers to ensure that those receiving the vaccine felt comfortable accessing services.

The rapid and effective implementation of a peer-supported mpox vaccination response that reached thousands of GBMSM in NSW and ensured adequate vaccine coverage ahead of WorldPride is a testament to ACON's long-standing clinical partnerships and our expertise in peer-led models of care.

## SUPPORTING MPOX RESEARCH PROJECT

ACON has provided support with recruitment as well as ethical guidance to ensure that mpox research projects are of the greatest benefit to our communities.

## WHAT'S NEXT

As we look ahead, we will continue to develop strategies to prevent mpox transmission in NSW, encourage vaccine uptake and support those most at-risk of mpox infection, in partnership with NSW Health, the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care, and other sector partners.



## NATIONAL MPOX AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

This year, we launched a national campaign Prick - Pause - Play to raise awareness of mpox and the importance of getting vaccinated. The campaign, delivered by our online sexual health resource for GBMSM, Emen8, featured messages around knowing the symptoms, risk factors, prevention strategies and where to get the vaccine. It was among a range of communications strategies we implemented to engage our communities on staying safe and to minimise the spread of mpox in Australia. The campaign was funded by the Australian Department of Health and Aged Care.



# FOCUS AREA 2

Our work is focused on

# 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

- LGBTQ Health
- Mental Health
- HIV Support
- Alcohol & Other Drugs
- Domestic & Family Violence



Emily and Scott from ACON's Cancer Programs



# LGBTQ HEALTH

We're here to help LGBTQ+ people in NSW take control of their health by providing information and a range of sexual health testing services, cancer awareness campaigns, workshops, as well as support services.

## ACON CANCER PROGRAMS

Now in its fourth year, our partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW continues to work to reduce the impact of cancer among LGBTQ+ communities in NSW. The partnership 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.

Highlights in 2022-2023 include:

- Building on the successful delivery of LGBTQ diversity and inclusion training for 785 Cancer Institute NSW, BreastScreen NSW and NSW Quitline staff, a new tailored module for cancer services was launched in January 2023 on Cancer Institute NSW's e-learning platform. 106 people have completed the training with participants reporting high satisfaction with the training and confidence about being able to make practical changes in their practice to make it more inclusive.
- In partnership with Universal Pictures, we hosted in February a preview of the US film *Spoiler Alert*, a heart-warming, funny and life-affirming story of how a gay couple's relationship is transformed and deepened when one of them receives a terminal cancer diagnosis. The event included a panel discussion with LGBTQ cancer patients and an oncologist.
- The BreastScreen NSW mobile van was back at Fair Day and, in partnership with BreastScreen NSW and Sydney Local Health District,

we provided support for community members accessing the service. The van was booked out throughout the day, screening 27 people – most of whom were first-time screeners. We also distributed more than 1500 CAN WE branded sunscreens across Sydney WorldPride events.

- We partnered with the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre at UNSW to conduct a survey of alcohol-related behaviours, beliefs and knowledge regarding cancer risk related to alcohol. The study recruited over 1,400 people and concluded there is an opportunity and need to address harmful levels of alcohol consumption among LGBTQ+ adults to reduce alcohol-related health risks.

## ACON'S CANCER PREVENTION RESOURCE, CAN WE

CAN WE, ACON's dedicated cancer screening and prevention online resource designed specifically for sexuality and gender diverse communities, reached a milestone of 75,000 users by 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.

Our social media presence on Facebook and Instagram continue to drive traffic to our website. We've reached 466,896 people on Facebook, growing by 53.7% since June 2022. CAN WE's Instagram account has reached 249,152 people, a 144.9% increase since June 2022 and now has over 1,000 followers.

## 'OWN IT' CERVICAL SCREENING CAMPAIGN

The option of self-collection became available for anybody participating in cervical screening from July 2022. This is a gamechanger, particularly for LGBTQ people with a cervix, because of unique barriers to screening such as negative past screening experience causing pain and discomfort, fear of penetration, and lack of culturally sensitive services for trans and gender diverse people.

To help promote this new option and put cervical screening back on people's agendas, we developed a new cervical screening campaign, *Own It*. The campaign was designed to empower young women and people with a cervix between 25-35 years to make screening their own. The campaign featured experiences of diverse community members sharing their experiences with cervical screening and how they've overcome these barriers. This was the first time ACON has been commissioned to develop a cervical screening campaign inclusive of all sexualities and genders.

*Own It* has been ACON's most successful cancer campaign to date, achieving nearly 300,000 video views and more than 44,000 visitors to the CAN WE website. Close to half of survey respondents recalled seeing the campaign, with 25-35 year olds and LGBTQ+ people more likely to recall the campaign. Over half of 25-35 year olds reported taking action after seeing the campaign, and 83% said they were motivated to screen when next due.

We hope the success of the *Own It* campaign will encourage other jurisdictions to run it. Family Planning Tasmania has already licensed it to run there, a first for a CAN WE campaign. *Own It* also showcases how inclusive campaigns can successfully communicate with a broad audience and achieve even better outcomes for LGBTQ+ people demonstrating equity approaches work.



### SPOTLIGHT:

CAN WE's *Own It* campaign has been ACON's most successful cancer awareness campaign to date. See opposite page for details. Below are key highlights from the campaign.



**300,000**

video views on CAN WE's cervical screening campaign *Own It*



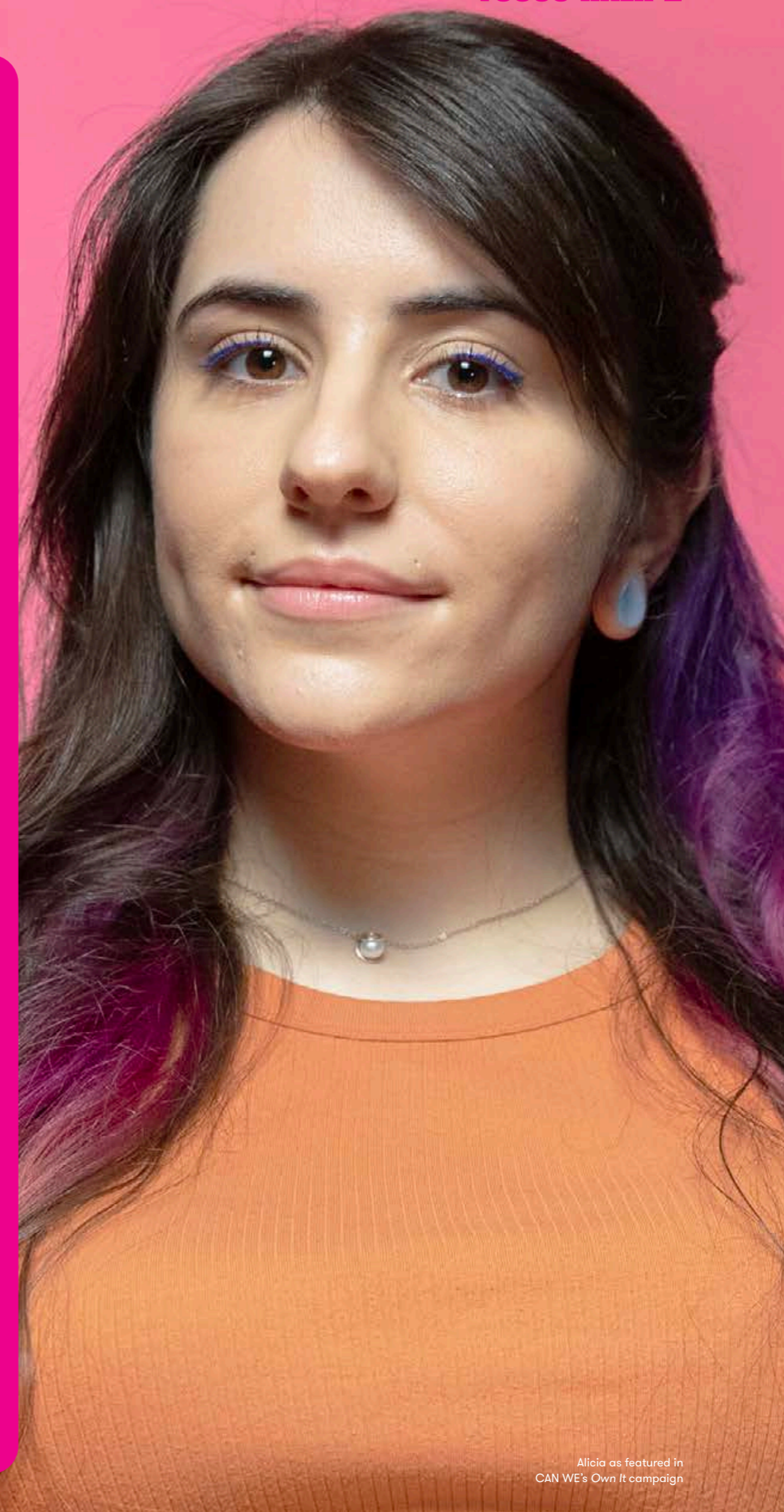
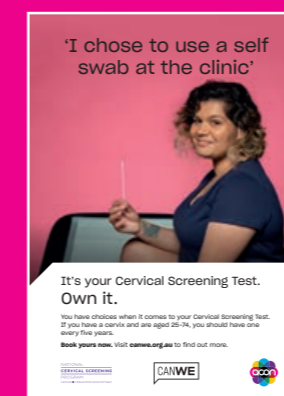
**44,000**

visits to the CAN WE website's *Own It* section



**83%**

survey respondents said they were motivated to get a cervical screening when next due after seeing *Own It*



Alicia as featured in CAN WE's *Own It* campaign

ACON staff and peers at Fair Day



**ACON HEALTH CENTRE**

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.

We have seen governments take great steps forward over recent years, recognising equity must be a key focus in health.

In NSW, we welcomed the development of the State's first LGBTQ+ Health Strategy, and greater acknowledgement of our communities in many other health related Strategies including the NSW Cancer Plan, NSW Women's Strategy and the NSW Regional Health Strategic Plan.

Against this backdrop, in 2022 ACON was particularly proud to receive funding from the NSW Government to help establish a community-led, integrated health care service for sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW.

The funding was granted through the NSW Ministry of Health after ACON had worked over six years to develop the model, build support from partners, and conduct a detailed feasibility study. 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.

A multi-disciplinary, integrated health centre, designed specifically for LGBTQ+ people in NSW is a complex task and work to develop the model of care, clinical operations and governance has been a key focus. Alongside this, we are working toward securing a building and commencing planning for the fit-out; as well as working to develop the name and branding for the Centre.

This exciting and ground-breaking service is taking shape and we are working with our partners to bring the vision to life.

ACON anticipate being able to share more details with our communities in the coming year.

**LGBTQ WOMEN'S HEALTH PROGRAMS**

This year marked significant milestones for ACON's LGBTQ+ Women's Health programs. We trained 25 LGBTQ+ women and non-binary volunteer facilitators, developed a new sexual health resource, and initiated the development of two workshops for our communities - informed by three community consultation sessions attended by 50 community members. Additionally, we successfully organised and conducted monthly LBQ women's packing groups throughout 2022-23.

During Sydney WorldPride, the LGBTQ+ Women's Health program prioritised community engagement. We connected with 500 attendees at Minus18's Queer Formal, and engaged with 600 community members at Fair Day through the LGBTQ+ Women's Health stall and the BreastScreen NSW van. ACON's LGBTQ+ Women's Health programs was the sole community stall at UltraViolet, the premier event for LGBTQ+ women during WorldPride, and engaged with 300 community members.

ACON also partnered with Queer Screen to co-present a film at the Mardi Gras Film Festival, connecting with another 100 community members. On International Women's Day, we collaborated with Belvoir St Theatre to host a special LGBTQ Women's screening of Blessed Union, engaging with and welcoming the 400 attendees in the lobby. The event's success has led to a partnership with Belvoir to host two additional 'queer nights' at the theatre in 2023.

**WHAT'S NEXT**

Engaging LGBTQ women on sexual health and wellbeing is a key focus for ACON. In the coming year, our Womens Health Project will be developing a new online health resource catering to all women in our communities. ACON's Cancer Programs will continue its work in delivering LGBTQ-inclusive health promotion with the launch of a new digital tool that will increase cancer risk reduction knowledge and contribute to increasing screening participation rates among our communities. Working alongside our partners, we will also continue to progress the establishment of the ACON Health Centre.

# MENTAL HEALTH

While many LGBTQ+ people in NSW lead happy, healthy and productive lives, there are a range of issues relating to poorer mental health outcomes, such as depression, self-harm, anxiety, suicide ideation and suicidality, which impact on a higher number of LGBTQ+ people compared to the wider population. 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.



ACON counsellor Deb Broughton

## 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, including HIV prevention and sexual health counselling. This year, our counsellors provided over 2,350 occasions of service via face-to-face and telehealth. Of these, over 290 occasions of service were delivered by fully qualified volunteer counsellors who are crucial to our service delivery. Investing in the training and development of volunteer counsellors enables ACON to build the capacity of the mental health services sector, while providing inclusive and affirming services to our communities.

## CARE COORDINATION FOR LGBTQ+ PEOPLE

Our Care Coordination Service provides free support to community members experiencing a range of health, personal and social barriers. LGBTQ+ people supported with care coordination work with our specialist social workers and psychologists for assistance with sexual, domestic or family violence, substance use or gender affirmation. This year we provided over 5,100 care coordination occasions of service to sexuality and gender diverse people, a 25% increase from 2021-22. This work was funded by the NSW Ministry of Health and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

## 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 includes a service for individuals with a GP Mental Health Plan but who are ineligible for funded services and are able to pay for counselling;

and Pride EAP (Employee Assistance Program), which provides inclusive and affirming counselling to employees of member organisations. This year, Pride Counselling Programs delivered over 1,000 occasions of service.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION AND AFTERCARE

ACON has been working to prevent LGBTQ+ suicide for almost 40 years. Our dedicated Suicide Prevention and Aftercare Services have supported community members experiencing a suicidal crisis or requiring assistance following a suicide attempt, and this year, our team of specialist LGBTQ+ social workers, psychologists, counsellors and peer workers delivered over 1700 occasions of service to over 200 people across NSW.

 **2,350**

occasions of counselling support provided to LGBTQ people

 **5,100**

occasions of care coordination support provided to people with complex needs

 **1,700**

occasions of suicide prevention and aftercare support provided to over 200 people

## HERE: SUICIDE PREVENTION DIGITAL HUB

This year, we launched *HERE.org.au*, ACON's LGBTQ+ suicide prevention digital hub. The website provides information on suicide and situational distress, connecting people, their loved ones, and service providers in NSW to care, support, and resources. *HERE.org.au* won two Good Design Awards for Social Impact and Digital Design. This project has been funded by the NSW Ministry of Health Towards Zero Suicides Initiative.

## NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

ACON participated in the National Suicide Prevention Conference held in Canberra in March. We presented various sessions and workshops including on suicide in trans communities; the role of holistic, collective care and lived experience on suicide responses; and the use of digital means to support those impacted by suicide.

## MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

ACON continued to partner with Way Ahead to support Mental Health Month and the Mental Health Matters Awards. The Mental Health Matters Rainbow Inclusion Award for 2022, sponsored by ACON, was awarded to QI Project: Gender Affirmative Practice, which is an LGBTQIA+ supportive, inclusive and resourceful service from Gna Ka Lun - Campbelltown Hospital.

## WHAT'S NEXT

ACON will continue supporting people to improve their quality of life through our LGBTQ-inclusive and affirming services. We will also be offering a suicide bereavement group, continuing to build collaborative working relationships across the mental health and social services sectors, and focusing on growing Pride Counselling Programs. We will also develop community care workshops and a campaign focused on preventing LGBTQ+ suicide.

You can find out more about our work in mental health at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/mental-health](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/mental-health)

# HIV SUPPORT

## 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 successfully conducted two a[STARTx] workshops for a total of 17 people living with HIV, and for the first time we delivered a pilot workshop on HIV disclosure. As well as group programs, ACON delivered 1-on-1 support to 58 people living with HIV.

Positive Life NSW and ACON collaborated on the delivery of two community forums for people living with HIV. One forum addressed healthy lifestyles, diet and exercise and the other provided education, guidance and support for people living with HIV and migrating to Australia.

## COUNSELLING & CARE COORDINATION 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 year, we provided 800 free counselling occasions of service to people living with HIV.

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.

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.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORK

The Community Support Network provides much needed practical support for older people living with HIV. Our team of trained volunteers help with household chores, grocery shopping, meal preparation and gardening. This year, our dedicated CSN team provided a total of 962 occasions of service, totalling 700 home visits and 229 check-ins via telehealth support. Furthermore, approximately 50 essential transport services were coordinated to ensure recipients could attend important medical appointments.

## WEEKLY MEAL SERVICE

ACON provides access to food and provisions to people living with HIV through our Weekly Meal Service. The Friday Lunch Club operates from ACON's Sydney office in Surry Hills, offering up-to-date information on HIV and LGBTQ+ health and 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 1,507 meals.

## POSITIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

The Positive Leadership Development Institute (PLDI) returned after

a long hiatus due to COVID. The PLDI program aims to build the resilience and leadership capacities of people living with HIV in Australia. Alongside several national partners ACON supported PLDI to host two workshops attended by 24 people living with HIV.

 **800**

free counselling occasions of service to people living with HIV

 **1,507**

free meals served to vulnerable people living with HIV

 **700**

home visits to older people living with HIV through Community Support Network

## WHAT'S NEXT

Supporting people living with HIV to live fulfilled, healthy lives will always be a priority for ACON. We will continue to provide programs and services that provides support to people living with HIV, including those newly-diagnosed. We will also continue to participate in efforts to raise awareness of the need to challenge and eradicate HIV stigma.

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

## FOCUS AREA 2



Lionel and Troy from ACON's HIV & Sexual Health Division



ACON Rovers at Sydney WorldPride

FROM SYDNEY

WITH



LOVE

# 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.

## 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 evidence based, trauma-informed, person-centred treatment approaches that help them better manage their use, cut down or quit their use of substances, and improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing. Funded by Central Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network, this year we provided around 1,700 occasions of service to 177 people.

## PIVOT POINT: HARM REDUCTION DIGITAL RESOURCE

Pivot Point is ACON's online hub for reducing harms associated with alcohol and drug use in LGBTQ communities. *Pivot Point* is an effective health promotion platform, enabling us to increase harm reduction knowledge, awareness, and capacity for LGBTQ+ people living in and visiting NSW. We additionally promoted services and resources to providers working with LGBTQ+ people. In 2022-2023, *Pivot Point* recorded over 48,000 page views, with 38,000 new users.

## HARM REDUCTION MESSAGING DURING WORLDPRIDE

Harm reduction messaging before, during and after Sydney WorldPride and Mardi Gras events were released via digital campaigns, venue posters and through ACON's festival health and safety guide. A dedicated online portal on harm reduction with health and support information for visitors to Sydney WorldPride was developed and hosted on *Pivot Point*.

## ROVERS: HELPING REVELLERS CELEBRATE SAFELY

The Rover program marks its 20th year in 2023 and continues to be a much-loved service by

our communities. ACON Rovers promote a culture of care at LGBTQ dance parties and events. In total we had 220 peer volunteers contribute as Rovers over the year, of which 109 were newly inducted.

The Rovers were present across seven large scale LGBTQ events this year, including four of the major WorldPride events (Mardi Gras Party, Domain Dance Party, Bondi Beach Party and Rainbow Republic) as well as the Pride Villages on Oxford Street. This year we partnered with Dancewize NSW to support our harm reduction efforts. These included provision and management of supervised care spaces, peer support roving, drug and alcohol peer education, and individual support and referral throughout the events.

During these events Rovers supported over 7,733 patrons and responded to 15 overdoses. Overall, these events were incredibly successful and had fewer medical presentations compared to previous years.

## NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAM

ACON's Needle & Syringe Program (NSP) is offered at Sydney, Hunter and Lismore offices. We provide free sterile injecting equipment and health promotion services to people who inject drugs. People who use this service can also get connected to advice, support and relevant health resources, referrals to other services and access to condoms.

## WHAT'S NEXT

In 2023/24, the Harm Reduction team will be focusing on reviewing the Rover program and *Pivot Point* to harness the opportunities for reducing harms for LGBTQ communities when it comes to alcohol and other drugs. The program will continue providing an impactful service at events and parties in NSW, including a return to Tropical Fruits and Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. The team will also deliver quality improvement and capacity building in the NSP space, as well as harm reduction messaging and community education.

You can find out more about our work in alcohol and other drugs support at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/alcohol-drugs](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/alcohol-drugs)

## FOCUS AREA 2

**7,700+**  
patrons at LGBTQ event and festival supported by the ACON Rovers

**1,700**  
occasions of service provided by ACON substance support counsellors

**48,000**  
page views to ACON's harm reduction digital resource *PivotPoint*

Provision of the NSP helps to reduce the transmission of blood borne viruses such as HIV and Hep C and other injecting related risks. In Sydney, we distributed 299,276 units of equipment, Hunter NSP and outreach program distributed 294,070 units and the Lismore NSP distributed a total of 9,442.

All NSP sites participates in the Take Home Naloxone program, a life-saving drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Satisfaction with our NSP service is high with all surveyed respondents in Sydney noting they have had a good or very good experience with the service and 74% strongly agree that our range of equipment meets the service user needs.

# 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.



'Speaking out for Solidarity and Connection' campaign

## SEXUAL, DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICE

The NSW Department of Communities and Justice continued our funding in 2022-23 to deliver statewide specialist SDFV counselling and care coordination support. This enabled us to provide around 1,200 occasions of service to 56 clients.

The Department also funded ACON through the Commonwealth Government Domestic and Family Violence COVID-19 stimulus packages to refurbish our counselling and therapeutic support rooms to help ensure safe, confidential and comfortable support spaces. This funding was used to reduce noise leakage, create additional therapeutic spaces, install telehealth pods and improve lighting.

## SAY IT OUT LOUD: NATIONAL SDFV DIGITAL RESOURCE

ACON's *Say It Out Loud* website ([www.sayitoutloud.org.au](http://www.sayitoutloud.org.au)) is the only national online sexual, DFV resource for LGBTQ+ people, professionals and allies, creating a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQ+ people to seek support, information and services. Over the course of the year, *Say It Out Loud* delivered blog posts, added new services and resources, and distributed over 1300 printed resources to services across Australia. During 2022-2023, *Say It Out Loud* recorded over 42,376 unique views.

## SPEAKING OUT FOR SOLIDARITY AND CONNECTION CAMPAIGN

Under *Say It Out Loud*, we launched the online campaign, *Speaking out for Solidarity and Connection*. Developed in partnership with the Zoe Belle Gender Collective and ACON, the campaign shines a light on the connection between trans women and non-binary trans femme people, and people of other genders. These are real stories from people across the country in a variety of relationships from friendships to intimate partners. ACON celebrates the importance of trans women and non-binary trans femmes in our relationships, in LGBTQ+ communities and broader societies. The project was funded by the Australian Department for Social Services.

## SURVIVOR GROUP: SUPPORTING LGBTQ PEOPLE IMPACTED BY SDFV

This year, ACON ran another iteration of our Survivor Group, an 8-week group program for any LGBTQ person who has experienced or is currently experiencing intimate partner, family and/or sexual violence. 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 mechanisms. The program was funded and made possible by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY: SHINING A LIGHT ON LGBTQ SDFV

ACON provided an important advocacy and advisory role to a number of government and sector initiatives related to sexual, domestic and family violence. This included our ongoing participation in the National Plan Advisory Group, providing input to into the Action Plan and Outcomes Framework for The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

## LGBTQ+ PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE REPORT

This year, we released a report based on the findings from the first comprehensive NSW-based survey relating to community experiences and perceptions of sexual violence. The report gives voice to survivors of sexual violence, who shared their experiences over their lives, along with the impacts of sexual violence on their health, relationships and lives. The report also offers guidance on what helpful responses to disclosures of sexual violence can look like.

## SPOTLIGHT: ON SDFV

 **1,200**

**occasions of SDFV counselling and care coordination support provided to 56 clients**

 **1,300**

**SDFV support resources distributed to services across Australia**

 **42,376**

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

## WHAT'S NEXT

Over the next year, ACON will be expanding our sexual, domestic and family violence programs with two new initiatives. Our *Survivor Stories* program will support LGBTQ+ victim-survivors of sexual violence to share their stories in an anthology of stories and art, and our *Sexual Violence Consult Service* will provide consults, training and guidance to services that provide support to sexuality and gender diverse people who have experienced sexual violence with the goal of strengthening service provision.

**You can find out more about our work in SDFV at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/domestic-family-violence](http://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/domestic-family-violence)**

# FOCUS AREA 3

Our work is focused on

# 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

- Safety & Inclusion
- Healthy Ageing
- Trans & Gender Diverse Health
- Policy, Strategy & Research
- LGBTQ+ Disability
- Regional NSW
- Pride Inclusion Programs



Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey recruiters Francisco and Ryan

# SAFETY & SOCIAL INCLUSION

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.



Stories Out West contributor Andrew Lac

## FOCUS AREA 3

### 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 anti-LGBTIQ violence.

This year, we supported the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes set up to investigate unsolved suspected hate crime deaths of LGBTIQ people (or people who were presumed to be LGBTIQ) in NSW between 1970 and 2010.

We provided information, evidence, archival material and resources in the lead up to and during hearings of the inquiry. We also provided support services to people providing evidence or who were impacted by the work of the commission. The final report is due to be handed down in 2023-2024.

ACON acknowledges the significant work of the inquiry to date, as well as the efforts of many people and organisations over the decades who have worked to bring attention to these acts of hate and to call for justice. ACON will continue to advocate for justice and work towards improved responses to hate crimes.

### SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY

As part of our work in empowering LGBTQ+ communities in Greater Western Sydney, ACON continued to support five Inclusive Communities 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, focussing on LGBTQ+ inclusion, safety, culturally competent services provision, knowledge-sharing, and collaboration.

In February, we published *Stories Out West*, a short story anthology developed in partnership with Sweatshop. The initiative sought to elevate the voices of LGBTQ+, Sistergirl and Brotherboy community members and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Western Sydney through storytelling.

*Stories Out West* is part of ACON's work to achieve greater health equity for LGBTQ+ people from CALD, as well as migrant and refugee, backgrounds in Greater Western Sydney.

We continued our Leading Rainbow Western Sydney program, a forum for community leaders who support multicultural LGBTQ communities in Greater Western Sydney.

In June, ACON, in partnership with the Inclusive Communities Network, Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, BCRG, Wellways and OutLOUD held the Rainbow Multicultural Fair at the Bankstown Arts Centre, which celebrated the colourful intersections of LGBTQ+ and cultural identity.

ACON's Safety and Inclusion work in Western Sydney is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health through the South-East Sydney Local Health District.

### 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 930 businesses accounting for 5064 sites joining the project, bringing us to a total of 2,721 businesses and 10,667 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

We marked Pride Month in June with a small grants program that supported community organisations to hold Pride events in their local area. Fourteen grants of up to \$1000 each were awarded to community groups and organisations throughout NSW, with a particular focus on regional and rural areas, as well as events for LGBTQ+ First Nations people.

 **5,064**

**New sites signed up for the Welcome Here Project bringing the total to over 10,600**

 **1,000**

**Copies of *Stories Out West*, an anthology featuring First Nations and CALD writers, distributed**

 **14**

**Grants valued at \$1000 provided to community groups to support Pride activities**

### WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, our Safety and Inclusion program will have a strong focus on supporting our LGBTQ+ communities in the face of escalating disinformation, stigma and violence directed at sexuality and gender diverse people. This work will include guidance on hosting LGBTQ+ events safely and facilitating opportunities for our communities to gather together to discuss solutions.

**You can find out more about our work in safety and inclusion at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion/](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/safety-inclusion/)**



# 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 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 a number of programs and events under our LOVE Project umbrella.

## SNAPSHOT: COMMUNITY VISITOR SCHEME

 55

clients supported by CVS

 44

CVS volunteers supporting clients

## WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, ACON's LOVE Project will continue to hold our regular LOVE Club Gatherings in person and online, providing opportunities for older LGBTQ+ community members to socialise and connect. With support from the City of Sydney, we will also deliver events for older LGBTQ+ people with focuses on digital literacy and social connection.

You can find out more about our work in ageing at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/ageing/](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/ageing/)

## COMING BACK OUT SALON

The Coming Back Out Salon was presented by Melbourne-based events company All The Queens Men, in association with Sydney WorldPride and supported by ACON and the LOVE Project. The spectacular social event celebrating older LGBTQ+ people for the whole community was held at Sydney Town Hall, as one of the WorldPride's premier opening events.

## AFTERNOON DELIGHT

Afternoon Delight is our annual event presented by the LOVE Project and funded by NSW Seniors' Festival. Screening as part of Queer Screen's 30th Mardi Gras Film Festival, the event is a movie matinee, afternoon tea and social gathering for the older LGBTQ+ community, friends, and allies.

## MINDFUL ART ACCESS

In partnership with the Art Gallery of NSW, this initiative provided older LGBTQ+ people an opportunity to get up close to gallery and its artworks over a series of excursions.

## SUPPORTING OUR SENIORS WITH THE CITY OF SYDNEY

The LOVE Project has a close and successful partnership with the City of Sydney. Their investment helps support activities and events for older LGBTQ+ people.

The event A Social Movement was delivered for the second time as a collaboration with ACON's Women's Health Project and Boomalli

Aboriginal Artist Co-Operative. This event provided LGBTQ+ people with a safe space to make social connections and create art with the artist Hayley Pigram.

We collaborated with Tribal Warriors Cultural Cruises to offer older community members the opportunity to learn First Nations culture, history and stories of Sydney harbour.

In October, we held our inaugural LOVE Social Celebration. With generous funding support from Dowson Turco Lawyers, the event celebrated our trailblazing older community and paid tribute to our passionate LOVE Project members.

We also held the LOVE Social Catch Up at Glebe Town Hall, which included movement and dance exercises, a healthy lunch and discussion about cooking on a budget and information from the Welfare Rights Centre.

## 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. The gatherings have grown to become a fun and welcoming activity for older LGBTQ+ people to build their own support networks and friendships.

## COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS), 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.

## FOCUS AREA 3



The LOVE Project's Russ Cluyas (right) with Sydney vocalist and entertainer Shauna Jensen



# TRANS HEALTH EQUITY

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

Supporting the health of trans people ... Yesim Karasu

## IMPROVING THE HEALTH OF TRANS PEOPLE

ACON's Trans Health Equity unit was established in 2019 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*. We have fostered and strengthened strategic partnerships such as working with ASHM, Justice Health and NSW Health to improve affordable and available gender affirming healthcare and trans-affirming services.

It has been a difficult year for trans people of all genders everywhere. However, our community engagement, health promotion and advocacy efforts continue to demonstrate the importance and positive outcomes of peer-led care and support programs that aim to strengthen and empower our trans communities in NSW, and across Australia.

## TRANSHUB

*TransHub* continues to be one of the most important online hubs for trans health and gender affirmation support across NSW. The site draws visitors from all over Australia and overseas. Over the past year, *TransHub* recorded 898,000 visits and 1.4 million page views.

We received generous funding from the TPG Foundation to deliver a national expansion project to increase the health and wellbeing of all trans people and provide key information and resources to trans people, their allies and health providers across Australia. This project involves partnerships, robust governance, and collaboration between ACON and 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 on *TransHub*.

This year we added new pages on updating name and gender details to vote, experiences of suicide and distress and developed resources for Australian employers focusing on trans-affirming workplace practice, including updating the workplace gender affirmation policy template available on *TransHub*.

## TRANS VITALITY

Trans Vitality aims to reduce suicide rates in trans communities by strengthening the protective factors of trans people of all genders and the capacity of service providers across NSW.

This year, the program focused on a peer education model of supporting resilience-building, community connections, fostering self-determination, and prioritised the engagement and focus on trans people from culturally diverse backgrounds, people of colour and First Nations Sistergirls, Brotherboys and trans mob.

ACON's Trans Health Equity team revised the pilot program workshops and in 2023 delivered four workshop streams held over three months in March-May. This included an in-person workshop stream for trans people of colour in Western Sydney, and an online workshop stream for First Nations Sistergirls, Brotherboys and trans mob.

In total, 60 people applied to attend at least one of the workshop streams with 28 attending one or more of the workshop sessions. Attendees noted greater connection to community,

greater confidence to support other trans people in their lives, increased awareness of trans-affirming and gender affirming services, increased awareness of local trans history and feeling more euphoric and affirmed.

## TRANS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE

This year, ACON established the Trans Mental Health Service, off the back of the successful P4T pilot trans peer navigator service that finished up in 2022 and is featured in a final report *Insights Report: The role of Peer Navigators* by the Mental Health Commission NSW.

This new 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 clinicians and peer workers delivering this service are also trans.

To-date, this service has supported 58 people, through the delivery of over 580 occasions of service.

## SNAPSHOT: TRANSHUB

**1.4M**

Page views on *TransHub*

**898,000**

Visits to *TranHub*

## WHAT'S NEXT

Trans health and rights are a key focus for ACON. In the coming year, we will continue developing new *TransHub* pages and resources with a focus on the national expansion project. We will engage trans communities across our Trans Vitality program for the development of new peer-led workshops and a social media campaign. We will work alongside our partners and key stakeholders to continue our on-going commitment to an inclusive and knowledgeable health sector and providing resources and advocacy for clear and easy pathways for accessing available gender-affirming care in NSW.

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](https://acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/tgd-people)

# POLICY, STRATEGY AND RESEARCH

We're here to work with legislators, policymakers, researchers and service providers to help them understand and 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 a number of major policy papers including:

- *HIV and Young Gay, Bi+ and Queer Men*
- *People Living with HIV and Smoking: An Evidence Brief*
- *The Role of the NSW HIV Partnership Network in our Response to Mpox*

We provided submissions to a number of state and federal inquiries including the Australian Law Reform Commission's Inquiry into Religious Educational Institutions and Anti-Discrimination Law; the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2026 Census topic consultation; the federal Inquiry into Universal Access to Reproductive Healthcare; a submission to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee regarding long-acting injectable PrEP; and advice to NSW MP Alex Greenwich on his proposed Equality Bill.

We gave evidence at hearings including the NSW Inquiry into Improving Crisis Communications for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities; the Inquiry into Universal Access

to Reproductive Healthcare; and the Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ Hate Crimes.

We provided advice and feedback on a number of government strategies and policies, including the forthcoming *National HIV Strategy*, the *NSW Women's Strategy*, the *National Suicide Prevention Strategy*, the *NSW Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategy*, the new *NSW notification of HIV Infection form*, *NSW's Clinical Guidance for the Management of Substance Use in Pregnancy, Birth and the Postnatal*

 **3,395**  
responses collected from Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey

 **66**  
research projects advised on ACON Research Ethics Review Committee or supported by ACON

 **20+**  
submissions, advice, evidence, feedback provided to inquiries, hearing, strategies, policies and bills

*Period*, the Medical Board of Australia's *Telehealth consultations with patients guidelines*, as well as ongoing advice around the implementation of the *NSW LGBTIQ+ Health Strategy*.

We continued to advocate against mandatory disease testing by working with sector partners to produce guidelines for people who are the subject of a Mandatory Testing Order.

## NSW ELECTION 2023

In the lead up to the 2023 NSW State Election, ACON worked alongside a coalition of organisations including BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, Equality Australia, NSW Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby, Hepatitis NSW, SWOP, Positive Life NSW, HALC and Twenty10, to produce our Candidates Questionnaire, which outlined key commitments necessary in improving the health, human rights, and safety of people in our communities.

Representatives from the major parties and key independents provided their position and elaborated on their commitments at our community forum held in March at the Teachers Federation Conference Centre. Over 150 community members attended in person and online.

ACON remains committed to our multi-partisan approach to our

work. We look forward to continue working with the NSW Government to achieve positive health outcomes for our communities.

## GAY COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

Sydney WorldPride saw the return to in-person recruitment of the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey (SGCPS) back to pre-pandemic levels. This year, 3,395 valid surveys were collected. We engaged 30 peer recruiters, working a total of 496 hours during Sydney WorldPride.

Delivered in partnership between ACON, UNSW's Centre for Social Research in Health, the Kirby Institute, Positive Life NSW and the NSW Ministry of Health, the SGCPS is an annual cross-sectional survey of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men recruited in community sites in Sydney and online throughout NSW.

## 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.

Our Research Ethics Review Committee, which is committed to ensuring our communities are meaningfully and ethically included in research, reviewed and provided advice to 45 research projects from 18 research institutions, exploring a range of topics including HIV stigma, PrEP, cancer, violence, inclusion, drug and alcohol use, mental health, mpox, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, trans and gender diverse health, multicultural LGBTQ people and health service access.

ACON staff also provided support to 21 research projects in an advisory capacity including the SGCPS, PrEPARE, SWASH, Alcohol and Tobacco Use Among LBQ Women study, GoGoVax, Bi+ HIV and Sexual Health survey, #SpeakingOut@Work, and the

Transforming Responses to Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence study, among others.

## WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, ACON will start developing the next iteration of our Strategic Plan. It will be a collaborative effort involving consultations with our community members, stakeholders, and staff, alongside a comprehensive review of our existing programs and initiatives. In addition, we will continue our advocacy efforts including responding to Alex Greenwich MP's Equality Bill, participating in the NSW Drug Summit, and addressing the findings of the NSW Special Commission of Inquiry into LGBTIQ hate crimes, which is due to report in 2023/24.

You can find out more about our work in policy, strategy and research at [acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/policy-research/](https://acon.org.au/what-we-are-here-for/policy-research/)

# LGBTQ PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

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

ACON's LGBTQ People With Disability project began in September 2019 with the development and production of a resource helping sexuality and gender diverse communities understand and navigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We partnered with

People With Disability Australia to develop Queerability, an toolkit that focuses on providing culturally-informed information about choice and decision-making in the NDIS application and management processes. ACON is continuing to update and improve this toolkit to reflect changes in NDIS policy and

legislation, and to make the toolkit easier to use and more user-friendly. In 2023/24, ACON will deliver virtual workshops to support LGBTQ+ people with disability nationally to build advocacy skills and navigate the NDIS. In NSW, we will also create opportunities for LGBTQ+ people with disability to connect socially.

# 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 through via phone and the internet.

## ACON HUNTER

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 *With Love*, WorldPride and Mpox campaigns via our online platforms and through local networks.
- Provided a peer support service to the HNELHD Mpox vaccination clinic in Newcastle.
- 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 421 clients.
- Partnered with SWOP to conduct 7 outreach visits to brothels and provided HIV and STI testing for 52 sex workers.
- Distributed 30,208 free condoms.
- Partnered with the City of Newcastle to deliver Trans and Gender Diverse inclusion and wellbeing events.
- Attended 56 events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included regional pride events, SHAG week with the University of Newcastle, Mardi Gras viewing parties, Queer social and arts-based events, service provider expos, and outreach community catchups.
- Delivered the ComeOUT LGBTQ+ youth inclusion project, which developed work-ready skills among LGBTQ+ young people and produced eight social inclusion events attended by over 250 LGBTQ+ youth in Newcastle.
- Continued to deliver both peer education and training to local service providers working with our communities. In total, we delivered 46 education and capacity-building sessions to 603 participants from a broad section of our regional communities. Our Community Health Promotion Officers also provided an additional 5,734 occasions of health education to our LGBTQ+ peers.
- Conducted 34 outreach trips to towns and cities across the region, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities that were attended by 3,781 people. An additional 24,000 people attended Newcastle, Central Coast, and Lake Macquarie pride festivals, where ACON had activator stalls.
- Provided counselling, care coordination, and peer support to over 555 clients directly 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 60,890 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 233,180 needles and syringes and providing 1,369 brief interventions at our Maitland Road NSP outlet
- Developed and distributed 15 regionally focused HIV, sexual health, and harm minimisation health promotion resources.

### SNAPSHOT: ACON HUNTER

 **30,208**

Free condoms distributed through the Hunter and New England region

 **5,734**

Interactions around HIV and LGBTQ health education to LGBTQ+ peers

 **421**

Clients accessed HIV and STI testing at the drop-in sexual health service



ACON at the Broken Heel Festival

## ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

ACON's Northern Rivers office is based in Lismore and works with community, along with partners and 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.

Since March 2022, the ACON Northern Rivers team has worked hard to rebuild and refurbish the office that was inundated by severe floods that hit the region. In June 2022 our office re-opened, with improved facilities and counselling and care spaces, allowing us to continue supporting our communities.

Among the highlights this year were:

- Delivering ACON's HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at local events

### SNAPSHOT: ACON NORTHERN RIVERS

 **9,900**

free condoms distributed in the Northern Rivers region

 **9,606**

sterile injecting equipment distributed via the Needle & Syringe Program

 **193**

community members support through counselling, care coordination and client services

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, RU Okay Day at Southern Cross University, It's OK on the Macleay, Mental Health Day BBQ in Ballina and NAIDOC events in Lismore.

- Provided 15 training sessions about HIV treatment, prevention and testing, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and ACON services. These are free sessions for the community and service providers that help to reduce stigma and discrimination for the LGBTQ+ community and people living with HIV.
- Our Client Services team and Health Promotion team established a new 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.
- Delivered counselling, care coordination and client services to 193 community members in the Northern Rivers region.
- Supported domestic violence and suicide prevention initiatives through our membership in the Kyogle Anti-Violence Alliance and the Lismore Suicide Prevention Collaborative.
- Conducted 15 outreach trips to towns and cities across the Northern Rivers, facilitating social connection, networking, capacity building, and health and wellbeing opportunities.
- Attended 15 local events to engage in health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community and promote HIV awareness. These included events at 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 groups for people living with HIV, including Northern Rivers Gay Men, Lismore Lads and Brunswick Lunch Club, while creating new relationships with Rainbow in the River in Laurieton and Rainbow Coffs Harbour.
- Distributed 9,900 free condoms.
- Distributed 9,606 sterile needles and syringes and provided 61 brief interventions via our Needle Syringe Program outlet.

The impact of the 2022 floods was significant and continues to cause psychological distress and social and economic hardship among our communities in the region. We continued to provide support by:

- Providing financial assistance with funds raised from ACON's flood appeal. \$12,800 was distributed to 78 people from our communities to assist with essential items such as food, fuel and clothing.
- Delivering a suicide prevention workshop in April to support those with feelings of despair or thoughts of suicide. This was made possible with support from the Lismore Suicide Prevention Collaborative and North Coast Primary Health Network.
- Developing a series of workshops to increase wellbeing and preparedness for LGBTQ+ communities impacted by flooding in the Northern Rivers, along with additional counselling support to flood-affected community members. This program is funded by Healthy North Coast through the North Coast PHN program.

## 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 were:

- Hosted a peer-led HIV prevention regional forum for GBMSM "HIV in 2023" and presented three peer-led workshops for GBMSM focusing on HIV, sexual health, and wellbeing.
- Hosted a rapid HIV testing and Dry Blood Spot pop-up clinic at the Broken Heel Festival.
- Delivered 10,820 safe sex packs to community events, organisations, and venues in Southern, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions.
- Delivered World AIDS Day events in Katoomba and Wollongong, including coordinating the refurbishment and unveiling of the AIDS memorial at the Wollongong Memorial Gardens.
- Delivered ACON resources to 180 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 Wagga Wagga and the Southeast Coast to improve access to PrEP in regional NSW.
- Delivered ACON's HIV prevention campaigns and sexual health messages at key local events in Wollongong, Albury, Wagga, Hay, Katoomba, Penrith, Bega, Young, Queanbeyan, Jindabyne and Nowra.
- Supported and attended key events marking LGBTQ+ days of significance in Wollongong, Leeton, Hay, Katoomba and Penrith.

- Attended or ran over 20 events and initiatives to engage in HIV and STI health promotion and help create inclusive spaces for the LGBTQ+ community. These included six regional pride festivals in Broken Hill, Hay, Bega, Wagga, Port Kembla and Jindabyne. Additionally, we supported the Western Sydney Rainbow Connection speaker series, Wollongong Spin Festival, Koori Knockout, World AIDS Day Red Party Wollongong, Medlow Bath AIDS memorial grove service, and IDAHOBIT Day events.
- Partnered with the Parramatta Pride Forum to plan, operate and sponsor the 2022 Parramatta Pride Picnic.
- Conducted 27 outreach trips to towns and cities across our region, including in the NSW Far West, Murrumbidgee, Illawarra Shoalhaven, Nepean Blue Mountains, Southern Highlands, and Southern NSW.

### WHAT'S NEXT

In addition to maintaining our broad range of programs and services in regional NSW, in the coming year, we will have a special focus on:

- Continuing to work closely with Local Government and Community Organisations in regional NSW to offer safe, fun, and engaging opportunities for our communities to gather despite an environment of escalating disinformation, lobbying, stigma, and aggression directed against LGBTQ+ people.
- Supporting the Tropical Fruits NYE festival, which is returning for the first time in several years, by providing a large harm minimisation and health promotion presence via the ACON Rovers program.
- Continuing to focus on delivering our Mental Health Resilience and Wellbeing services in Northern NSW as the long-term impacts of the floods continue to be felt by our communities.
- Extending access to our suicide prevention and trans and gender diverse mental health peer support services to better meet the needs of our communities in Regional NSW.

You can find out more about our work in regional NSW at [acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/regional-nsw/](https://acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/regional-nsw/)

### SNAPSHOT: ACON REGIONAL OUTREACH

 **10,820**

safe sex packs distributed in the Southern, Nepean Blue Mountains, Murrumbidgee and Far West regions

 **27**

outreach trips to support rainbow communities in towns and cities across the southern and far west NSW

 **20**

events and initiatives hosted or support to promote HIV and STI health education



Chris Nelson from ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs

# 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 SUITE

ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs offer Australian employers, sporting organisations and health and wellbeing providers a membership-based program that provides dedicated relationship management, expert advice, training, resources and on-call support for all aspects of LGBTQ inclusion.

In addition, members are provided with strategic roadmaps for best practice, benchmarking opportunities, and participation in annual employee surveys, all of which provide valuable information on the scope, trajectory, and impact of their work. Pride Inclusion Programs also holds an annual conference, several awards events, information sessions, data presentations, and panel events throughout the year.

## PRIDE IN DIVERSITY

Pride in Diversity is an employer support program for LGBTQ inclusion in the workplace. Pride in Diversity are specialists in HR, organisational change and workplace diversity dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ people by reducing exclusion, invisibility, homophobia and stigma in the workplace.

Membership of Pride in Diversity has substantially grown this year with member numbers rising to 469, an increase of 14.4% year-on-year.

The Australian LGBTQ Inclusion Awards did not take place this year due to the significant redesign of the Australian Workplace Equality Index and will resume in 2024.

## PRIDE IN SPORT

Pride in Sport has maintained its success over the past year, partnering with over 60 national, state, professional and university sporting bodies, including prominent entities like the Australian Sports Commission, Sport Integrity Australia, and Paralympics Australia. Notably, fee-for-service support surged, enabling our team to engage with 100+ sporting organisations.

A highlight this year is the 'Pride in Sport Collective', a Sport Australia-funded initiative where 12 national sporting bodies collaborated with Pride in Sport on inclusion policies and community engagement, yielding resounding success.

We played a pivotal role in the Australian Institute of Sport's 'Thrive With Pride' initiative; empowering out and ally ambassadors and developing education packages, fostering greater inclusivity within elite sport.



delegates attended the Pride In Practice Conference



organisations making their workplaces more inclusive for LGBTQ employees



sessions on LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusive practice delivered by Pride Training

The 2023 Australian Pride in Sport Awards set a new benchmark with the largest attendance to-date, making this a must-attend event celebrating LGBTQ inclusion successes.

### PRIDE IN HEALTH + WELLBEING

Pride in Health + Wellbeing enjoyed a 46% growth in membership this year closing the financial year with 92 members. This year also saw culmination of both Pride in Health + Wellbeing members and Pride in Diversity Health members under an overarching 'Health' umbrella, for the purpose of extending our work across the health sector and providing better value for members across both programs.

### PRIDE TRAINING

2022-2023 saw Pride Training continue to grow with increases in training sessions and a broad range of special projects. The team delivered 110 facilitated training sessions (an increase of 59%) which was made up of 413 hours of training (an increase of 48%) delivered to 2,196 learners (an increase of 89%). The overall satisfaction score for these sessions remains steady at 9.4/10.

Over the year, Pride Training developed and delivered bespoke training and e-learning packages around LGBTQ+ awareness, inclusive practice and trans-affirming support for professionals and service providers across a broad range of sectors and industries.

### NATIONAL BENCHMARKING INDICES & SURVEYS

All Pride Inclusion Programs publish an index for best practice within their respective areas of expertise. These indices act as:

- a roadmap that empowers organisations to develop their LGBTQ inclusion strategies and action plans through an evidence-based approach guided by best practice insights
- a submission instrument that assesses the workplace inclusion initiatives within an organisation based on evidence and responses supplied,
- a survey designed to gauge the overall impact of inclusion initiatives on organisational culture as well as on LGBTQ identifying and non-identifying respondents.

This allows organisations to holistically plan, audit, and measure the impact of their work in LGBTQ inclusion, benchmark themselves against their peers, and provide a comprehensive overview of progress to date.

This year the Australian Workplace Equality Index and the Pride in Sport Index undertook significant changes after an extensive member consultation. Due to the extent of the AWEI review, submissions were not collected for the 2022 year. 41,157 respondents participated in the AWEI Employee Survey. The Pride in Sport Index saw 27 organisations take part and over 1,000 survey responses collected, making this one of the richest datasets for LGBTQ inclusion in sport to-date. The Health + Wellbeing Equality Index saw 28 submissions with a total of 1,177 survey responses.

### PRIDE IN PRACTICE CONFERENCE

The Pride in Practice Conference is the only national conference dedicated to advancing LGBTQ inclusion in workplaces, sporting organisations and the health and human services sector. This year was deemed the most successful conference to-date, held in Melbourne with 960 delegates across the three days, 143 speakers and 50 sessions overall.

### WHAT'S NEXT

Looking ahead we see the start of the new iteration of all our program indices and surveys and the return of the much-anticipated AWEI awards event in 2024. Across all programs there is an anticipation of increased uptake with newly programmed initiatives and bespoke work by our Pride Training program, increased engagement of executive leadership in forums and peer discussions across all inclusion programs and a refresh of divisional cross-program offerings.

You can find out more about our work in LGBTQ inclusion at [prideinclusionprograms.com.au](https://prideinclusionprograms.com.au)



ACON's Pride Training Team



## FOCUS AREA 4

Our work is focused on

# 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.

During this financial year, revenue from community fundraising and events has been impacted by the post pandemic economic environment. However, income through other revenue streams, such as our Pride Inclusion Programs, was robust. ACON also continued to have considerable success in its various government grant applications at national, state and local levels.

The Finance Team continued to deliver accurate financial reporting, including thorough monitoring of income and expenditure, as well as closely analysing the cashflow of the organisation and the economic environment. Quarterly reviews of performance against budget continued to ensure that the Finance & Audit Committee and Board of Directors had full transparency of how ACON's operations were tracking throughout the year.

ACON continues to re-invest income that is self-generated through fee-for-service offerings such as Pride Inclusion Programs, Pride Training and Pride Counselling to ensure their continued growth. These programs operate independently from government funding and the income generated allows ACON to continue to expand the reach of its various programs and services to our communities.

### FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE

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.

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 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.

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

### IMPROVED SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES

We continued to develop and implement improved systems, processes and initiatives to strengthen our finance operational capabilities. These include:

- Regular review and update of finance policies in view of changes in complexity and implementation of new systems, and changes in accounting standards and regulations
- Performance of additional internal audits to improve operational efficiency and ensure decisions are properly authorised
- Implementation of a new online credit card management and reporting system

### 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 2022-23 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.

### WHAT'S NEXT

In the coming year, ACON will investigate and conduct due diligence on the proposed implementation of a new best-practice financial management information system to provide real time reporting on ACON's financial position. This will ensure ACON continues to be innovative, agile and effective organisation.

We will continue our efforts to maintain our focused and disciplined approach to financial decisions to ensure long-term sustainability.

# 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.



Jean Paul Gaultier raised over \$10,000 for ACON throughout 2022/2023

## FOCUS AREA 4

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 thousands of dedicated supporters who donate and raise funds for us every year, in what continues to be a very challenging fundraising environment.

### INTRODUCING CELEBRATE WITH PRIDE

This year, we introduced a new peer-to-peer fundraising campaign called Celebrate With Pride. The campaign provides a platform for people and businesses to raise funds for ACON in the lead up to Mardi Gras and Pride Month. Supporters can also raise funds through the platform at any time of the year. We had an incredible response towards the campaign, particularly in the backdrop of WorldPride, with around 40 registrations, raising around \$40,000. We thank all who got involved with, or donated to, our inaugural Celebrate With Pride campaign.



**We thank the many hundreds of supporters who continue to make ACON's work possible through fundraising and philanthropy.**

### SUPPORTING THE RED RIBBON APPEAL

Our communities continued to show wonderful support for our long-running campaign, the Red Ribbon Appeal. We collected donations at train 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.

### FUNDRAISING AT EVENTS

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 long-running fundraiser Bingay continues to attract a strong following. Held monthly at The Beresford, 100% of proceeds goes towards supporting ACON's programs and services.

This year saw the return of the Honour Awards, after it was cancelled for two consecutive years because of the pandemic. As well as celebrating our communities, Honour is a fundraiser for ACON. We thank all who attended Honour, participated in the silent auction, bought a raffle ticket or made a donation.

Local LGBTQ venues continued their fundraising efforts for ACON and we extend our sincerest thanks for their support, including Universal, The Beresford and The Stonewall Hotel. The latter's Orgy of Drag event, held each year during Pride Month, raised over \$2,000, bringing the total amount raised in 24 years to an amazing \$48,000.

### THE IMPACT OF REGULAR DONORS

ACON is grateful to be the recipient of donations from our regular

donors. Their monthly gifts makes a big impact in supporting our health programs and services. We thank all our regular donors for giving so generously to ACON every month.

### BUILDING FUNDRAISING PARTNERSHIPS

We continued to grow our valued partnerships with corporates, businesses and organisations. Global fashion label Jean Paul Gaultier has donated over \$10,000 from their Pride fragrance collection. \$20 from every bottle sold in Australia was donated to ACON. Hospitality group Merivale donated \$24,308 from the proceeds of their summer cocktail campaign. Lendlease donated \$14,000 from their Darling Quarter activation during WorldPride. 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 our allies. 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

ACON's work is simply not possible without our supporters. Looking ahead, we will continue to develop innovative campaigns and invest in new technologies to give our communities more options to support us. We also aim to build long-term and meaningful relationships by improving and enhancing their supporter experience.



ACON at the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade

Our work is focused on

# BUILDING A WORKPLACE THAT ATTRACTS AND DEVELOPS THE BEST PEOPLE

## FOCUS AREA 5

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

**CORPORATE SERVICES**

In 2022-23, 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. These improvements included a new online credit card management system, investigations into the implementation of an up-to-date, leading practice financial management information system and the adoption of advanced cyber security policies and procedures.

This year's highlights include:

- The Information Technology unit continued to provide effective support and resources to ACON staff. A particular emphasis this year has been on developing a cyber security strategy and implementation across the organisation. Key measures include the rollout of IT vulnerability management software and mandatory cyber security training for all staff.
- Front of House provided a total of 16,343 occasions of service, both face-to-face and via telephone.
- The Facilities team continued the maintenance and efficient operation of facilities, safeguarding the health of all in the Sydney building. An Automated External Defibrillator was installed in the ground floor lobby in June 2023.

- People & Culture supported the business with policy, practices, and guidance to manage ongoing hybrid work arrangements ensuring that employees working away from the office stayed connected with their colleagues, their work, ACON and the communities they serve.
- The Finance team provided timely and accurate reports throughout the period, particularly in relation to the impact of the post pandemic environment on the organisation's financial position.

**PEOPLE & CULTURE**

ACON is committed to building a workforce that reflects all aspects of diversity and intersectionality to bring a range of perspectives, ideas and insights to everything we do. Our focus continues to be on developing the internal pipeline of people from under-represented groups at all levels and enhancing our recruitment and other talent retention practices to enable this.

ACON will continue its work to increase representation of women and underrepresented ethnically and gender diverse groups across our workforce. We will continue to enhance internal campaigns with the collection of demographic data to understand the diversity of our workforce and improve practices to attract candidates with broad diversity.

In 2022-23, we continued to attract, develop, and retain a skilled and engaged workforce. To support our work, the following actions were taken:

- The re-branding of Human Resources to People & Culture.
- Ongoing review and updating of all people-related policies.
- Review of all People & Culture systems with a view to move to a fully integrated management and payroll system.
- A review of all people-related processes to ensure we adopt and implement leading practices.
- The appointment of a Diversity & Inclusion Officer to coordinate and progress our internal diversity and inclusion strategies.

**SNAPSHOT: EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY**



Teamwork



Values



Workplace flexibility

# 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.



ACON team members at ACON's staff conference, Big Days In



Staff honoured for their efforts in supporting the recovery of ACON's Northern Rivers office and team at ACON's annual Staff Recognition Awards

**STAFF ENGAGEMENT**

- This year, the ACON employee engagement survey yielded a participation rate of 94%. Notable highlights include:
- Stand-out results with Workplace Flexibility holding firm at 86%, while Supervision, Values and Teamwork rating amongst the highest areas at 94%, 92% and 90% respectively.
- Employee Engagement score of 82%. While lower than 2022 it is slightly higher than our benchmarks of H&CS (80%) and NFP (81%).
- Employee Wellbeing held firm in this year's results at 76%, only dropping 1% on 2022 results and sitting 3% and 5% respectively higher against the H&CS and NFP benchmarks.

**STAFF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

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

- Ensuring every staff member has access to professional development per year.
- 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 of relevant policies at the general staff meetings that support and foster a safe working space for ACON's workforce.

**WOMEN'S EQUITY TASKFORCE**

ACON's Women's Health, Safety & Equity Taskforce (WHSETF) was established in September of 2021. The WHSETF was created to start conversations about what more ACON could be doing both internally and externally for our communities to better address issues surrounding gender equity. In 2022 the WHSETF welcomed the hire of ACON's first Diversity & Inclusion Officer. This has meant the WHSETF is resourced to drive action in key priority areas ongoingly. Working closely with the Diversity & Inclusion Officer, the WHSETF has provided recommendations for the design of a purpose-built Gender Equality Training that all existing staff and new starters will undertake. Plans are under way to re-establish an ACON's women's network. During the 2022 Big Days In all staff training days the WHSETF curated a popular session titled Gender Equality: A Shared Vision. And in early 2023 we hosted another well attended International Women's Day event in the ACON café that was live streamed to the regions. The event was called Women Talking.

**MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT PLAN**

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.

Through a City of Sydney grant, ACON delivered Digitising Rainbow Resilience, a training program upskilling LGBTQ+ people from multicultural backgrounds on their digital engagement skills and capacity to support their communities and respond to online discrimination.

ACON also partnered with The Australian Institute of Interpreters and Translators to train over 220 translators and interpreters on LGBTQ+ safety and inclusion practices through online webinars. We also plan to deliver ten in-person sessions in the coming year.

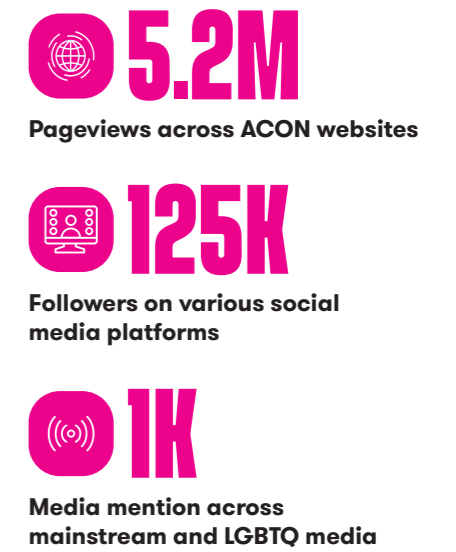
ACON's Leading Rainbow Western Sydney events and Rainbow Multicultural Fair also supported LGBTQ+ community members and leaders in Western Sydney to get connected and share skills. We also launched the People of Colour Network and Multicultural Working Group, fostering support and knowledge-sharing among culturally diverse staff.

**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. We also continued to enhance ACON's digital information and engagement capabilities. Key highlights include:

- Our media releases and announcements generated robust media coverage throughout the year. In 2022-2023, we tracked 1,091 media mentions across mainstream and LGBTQ media.
- Engagement on social media continued to grow. Across the various platforms, our collective channels recorded over 125,000 followers, an increase of 22% on the previous year.
- We continued to deliver a range of 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.
- There was significant engagement across ACON's suite of websites including ACON Health, Ending HIV, Emen8, Pivot Point, Can We, Here.org.au and Say It Out Loud. Traffic to ACON's corporate website also saw sustained growth throughout the year, recording a 41% increase in the number of users to 309,228.

- Across all our digital websites, we recorded over 5.2 million pageviews.
- We continued to work with stakeholders to improve user experiences and increase digital transformation across organisation, including volunteer onboarding, clinical support services and event management.
  - We continued to design, deliver and support common ACON platforms and services that enable digital transformation.



**WHAT'S NEXT**

ACON's Quality Accreditation is due for renewal in December 2023. ACON has completed all actions on its Quality Accreditation Improvement Plan, from the last assessment in 2020. We are now preparing for the next assessment and audit and will continue to provide leadership and advocacy on key issues relating to community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders.

As we fulfil our commitment to continuously improve, we will continue efforts to enhance systems and processes to further strengthen our organisational capabilities to better serve our communities.

# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

This year we reflected on our achievements, challenges and areas for improvement as we developed our next Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

## ACON'S SECOND INNOVATE RAP 2023-2025

This year marked a key milestone in our reconciliation journey with the development and launch of the second iteration of our Innovate RAP.

ACON's Innovate RAP 2023-25 builds on the organisation's ongoing commitment to ensuring health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities. We are committed to achieving this by engaging in a listening and truth-telling process, and by building relationships, trust and respect.

The actions of this RAP will provide us with outcomes to implement and bring us closer to our vision of everyone in our communities, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, having the opportunity to live their healthiest lives.

The RAP's artwork was created by Wiradjuri and Birpai man Wayde Clarke, and is titled 'Rainbow Pride, Rainbow Strong'.

## RAP WORKING GROUP

The development of the second Innovate RAP was overseen by ACON's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group, the organisation's internal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory committee made up of staff and community representatives.

This year, we increased the number of First Nations community members and appointed engagement consultant, storyteller,

podcast host and long-term RAP Working Group member Jane Yettica to Aboriginal co-chair.

We express our sincerest thanks to the members of ACON's RAP Working Group. We are deeply grateful to all of them for sharing so generously their time, insights and lived experience to assist ACON on its reconciliation journey.

## RAP WORKING GROUP RETREAT

This year, ACON hosted a retreat for the RAP Working Group to build stronger connections, strengthen collaboration and foster discussion and ideas in the development of the next RAP.

The retreat was held on Awabakal and Worimi Country in Muloobinba (Newcastle). Members gathered at Yamuloong Conference Centre for two days of workshops to evaluate our first Innovate RAP and to inform the second Innovate RAP.

The retreat allowed attendees to connect with each other in a more meaningful way and provided scope to evaluate and identify opportunities for future connections.

## FIRST NATIONS HEALTH PROGRAMS

The First Nations Health Programs team continued its work in strengthening the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities by implementing a range of activities and initiatives. Highlights include:

- Leading the development and production of the First Nations Float at the 2023 Mardi Gras Parade. The float featured the 20-metre long Rainbow Serpent referred to as 'Gari'. As well as the parade, the serpent also led the historic Sydney WorldPride March over the Sydney Harbour Bridge and was later re-activated at the Powerhouse Museum during NAIDOC Week.
- Hosting and participating in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week events in Sydney and regional NSW.
- Partnering with a[TEST] to hand out self-testing kits and educated community on PrEP, PEP and sexual health at the AMS Redfern NAIDOC Community Day.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Guided by our Innovate RAP 2023-25, we will implement actions that work towards achieving our vision for reconciliation. We will listen and engage in truth-telling. We will continue to strengthen relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, engage staff and stakeholders in reconciliation, and work towards achieving positive health outcomes for First Nations communities.

You can find out more about our RAP and other work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people at [acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/Aboriginal-people](https://acon.org.au/who-we-are-here-for/Aboriginal-people)

## ACON'S VISION FOR RECONCILIATION

ACON's vision for reconciliation is an inclusive community where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the wider community work together in the spirit of truth and in the pursuit of health equity.

It is a community that respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities' identities and cultures, listens to their voices, and ensures they are at the centre of health responses.

The future that we envisage is free from HIV transmissions and one where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of diverse genders and sexualities, alongside the rest of our communities, live their healthiest lives. No one should be left behind.



FOCUS AREA 5

ACON's Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and management at the launch of ACON's Second Innovate RAP

# 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.

## HELPING PEOPLE STAY HEALTHY & SAFE AT WORLDPRIDE

During Sydney WorldPride, ACON was omnipresent throughout the festival with the support of our many volunteers and staff. ACON's health promotion campaign With Love was showcased at all major events, and our peers in HIV prevention and harm reduction were deployed throughout the season to support revellers. We thank all staff and volunteers who helped us deliver vital health messages and services to our communities during the festivities.

## ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES ON WORLD AIDS DAY

Held annually for World AIDS Day, ACON's Red Ribbon Appeal engages the community on our work in HIV prevention and support, and to raise funds for the Red Ribbon Appeal. A number of organisations, pubs, clubs, businesses, corporates, employee pride networks and community groups across NSW were provided with resources on hosting fundraising events and activities. In addition, dedicated volunteers supported our fundraising activations at CBD train stations, theatre production and community events.

## BINGAY: CONNECTING COMMUNITIES SINCE 1999

Bingay is ACON's long-running – and much beloved – community engagement and fundraising event. Held monthly at the Beresford Hotel in Surry Hills, it's a great way to engage with community and allies with 100% of proceeds supporting ACON's health programs. We express our gratitude to the management and staff of the Beresford Hotel and the wonderful attendees throughout the year, our generous sponsors and prize donors, our passionate volunteers and to Bingay's dedicated hosts Charisma Belle and Naomi Palmer.

## HONOUR AWARDS: CELEBRATING LGBTQ HEROES

Honour is ACON's annual gala event produced to celebrate outstanding achievements and service in NSW's LGBTQ communities, and to raise funds for community-led health initiatives. Over 300 people came together at the Ivy Ballroom to celebrate LGBTQ community members whose work have made a difference to the lives of sexuality and gender diverse people in NSW. Eleven recipients were selected from a diverse field of 35 finalists, drawn from over 230 nominations. We thank all who attended and continue to support the Honour Awards, along with our many generous partners and sponsors, including Dowson Turco Lawyers, who have been Honour's Principal Partner since 2018. Thank you.

## UNITE & REMEMBER: SYDNEY CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Presented by Positive Life NSW and ACON, the Sydney AIDS Candlelight Memorial was held on Sunday 21 May at the Eternity Playhouse in Darlinghurst, where the names of those who have passed were read out in remembrance. The service featured a performance by Mary Kiani and a slideshow photo presentation by William Yang. We thank all who continue to attend and support this important community and remembrance event for loved ones who have passed from HIV/AIDS.

## ACON & QUEER SCREEN AT MARDI GRAS FILM FESTIVAL

Each February at Queer Screen's Mardi Gras Film Festival, ACON co-presents a range of films to promote health and wellbeing messages and engage community members on important health issues. For 2023, ACON presented films with stories about transition journeys, mental health, sexuality labelling and gender presentation. The annual festival provides an important opportunity to further amplify our work and raise awareness of programs and services to our communities.

## WHAT'S NEXT

ACON will continue to deliver events and activations that engage our communities, facilitate social connections and provide volunteering opportunities. As we shift to a post-pandemic environment, we will look to expanding the footprint of our activities and presence including during World AIDS Day and at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Festival.

You can find out how you can get involved with ACON at [acon.org.au/get-involved/](http://acon.org.au/get-involved/)



### 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 crucial role in helping us run programs and services to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Our volunteers provide support with many 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.

Each year we hold a Volunteer Thank You event to express our gratitude to all our volunteers for their continued support.

We thank all our amazing volunteers for their ongoing support for ACON and our communities.

Volunteers supporting ACON's Red Ribbon Appeal

# OUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM



**Nicolas Parkhill AM** Chief Executive Officer

Nicolas Parkhill AM has over 30 years of experience in public and community health. Since 2009 Nicolas has been the CEO of ACON. Prior to this role Nicolas worked in a variety of senior management and policy roles for NSW Health and the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet. He has a background in health policy, social marketing campaign management and public relations. Nicolas is a Board member of the Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies (NADA), the peak organisation for the non-government alcohol and other drugs sector in NSW, is a current member of the Advisory Board of the National Suicide Prevention

Office, a member of the Australian Government's Expert Advisory Group for the development of Australia's first LGBTIQ+ Health and Wellbeing 10 Year Action Plan. He is a former Board member of ACON, the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and APCOM, the peak body in the Asia Pacific region for men who have sex with men and transgender people in relation to HIV, sexual health and wellbeing, and human rights. In 2022 Nicolas was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in recognition of his significant service to community health, particularly to people living with HIV, and to healthcare delivery.



**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.



**Susan Culverston** Director, Corporate Services

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.



**Daniel McCarthy** Director, Regional Services

Daniel has 15 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 LGBTIQ+ people in rural, regional and remote settings.



**Dawn-Emsen Hough** Director, Pride Inclusion Programs

Dawn is the Director of ACON's Pride Inclusion Programs (Pride in Diversity, Pride in Sport, Pride in Health + Wellbeing). Dawn started with ACON in 2009 specifically to develop and establish the national Pride in Diversity Program and to develop the Australian Workplace Equality Index (national benchmark on LGBTQ workplace inclusion). Since that time, the program has grown substantially

and gained an international reputation for its leading practice and gold standard index. Dawn has a background in financial services, talent management and organisational development with academic qualifications in adult education and cognitive science. Dawn was appointed Adjunct Senior Fellow at University of Queensland in 2021.



**Teddy Cook** Director, Community Health & Wellbeing

Teddy Cook (he/him) has held leadership roles in the community sector since 2007. He specialises in community health, health promotion, policy, advocacy, education and implementation. Teddy has been at ACON since 2012, and is now the Director, Community Health Division. This team includes ACON's Gadigal Sydney-based Support Services, NSW-wide and some national LGBTQ+ health, equity, and harm reduction programs. Teddy leads the Division's strategic position and

direction, key relationships and design, delivery and evaluation of all services and programs, alongside the Divisional Leadership Team. These programs focus on key health issues that people from LGBTQ+ population groups are disparately over-represented in while facing significant barriers to care, information and health education. This includes initiatives that enhance empowerment, autonomy, community connection and self-determination of LGBTQ+ people and communities.



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



**Sabine D'Haeseleer** Company Secretary and EA to CEO

Sabine joined ACON in 2013 in the role of Executive Assistant to the CEO and was appointed by the ACON Board in 2018 as the Company Secretary. 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 fifteen years. Internationally, he is co-chair of UHC2030, the global multistakeholder partnership for Universal Health Coverage, and is 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.

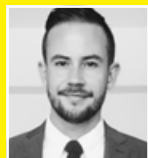
He is also an Advisory Governor of the Commonwealth Foundation, a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, and a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors Not-for-Profit Chairs Advisory Forum. He is trained as a mathematician, and currently works as an investment analyst. 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 GP registrar with an interest in sexual and reproductive health alongside regular work in Emergency Medicine. He completed his internship and residency at St Vincent's Hospital working across a variety of medical and surgical specialties in addition to completing secondments in paediatrics and Aboriginal health. 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 almost 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 a member of the Boards of the GO Foundation and The Foundation for Young Australians, and, until recently, was Chair of PwC Indigenous Consulting and the 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.



**Julie Mooney-Somers** BSc, GradCertEdStud, PhD

Julie is an Associate Professor in Qualitative Research in Health at Sydney Health Ethics at the University of Sydney where she teaches into the Master of Public Health. A social scientist, her research examines equity in health and

health services in relation to sexuality, gender, indigenous status, and youth. She has been the joint coordinator of SWASH, the longest running regular survey of lesbian, bisexual and queer women's health, since 2009.



**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** BAgEc, 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

FINANCIAL REPORT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023

ACON HEALTH LIMITED  
ABN38136883915

These financial statements are the consolidated financial statements of the consolidated entity consisting of ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary, AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated. The financial statements are presented in the Australian currency.

ACON Health Limited is a 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 Australia

A description of the nature of the consolidated entity's operations and its principal activities is included in the directors' Report on pages 2 to 7 which is not part of these financial statements.

The financial statements were authorised for issue by the directors on 13 September 2023. The directors have the power to amend and reissue the financial statement.



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

The directors present their report on the consolidated entity (referred to hereafter as the group) consisting of ACON Health Limited and its controlled entity, the AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated, for the year ended 30 June 2023.

## 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
- Zoé de Saram

## ACON BOARD

### Meetings of Directors

The number of meetings of the Company’s board of directors during the year, and the number of meetings attended by each director were:

ACON Health Board meetings - Attendance From 1 July 2022 - 30 June 2023		
Board member	Meetings Held	Meetings Attended
Justin Koonin	6	6
Louisa Degenhardt	6	3
Atari Metcalf	6	4
Benjamin Bavinton	6	6
Christian Dunk	6	4
Jason Glanville	6	5
Julie Mooney-Somers	6	4
Somali Cerise	6	3
Steven Berveling	6	5
Zoé de Saram	6	6

## PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES AND OBJECTIVES

### 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 be 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 sexuality and gender diverse 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 sexuality and gender diverse communities 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 sexuality and gender diverse 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 sexuality and gender diverse 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 sexuality and gender diverse 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 2023 resulted in a reportable deficit of \$257,737 (30 June 2022: reportable deficit of \$159,626). The adjusted net surplus after accounting for AASB 16 Leases adopted in 2021 is as follows:

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Net surplus under old accounting standard AASB 117 Leases	62,006	441,604
Impact of new accounting standard AASB 16 Leases	(446,000)	(446,000)
Net Surplus/(Deficit)	(383,992)	(4,396)
Gain/(Loss) in fair value of investment	126,257	(155,230)
<b>Reportable deficit</b>	<b>(257,737)</b>	<b>(159,626)</b>

The 2022/23 financial year was again a challenging one for ACON with the post pandemic economic environment impacting on the cost of delivering our services and programs. Faced with increasing demand, ACON continued to be flexible and innovative in its provision of services to continue to meet the needs of our communities. Our membership programs also continued to bring in additional revenue in this economic environment.

**Application of funds**

The net surplus obtained from fundraising activities was applied to the purposes of ACON Health Limited as described under 'principal activities' above.

**Winding Up**

Each Member undertakes to contribute to the assets of ACON Health, if it is wound up while they are a Member, or within one year afterwards, an amount of money not exceeding the limit of liability of \$2 at the time of winding up the debts and liabilities of ACON Health exceed its assets.

**Matters subsequent to the end of the financial year**

No matters or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2023 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect:

- 1) the Group's operations in future financial years, or
- 2) the results of those operations in future financial years, or
- 3) The Group's state of affairs in future financial years.

**Likely developments and expected results of operations**

Information on likely developments in the operations of the Group and the expected results of operations have not been included in this Directors' Report because the Directors believe it would be likely to result in unreasonable prejudice to the Group.

*Signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board.*

Dated at Sydney this 13th day of September 2023



Justin Koonin  
**President**



Louisa Degenhardt  
**Vice President**

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND  
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR  
THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2023**

	Notes	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Income</b>			
Grants:			
NSW Ministry of Health		13,782,740	12,940,360
Local Health Districts		861,132	721,953
Other grants		3,267,292	2,394,989
Fundraising	17(a)	567,912	892,321
Interest revenue		463,370	63,430
Membership		3,397	3,089
Fee for service		4,503,088	3,876,869
Rent received		393,582	363,949
Sale of vitamins		6,388	5,313
Sale of materials		192,669	148,054
Other Income		474,801	334,311
<b>Total revenue from operations</b>		<b>24,516,371</b>	<b>21,744,638</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Salaries & associated costs		15,934,245	13,767,998
Campaigns & Education		1,688,373	1,762,404
Outgoings and property costs		602,943	238,141
Depreciation – plant & equipment		257,476	246,684
Depreciation – lease		2,152,491	2,120,261
Finance expense – lease		614,548	688,566
Building maintenance		436,056	315,336
Communications		134,577	147,595
Travel and representation		388,562	180,709
Donations given		75,108	105,564
Events and activities		500,189	508,810
Administrative costs		2,056,532	1,587,387
Cost of goods sold		59,263	79,579
<b>Total expenditure</b>		<b>24,900,363</b>	<b>21,749,034</b>
<b>Net Surplus (Deficit) for the year before tax</b>		<b>(383,992)</b>	<b>(4,396)</b>
Gain/(Loss) in fair value of investment		126,257	(155,230)
<b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>		<b>126,257</b>	<b>(155,230)</b>
Operating (Deficit) of ACON Health Ltd		(257,737)	(159,626)

The Consolidated Statement of profit and loss should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

**CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF  
FINANCIAL POSITION AS  
AT 30 JUNE 2023**

	Notes	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Cash and cash equivalents	4	14,377,414	12,982,862
Receivables	5	1,112,119	499,692
Contract asset		55,636	64,185
Inventories		3,380	2,880
Prepayments		342,341	336,612
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<b>15,890,890</b>	<b>13,886,231</b>
<b>Non-Current Assets</b>			
Other Financial Assets	6	4,281,513	4,027,484
Plant & equipment and lease incentive	7	623,282	740,243
Right-of-use asset	8	14,125,426	15,983,563
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>		<b>19,030,221</b>	<b>20,751,290</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>34,921,111</b>	<b>34,637,521</b>
<b>Current Liabilities</b>			
Trade and other payables	9	709,689	1,161,259
Grants and revenue in advance	10	11,510,194	9,100,949
Lease Liability	12	1,812,881	1,632,857
Employee entitlements	11	2,645,365	2,580,063
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<b>16,678,129</b>	<b>14,475,128</b>
<b>Non-current Liabilities</b>			
Lease Liability	12	14,019,219	15,680,894
<b>Total Non-current Liabilities</b>		<b>14,019,219</b>	<b>15,680,894</b>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>		<b>30,697,348</b>	<b>30,156,022</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<b>4,223,763</b>	<b>4,481,499</b>
<b>Accumulated Funds</b>			
Retained surplus at the end of the year	18	1,568,451	2,014,451
Funds Reserve		2,592,812	2,530,804
Revaluation Reserve		62,500	(63,756)
<b>Total Accumulated Funds</b>		<b>4,223,763</b>	<b>4,481,498</b>

The 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 2023**

	Retained Surplus	Revaluation Reserve	Funds Reserve	Total
<b>Year ended 30 June 2023</b>				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	2,014,451	(63,756)	2,530,804	4,481,499
Transfer to funds reserve	(62,008)	-	62,008	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(383,992)	126,256	-	(257,736)
<b>Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>1,568,451</b>	<b>62,500</b>	<b>2,592,812</b>	<b>4,223,763</b>
<b>Year ended 30 June 2022</b>				
Total stakeholder funds at the beginning of the financial year	2,733,266	91,474	1,816,385	4,641,125
Transfer to funds reserve	(714,419)	-	714,419	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	(4,396)	(155,230)	-	(159,626)
<b>Total stakeholder funds at the end of the financial year</b>	<b>2,014,451</b>	<b>(63,756)</b>	<b>2,530,804</b>	<b>4,481,499</b>

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 2023**

Notes	2023	2022
	\$	\$
<b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>		
Receipts from customers, granting bodies & fundraising (inclusive of goods & services tax)	28,255,119	29,244,920
Payments to suppliers and employees (inclusive of goods & services tax)	(24,031,888)	(20,399,227)
Interest received	305,332	63,430
<b>Net cash inflow from operating activities</b>	<b>4,528,563</b>	<b>8,909,123</b>
<b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>		
Payments for property, plant & equipment	(228,306)	(298,839)
Payment for investment	-	(2,625,803)
<b>Net cash outflow from investing activities</b>	<b>(228,306)</b>	<b>(2,924,642)</b>
<b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>		
Principal repayments for leases	(2,905,705)	(2,511,442)
<b>Net cash outflow from financing activities</b>	<b>(2,905,705)</b>	<b>(2,511,442)</b>
<b>Net increase in cash held</b>	<b>1,394,552</b>	<b>3,473,039</b>
Cash at the beginning of the year	12,982,862	9,509,823
<b>Cash at the end of the year</b>	<b>14,377,414</b>	<b>12,982,862</b>

The above Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

## NOTES TO THE CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

### 1. Summary of significant accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of these consolidated financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

The financial statements are for the consolidated entity consisting of ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary, AIDS Council of New South Wales Incorporated.

#### A. Basis of preparation

These general purpose financial statements have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board and the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission Act 2012. ACON Health Limited is a not-for-profit entity for the purpose of preparing the financial statements.

##### i) Compliance with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures

The consolidated financial statements of the ACON Health Limited group comply with Australian Accounting Standards – Simplified Disclosures as issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB).

##### ii) New and amended standards adopted by the group

Conceptual Framework for Financial Reporting (Conceptual Framework)

The consolidated entity has adopted the revised Conceptual Framework from 1 January 2020. The Conceptual Framework contains new definition and recognition criteria as well as new guidance on measurement that affects several Accounting Standards, but it has not had a material impact on the consolidated entity's financial statements.

##### AASB 1060 General Purpose Financial Statements - Simplified Disclosures for For-Profit and Not-for-Profit Tier 2 Entities

The consolidated entity has adopted AASB 1060 from 1 January 2020. The standard provides a new Tier 2 reporting framework with simplified disclosures that are based on the requirements of IFRS for SMEs. As a result, there is increased disclosure in these financial statements for key management personnel, related parties, tax and financial instruments.

#### B. Principles of consolidation

The consolidated financial statements incorporate the assets and liabilities of the subsidiary of ACON Health Limited ("company" or "parent entity") as at 30 June 2023 and the results of the subsidiary for the year then ended. ACON Health Limited and its subsidiary together are referred to in this financial report as the group or the consolidated entity.

Subsidiaries are all entities (including special purpose entities) over which the group has the power to govern the financial and operating policies, generally accompanying a shareholding of more than one half of the voting rights. The existence and effect of potential voting rights that are currently exercisable or convertible are considered when assessing whether the group controls another entity.

Subsidiaries are fully consolidated from the date on which control is transferred to the group. They are de consolidated from the date that control ceases.

Intercompany transactions, balances and unrealised gains on transactions between group companies 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 group.

#### C. Revenue

The Group recognises revenue as follows:

##### Revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the company is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the company: 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.

##### (i) Sales revenue

Events, fundraising and raffles recognised when received or receivable.

##### (ii) Donations

Donations recognised at the time the pledge is made.

##### (iii) 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.

##### (iv) 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.

##### (v) Other revenue

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

##### (vi) Voluntary services

The Group 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.

#### D. CONTRACT ASSETS AND CONTRACT LIABILITIES

##### (i) Contract assets

Contract assets are recognised when the company has transferred goods or services to the customer but where the company is yet to establish an unconditional right to consideration. Contract assets are treated as financial assets for impairment purposes.

##### (ii) Contract liabilities

Contract liabilities are recognised when the company's obligation to transfer goods or services to a customer for which the company has received consideration (or an amount of consideration is due) from the customer, however the obligations related to the consideration have not yet been fulfilled.

**E. LEASES**

(i) Right-of-use asset

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 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 company 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 company 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.

(ii) Lease liability

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 company's incremental borrowing rate, being the rate that the company would have to pay to borrow the funds necessary to obtain an asset of similar value to the right-of-use asset in a similar economic environment with similar terms, security and conditions. Lease payments comprise 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.

**F. IMPAIRMENT OF ASSETS**

Assets are tested 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. The recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs to sell and value in use. For the purposes of assessing impairment, assets are grouped at the lowest levels for which there are separately identifiable cash inflows which are largely independent of the cash inflows from other assets or groups of assets (cash-generating units). Non-financial assets that suffered impairment are reviewed for possible reversal of the impairment at the end of each reporting period.

**G. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS**

For the purpose of presentation in the statement of cash flows, 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.

**H. TRADE RECEIVABLES**

Trade receivables are recognised initially at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less provision for impairment. Trade receivables are generally due for settlement within 30 days. They are presented as current assets unless collection is not expected for more than 12 months after the reporting date.

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.

**I. INVENTORIES**

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.

**J. INVESTMENTS AND OTHER FINANCIAL ASSETS**

*Classification*

The group classifies its financial assets in the following categories: loans and receivables, held-to-maturity investments, financial assets at fair value through profit or loss and available-for-sale financial assets. The classification depends on the purpose for which the investments were acquired. Management determines the classification of its investments at initial recognition.

(i) 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.

(ii) 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.

*Measurement*

At initial recognition, the Group measures a financial asset at its fair value plus, in the case of a financial asset not at fair value through profit or loss, transaction costs that are directly attributable to the acquisition of the financial asset. Transaction costs of financial assets carried at fair value through profit or loss are expensed through other comprehensive income.

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



**Impairment**

The Group assesses at the end of each reporting period whether there is objective evidence that a financial asset or group of financial assets is impaired. A financial asset or a group of financial assets is impaired and impairment losses are incurred only if there is objective evidence of impairment as a result of one or more events that occurred after the initial recognition of the asset (a 'loss event') and that loss event (or events) has an impact on the estimated future cash flows of the financial asset or group of financial assets that can be reliably estimated.

(i) Assets carried 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.

**K. PLANT & EQUIPMENT**

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

Subsequent costs are included in the asset's carrying amount or recognised as a separate asset, as appropriate, only when it is probable that future economic benefits associated with the item will flow to the group and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. The carrying amount of any component accounted for as a separate asset is derecognised when replaced. All other repairs and maintenance are charged to profit or loss during the reporting period in which they are incurred.

The Group 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.

Depreciation is calculated using the straight-line method to allocate cost, net of residual values, over the estimated useful lives of assets as follows:

Furniture & Fittings:	2-5 years,
Office & IT Equipment:	2-5 years,
Leasehold improvements	10 years

The assets' residual values and useful lives are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at the end of each reporting period.

An asset's carrying amount is written down immediately to its recoverable amount if the asset's carrying amount is greater than its estimated recoverable amount (note 1(f)).

Gains and losses on disposals are determined by comparing proceeds with carrying amount. These are included in profit or loss. When revalued assets are sold, it is group policy to transfer any amounts included in other reserves in respect of those assets to retained earnings.

**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.

**L. TRADE AND OTHER CREDITORS**

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the group prior to the end of the financial year which are unpaid. 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.

**M. EMPLOYEE ENTITLEMENTS**

**Wages and salaries, annual leave and sick leave**

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and accumulating sick leave expected to be settled within 12 months after the end of the period in which the employees render the related service are recognised in respect of employees' services up to the end of the reporting period and are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled. The liability for annual leave and accumulating sick leave is recognised in the provision for employee benefits. All other short-term employee benefit obligations are presented as payables.

**Long Service Leave**

The liability for long service leave expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date is recognised in the provision for employee benefits and is measured in accordance with the policy above. The liability for long service leave expected to be settled more than 12 months from the reporting date is recognised in the provision for employee benefits and measured as the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date.

The obligations are presented as current liabilities in the balance sheet if the entity does not have an unconditional right to defer settlement for at least twelve months after the reporting date, regardless of when the actual settlement is expected to occur.

**Superannuation**

Contributions are made by the group to several employee superannuation funds of choice and are recognised as expenses as they become payable.

**N. GOODS AND SERVICES TAX (GST)**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the taxation authority. In this case it is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the taxation authority is included with other receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to the taxation authority, are presented as operating cash flows.

**O. PARENT ENTITY FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

The financial information for the parent entity, ACON Health Limited, disclosed in note 16 has been prepared on the same basis as the consolidated financial statements.

## 2. Critical accounting estimates and assumptions

The Group makes estimates and assumptions concerning the future. The resulting accounting estimates will, by definition, seldom equal the related actual results. The estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities 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.

### Provisions for employee benefits

Provisions for employee benefits payable after 12 months from the reporting date are based on future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. The amount of these provisions would change should any of these factors change in the next 12 months.

## 3. 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.

## 4. Current assets – cash and cash equivalents

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash on hand	3,425	3,425
<b>Cash at bank</b>		
Cheque account – operations	14,373,989	12,979,437
	<b>14,377,414</b>	<b>12,982,862</b>

## 5. Current assets – receivables

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Trade receivables	1,112,119	524,542
Provision for doubtful debts	-	(24,850)
	<b>1,112,119</b>	<b>499,692</b>

The amount of the provision for doubtful debts was nil (30 June 2022: \$24,850). 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 \$24,751 (30 June 2022: \$11,150) has been recorded accordingly within other expenses.

The movement in the allowance for credit losses can be reconciled as follows:

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Reconciliation of allowance credit losses		
Balance 1 July	24,850	36,000
Amounts written off (uncollectable)	(24,751)	(11,150)
Impairment loss	(99)	-
<b>Balance 30 June</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>24,850</b>

## 6. Non-current assets - other financial assets

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Non-current investments</b>		
Investment portfolio	4,249,159	3,995,130
Term deposit	32,354	32,354
	<b>4,281,513</b>	<b>4,027,484</b>

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

## 7. Non-current assets - plant & equipment and lease incentive

Reconciliations of the carrying amounts of each class of plant and equipment and lease incentives at the beginning and end of the current financial year are set out below:

	Furniture & fittings \$	Office & IT Equipment \$	Library Works of Art \$	Leasehold improvements \$	Totals \$
<b>At 30 June 2022</b>					
Cost or fair value	1,023,072	2,211,856	146,650	1,788,732	5,170,310
Accumulated depreciation	(965,405)	(1,987,131)	-	(1,477,531)	(4,430,067)
<b>Net book value</b>	<b>57,667</b>	<b>224,725</b>	<b>146,650</b>	<b>311,201</b>	<b>740,243</b>
<b>Year ended 30 June 2023</b>					
Opening net book value	57,667	224,725	146,650	311,201	740,243
Additions/(Disposals)	35,382	99,850	-	5,283	140,515
Depreciation charge	(25,916)	(144,924)	-	(86,636)	(257,476)
<b>Closing net book value</b>	<b>67,133</b>	<b>179,651</b>	<b>146,650</b>	<b>229,848</b>	<b>623,282</b>
<b>At 30 June 2023</b>					
Cost or fair value	1,058,454	2,311,706	146,650	1,794,015	5,310,825
Accumulated depreciation	(991,321)	(2,132,055)	-	(1,564,167)	(4,687,543)
<b>Net book value</b>	<b>67,133</b>	<b>179,651</b>	<b>146,650</b>	<b>229,848</b>	<b>623,282</b>

## 8. Right of use asset

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Non-current assets</b>		
Right-of-use assets	22,321,004	22,026,650
Less: Accumulated depreciation	(8,195,578)	(6,043,087)
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,125,426</b>	<b>15,983,563</b>

## 9. Current liabilities - trade and other payables

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Goods & Services Tax net payable	459,551	814,212
Trade creditors	162,120	160,100
Accrued expenses	88,018	186,947
<b>Total</b>	<b>709,689</b>	<b>1,161,259</b>

## 10. Current liabilities - grants and revenue in advance

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Grants in advance	9,371,338	7,181,052
Deferred revenue	2,138,856	1,919,897
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,510,194</b>	<b>9,100,949</b>

## 11. Current liabilities - employee entitlements

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Employee entitlements - annual and long service leave	2,645,365	2,580,063
Number of employees at reporting date (full time equivalent)	159	124

## 12. Lease liability

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Lease Liability	1,812,881	1,632,857
<b>Non-current liabilities</b>		
Lease Liability	14,019,219	15,680,894
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,832,100</b>	<b>17,313,751</b>

	2023 \$	2022 \$
<b>Future lease payments due as follows:</b>		
Within one year	2,386,753	2,161,412
One to five years	9,562,585	11,336,638
More than five years	6,553,325	6,624,268
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,502,663</b>	<b>20,122,318</b>

### 13. Auditor remuneration

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Audit services - Grant Thornton	42,715	38,850

### 14. Remuneration Of Members Of The Board

Members of the Board, serve on the Board of the group in a voluntary capacity and receive no remuneration for this service to the group.

### 15. Related party transactions

During the year ACON Health Limited had no transactions with related parties

### 16. 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 2023/2024 financial year.

### 17. 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.*

#### a) Income Statement

	2023 Total	2022 Total
Gross income received from fundraising	567,912	892,321
Cost of fundraising	296,000	304,137
<b>Net proceeds from fundraising</b>	<b>271,912</b>	<b>588,184</b>
Application of net proceeds	271,912	588,184
<b>Net surplus from fundraising</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

	Red Ribbon \$	General \$
Gross income received from fundraising	82,770	485,142
Cost of fundraising	14,002	281,998
<b>Net proceeds from fundraising</b>	<b>68,768</b>	<b>203,144</b>
Application of net proceeds	68,768	203,144
<b>Net surplus from fundraising</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

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.

#### b) Balance Sheet

	2023 Total	2022 Total
Cash at bank	-	-
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
Other payables	-	-
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net assets</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>

**18. Retained surplus**

	2023 \$	2022 \$
Retained surplus at the beginning of the year	2,014,451	2,733,266
Transfer to funds reserve	(62,008)	(714,419)
<b>Current year surplus</b>	<b>(383,992)</b>	<b>(4,396)</b>
<b>Retained surplus at the end of the year</b>	<b>1,568,451</b>	<b>2,014,451</b>

**19. Parent entity financial information**

**(ACON Health Limited excluding AIDS Council of NSW Inc)**

*a) Summary financial information*

The individual financial statements for the parent entity show the following aggregate amounts:

Balance sheet	2023 \$	2022 \$
Current assets	15,890,890	13,886,231
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>34,921,111</b>	<b>34,637,521</b>
Current liabilities	(16,678,129)	(14,475,128)
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>(30,697,348)</b>	<b>(30,156,022)</b>
Stakeholders' Funds		
<b>Total Accumulated Funds</b>	<b>4,223,763</b>	<b>4,481,499</b>
Other comprehensive income	126,257	(155,230)
Operating (deficit) for the year	(257,737)	(159,626)

*b) Contingent liabilities of the parent entity*

The parent entity did not have any contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2023 (30 June 2022 \$nil).

**20. Matters subsequent to the end of the financial year**

No matters or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2023 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect:

1. the Group's operations in future financial years, or
2. the results of those operations in future financial years, or
3. the Group's state of affairs in future financial years.

**DIRECTOR'S DECLARATION**

In the directors' opinion:

1. The consolidated financial statements and notes set out on pages 8 to 24 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 2023 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 2012; 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**

Dated at Sydney this 13th day of September 2023.

**Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd**  
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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 Health Limited for the year ended 30 June 2023, 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, 13 September 2023

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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 2023, 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:

- a giving a true and fair view of the Registered Entity's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- b 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.

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### 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 2023, 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.

Our opinion on the financial report does not cover the other information and accordingly 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](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, 13 September 2023

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Grant Thornton Audit Pty Ltd

# CONTACT US

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# OUR VISION

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

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



