



**DiversityACT**  
COMMUNITY SERVICES

**Diversity ACT Community Services**  
**Annual report 2020–21**

## Publishing information

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## Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

Diversity ACT Community Services acknowledges Canberra has been built on the intersection of the lands of the Ngunnawal, Ngambri and Ngarigo people. We pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and honour the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the ongoing contributions to the ACT community of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Acknowledgement of LGBTIAQ+ community

Diversity ACT Community Services also acknowledges the members of the LGBTIAQ+ community past and present who have advocated for our cause, convictions, rights, and future.

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## About Diversity ACT Community Services

Diversity ACT Community Services (DACS) is a membership-based charity registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). We operate out of the Diversity Hub in Kambah, ACT, and have a diverse membership that includes other organisations, service providers, and individuals who share our vision and values for the ACT LGBTIQ+ community.

DACS is a member of ACTCOSS, which is a member of the nationwide network of Councils of Social Service (the COSS Network), that includes each of the state and territory Councils and the national body, the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS).

Strategic direction and corporate governance of DACS is provided by the Management Committee, which is composed of respected leaders from within our membership. Volunteers are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds and contribute their skills and knowledge to the services and development of DACS.

### Our vision

Safety and inclusion for LGBTIQ+ people in the ACT region.

### Our mission

DACS is a community led organisation that connects with all levels of society and government. We work for the community, forming partnerships that provide advocacy and support, to connect, empower and build an inclusive and safe region for LGBTIQ+ people. We foster this environment through learning from and celebrating one another.

## Diversity ACT Committee members

### Executive

- President: Megan Watts
- Vice President: Liz Stephens
- Treasurer: Morgan Sedaitis
- Secretary: Angel Hellyer

### Ordinary members

- Caterina Sullivan
- Shay-Leigh Willis
- Jay Thomsen
- Jazmeen Payne
- Daniel Putra

### Public Officer

- Angel Hellyer

## President's report

I open this report with an acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land on which DACS operates: the Ngunnawal, Ngambri and Ngarigo people. As demonstrated in the “Our Space” artwork in the front yard of the Diversity Hub, we operate today on land entrusted to and respected by Aboriginal peoples over many thousands of years. I acknowledge that custodianship, and the fact that these lands were never ceded.

I also acknowledge the history of the LGBTIAQ+ community around the world. We stand today on the shoulders of those who have gone before us, and I thank them for their passion, their dedication and their vision of inclusion.

It was a great privilege to be entrusted with the role of President by the DACS members at last year's Annual General Meeting. As I did at the AGM last year, I wish to again thank our previous President and Vice-President for their service to DACS, particularly through the demands of the COVID lockdown and their own health challenges.



My personal goal for DACS when I took on this role was for growth and an outward focus. In order to achieve this, I have sought to encourage the Management Committee and the various subcommittees to engage in strategic planning and goal setting. We held a Strategic Planning meeting in January 2021, at which we developed the new vision and mission statements which you will find earlier in this document. The subcommittees, the youth group and the Southside Women's group were encouraged to develop strategic goals for 2021, and to present to the Annual General Meeting their goals for 2022. You will find an exploration of the goals for 2020–21 later in this document.

I am indebted to the members of the Management Committee for their hard work throughout the 2020–21 financial year and beyond. There has been some movement across the committee as previous members have been unable to continue in their roles and new members have been seconded. I thank all those who have served our community through any period of time on the Management Committee.

I look forward to the 2021–22 financial year as a period in which we can consolidate our growth and then move forwards again.

I commend this annual report to the DACS membership.



Megan Watts  
President of Diversity ACT

## 2020–21 highlights

### Awards

Multiple DACS members were nominated for awards across the reporting period. Shay-Leigh Willis was a finalist in the 2019 Chief Minister’s Inclusion Awards in the Emerging Young Leader Category (an event held after our last AGM). Our Vice-President Liz Stephens was awarded the ACT Senior Woman of the Year Award for 2021.



2021 ACT Senior Woman of the Year Liz Stephens.

### Submissions

Grant submissions:

- ACTEW Community Grant
- Community Services Directorate COVID-19 Stimulus Community Connections Grant
- Department of Social Services 2021 Volunteer Grant.

Outside of grant submissions, DACS provided the following submissions to government:

- Conversion Practices Consultation: Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate.

Historic submissions to government can be found at <https://diversityact.org.au/resources/>

### Grants and donations

Substantial grants and donations were received from:

- Community Services Directorate
- Pink Tennis
- ACTEW Community Partnerships.

### Public events

- Wear It Purple Night 2020 (online event) September 2020
- Mad Hatter’s High Tea September 2020
- Self-Care Funday November 2020
- Christmas Soiree December 2020
- Hottest 100 Party January 2021
- QyouT Pre-Valentine’s Day February 2021
- Rainbow Ring Pour April 2021
- Not So Binary Workshops (multiple dates)
- Queerstories May 2021

### Other highlights

- Continued recruitment of members through listing of vacant positions on the ACT Diversity Register. This has contributed to the growth of the membership base discussed elsewhere in the report.
- Continued exploration of alternative funding sources.

- Distribution of emergency food supplies and Christmas hampers to LGBTIAQ+ community members experiencing hardship (in partnership with Tuggeranong Uniting Church).
- Development of our relationship with SEE-Change providing a monthly fundraising event at the Repair Cafe in Tuggeranong.
- Hub hires for activities such as parties and community events.

## Our goals and activities

The Management Committee set the following strategic goals for the organisation during the 2020–21 financial year.

### Maintaining the Diversity Hub as a drop-in and community centre which is a safe place for LGBTIAQ+ people

During the 2020–21 financial year, in addition to almost weekly meetings of Queer Youth Together, there were multiple public events held at the Hub. The Mad Hatter’s High Tea, Self-Care Funday, and the Christmas Soiree took place from September to December 2021. In the first half of 2021, the Hub hosted a Hottest 100 Party and the Rainbow Ring Pour, as well as gatherings for the Not So Binary Project.



As part of our responsibilities for the COVID-safety of the community, the Diversity Hub is registered with the Check-In CBR app. All persons over 16 years of age who attend the Hub are required to register using the app. For those who do not have a camera phone are registered as guests of those with camera phones, or using the business profile function in the app. For private hires, the check-in requirement is clearly advised and laminated check-in posters are provided. Reusable cloth masks are available at the Hub for any people attending without a mask.

At the last AGM, the Diversity Hub was open for drop-ins on Saturdays between 1.30 and 3.30pm. Unfortunately, volunteer availability has not allowed the drop-in hours to increase since that date.

Post the 2020 COVID lockdown, Queer Youth Together (QyouT, the DACS youth group) chose to meet at the Hub on Saturday afternoons rather than Wednesday nights. This has allowed for more outdoor activities, and reduced the load on the heaters at the Hub across winter.

### To deliver information, publications, training and education programs to LGBTIAQ+ people and the community on a range of LGBTIAQ+ topics and issues

Our social media pages have continued to provide opportunities for DACS to provide information to LGBTIAQ+ people across Canberra and elsewhere. Our most popular unboosted posts have been on issues such as COVID safety and LGBTIAQ+ inclusion in the census.

Our relationship with the ACT media has continued to deepen across the last year. We have been contacted by local radio and print media to provide input on topics such as the ACT Conversion Therapy Bill and mental health for LGBTIAQ+ young people. DACS has dispatched media releases on a range of topics. In addition to the releases regarding upcoming events, we have also provided



commentary on issues such as Conversion Therapy, Breastfeeding, Chest Feeding and Human Milk, our Community Survey, and fundraising campaigns.

Public information about DACS and a range of LGBTIAQ+ topics is made available at all DACS fundraising events. Information stalls were held at events such as Queerstories, the Canberra Roller Derby opening games and the ACT Volunteering Expo. We presented an IDAHOBIT information session at Penten in Braddon, which generated a donation to DACS from that organisation.

Diversity Digest, the DACS newsletter, had two issues published across the reporting period. Our new Communication subcommittee has taken over responsibility for production, and we hope to see an increase in publication rates over the next year.



The Not So Binary project has continued to develop across the reporting period. Not So Binary is an exploration of and response to the use of language as a weapon against the LGBTIAQ+ community. Not So Binary is funded through the Capital of Equality grants program. This project involves the production of a photography exhibition. Since the last AGM, this project has seen the establishment of a project management team, the appointment of the photographer, and the engagement of multiple participants, many of which were not originally members of the organisation. Original plans to hold the exhibition at the Diversity Hub across November may be pushed back by the 2021 COVID lockdown.

### **To survive COVID-19 and grow the organisation in the process.**

At the 2019-20 Annual General Meeting (AGM), it was resolved that DACS would provide free memberships for 2021. At the end of July 2021, a total of 28 new membership applications had been received since the AGM, This is an increase of 73 per cent over the same period in the previous year. Many of these new members are active and regular volunteers, which has increased volunteer numbers by approximately 50 per cent. While many of the new memberships have been members of QyouT and the Southside Women, there have also been multiple new memberships as a result of publicity through the ACT Diversity Register, the Volunteer Expo and the Not So Binary Project.

While the increase in membership has not allowed us to open the Hub more often, it has definitely improved the sustainability of the organisation. We have been in the privileged position of having people ask to volunteer on the Management Committee, and having to offer subcommittee roles as all the Management Committee positions were filled. A Communication subcommittee has been established, and all subcommittees have been required to develop draft strategic goals for endorsement at the upcoming AGM.





QyouT has continued to thrive. Across the reporting period, the young people built community and raised awareness by creating scarecrows and bird boxes, playing board and card games, and holding discussions with individuals, leaders and organisations both within the LGBTIAQ+ community and more widely. Some of the young adult members have taken on leadership roles within the group. Outside of their time at the Hub, QyouT leaders communicate with the young people digitally via Discord, Facebook and Instagram.



The Southside Women's Group slowly came out of lockdown with a range of social activities including lunches and dinners, musical events, seeing movies at the cinema, the Wellbeing Self-Care Day at the Diversity Hub, Queerstories at Tuggeranong Arts Centre and the Rise up Concert performed by Canberra Qwire. In April 2021, the Southside Women's Group organised a DIY Rainbow Acrylic Pour Art Day at the Diversity Hub which was attended by 19 women who created some very artistic Rainbow combinations.



On average, nine to ten same-sex attracted women and non-binary folk attend monthly activities for the Southside Women's Group. These people are from Canberra and surrounds including Queanbeyan and of ages from twenties to sixties. The group has enabled friendships and networks to be fostered and promoted Diversity ACT's aims of supporting LGBTIAQ+ people in Canberra and surrounds.

We have continued to seek out opportunities to build working relationships with other organisations across the ACT. For example, our relationship with

SEE-Change has generated a much needed post-COVID monthly fundraising event at the Repair Cafe in Tuggeranong. Our continuing relationship with PhotoAccess ensured that the Not So Binary project was successful in its grant application, and PhotoAccess provided expert advice on the recruitment of the creative team for the project. We have continued to work with Meridian and A Gender Agenda towards reducing the spirit of competition which has existed between our organisations in the past.

## Client services

DACS continues to receive client referrals from outside organisations, as well as self-referrals. A number of our clients have now been with us for over 12 months, as they have complex support needs across a range of issues. Referrals from the support clearinghouse have decreased in the last year. This has sparked engagement with the organisation behind that clearinghouse, and it is anticipated that numbers will increase in future.

Across the reporting period, the most common issues presented by self-referred clients were in relation to education, family conflict and emergency support.

## Client referrals

Year	DACS	LGB	T	H	NB	I	A	Referral Clearinghouse	LGB	T	H	NB	I	A
2020	8	1	3	3	1			1		1				
2021 (Aug)	5	3	1		1			0						

## Media and communication

Across 2020–21, DACS continued to engage with a range of media. As discussed earlier in this report, we have been contacted by local radio and print media to provide input on topics such as the ACT Conversion Therapy Bill and mental health for LGBTIAQ+ young people.

DACS has dispatched media releases on a range of topics. In addition to the releases regarding upcoming events, we have also provided commentary on issues such as Conversion Therapy, Breastfeeding, Chest Feeding and Human Milk, our Community Survey, and fundraising campaigns.

In addition to our long-standing Facebook and Twitter pages, DACS is now utilising the social media platform Discord. This is where we are holding our video meetings, and one of the places that the youth group like to chat.

Publication of the newsletter proved challenging this year, partly due to the turnover of the Secretary role. Carriage of newsletter publication has been transferred to the new Communication subcommittee.

The establishment of the Communication subcommittee has great potential to improve the consistency of our future media engagement.

## Volunteers and membership engagement

The Management Committee has sought to engage with our members through regular emails, social media posts and our newsletter. As discussed earlier in this report, there has been a substantial increase in membership and volunteer numbers.

Opening of the Hub for community drop-in opportunities can only be achieved through the availability of volunteers. Our current extremely limited opening hours continue to be the result of availability of appropriately trained and mentored volunteers.

## Subcommittee reports

### Policy and governance

During the 2020–21 financial year, the Policy and governance subcommittee:

- developed and implemented an Infectious diseases policy in response to COVID-19
- developed and gained approval for the Discrimination and harassment policy, Governance policies and procedures, Financial management policy and Risk management policies and procedures
- reviewed and updated the Volunteer policy
- conducted a review of current policies and developed a forward work plan for policy review and creation.

### Finance and fundraising

Despite a substantial reduction in our direct fundraising as a result of COVID-19, DACS finished the 2020–21 financial year in a strong position. We have continued to focus on diversification of our funding sources. To this end, we purchased a PayPal card reader, to ensure that we could continue fundraising while being COVID-safe and reducing our cash handling. Unfortunately, PayPal discontinued this service in Australia at the end of June 2021. We have since obtained an account with Square, and are now able to process card payments at fundraisers.

We acquitted three grants during the reporting period:

- ACTEW Community Partnership: \$3000 spent on the 2020–21 insurance bills
- Community Services Directorate: \$2000 spent on a community survey and community events
- Community Services Directorate Youth Week: \$1000 (funds re-allocated post COVID) spent on Queerstories.

The following grants remain unacquitted, with funds not yet fully spent:

- Pink Tennis: \$1000 for community events
- Capital of Equality: \$7500 for the Not So Binary Project
- Department of Social Services Volunteer Grant: \$5000 for supporting volunteers (computer equipment, training, landscaping, gardening, transport, etc.).

### Events and outreach

During the reporting period, the Events and outreach subcommittee ensured that DACS held ten public events. This is six more events that were held in the previous year, noting that the COVID restrictions dramatically limited events during that period.

There are currently events planned for November and December 2021.

### Communication

The Communication subcommittee was established in May 2021 and started developing a forward work plan.

## Education and training

Due to our limited operational hours, it has not been appropriate for DACS to offer placements to vocational students during this reporting period.

## Research and analysis

The Research and analysis subcommittee participated in:

- developing an article for UPDATE - the ACTCOSS journal
- preparing media releases on Conversion Therapy, Breastfeeding, Chest Feeding and Human Milk, and the DACS Community Survey
- providing supporting data for grant and award applications.

## Health and wellbeing

This subcommittee remains in abeyance, as there have been insufficient volunteers available. We hope to see this subcommittee re-invigorated in the next reporting period.

## Our finances

### Treasurer's report

So, this year's been a tough one, hasn't it. Firstly, a huge virtual hug to everyone out there, I hope you're all safe and well, and if not, have the ability to seek any help you need.

Diversity is doing quite well, thanks largely to a year of extraordinary effort by Megan and her team doing grant applications. Through this, we have been able to fund some of the extraordinary events we've hosted, and look to increase our energy consumption efficiency this coming winter.

Financially, we are very stable considering the situation, which upon reflection over the last five years is an incredible feeling. Some members may remember that, when the Committee I was new to took over, we were heavily reliant on membership loans. Since that new committee, we have all done an incredible amount of work. It is nice to look back and see that in these short years, Diversity has paid back those loans and can weather at least two incredibly bad years before needing any sort of drastic action.

As we (hopefully) emerge from our COVID hibernation, vaccinated and ready to fundraise, I would like to call out to any out there who have any interest in fundraising events, grant applications, great connections, or just a general positive outlook interested in volunteering in making a difference, to reach out to us. Regardless of your talents, skills, or interests I promise there is something helpful and productive you can do for us.

Morgan Sedaitis  
Treasurer of Diversity ACT

### Auditor's report

The audited report for 2020–21 will be provided separately.



## Draft budget for 2021–22

Income		Expenditure	
<b>Grants</b>		Accountant	800
Government Grants	2000	Advertising	200
Non-Government Grants	4200	Bank Fees	20
		Cleaning	100
<b>Fundraising</b>		Client support	100
Donations	3000	Donations	150
Events	1500	Event Expenditure	1000
Fundraising	4500	Flat Gecko (ISP)	120
Membership		Fundraising Supplies	800
		Grant Expenditure	\$ 14,000.00
		Insurance	3200
<b>Other Income</b>		Light, Power & Heating	800
Rent Received (Hub Hire)	400	Meeting Expenses	50
		Office Expenses	100
Total income	\$13,600.00	Post Office Box	136
		Printing, Stationary, Postage	200
		Queer Youth Together	500
Overall	-\$12,726.00	Repairs and Maintenance	1000
		Staff Training & Welfare	500
		Subscriptions & Memberships	150
		Telephone & Internet	1700
		Water Rates & Supply	700
		Xero	600
			\$ 26,326.00
Bank Balance @ 30/6/21	\$18,962.24		

## Acknowledgements

Diversity ACT would like to acknowledge the many volunteers who have assisted us throughout the year, both at events and in maintaining and improving the Diversity Hub.

We also thank our kind corporate sponsors and private donors, who make it possible for Diversity ACT to continue developing and providing services to the LGBTIAQ+ community of the ACT.

## Subcommittee goals for FY 2021-22

### Policy and governance

1. By the end of November 2021, review and update all policies that are past their review date to ensure currency and implement improvements.
2. By the end of December 2021, conduct an analysis of current policies and procedures to identify any conflicts, gaps or opportunities for increased consistency, with a report proposing new policies and procedures amendments to existing ones where required to be presented to the Management Committee.
3. By the end of June 2022, implement changes based on Management Committee feedback on the policy analysis report, in collaboration with other subcommittees and the committee.
4. By the end of June 2022, increase the membership and intersectionality of the subcommittee.

### Finance and fundraising

1. By the end of August 2021, have re-established card payments at fundraising events using Square.
2. By the end of December 2021, determine the position of DACS re GST registration and make any necessary changes.
3. By the end of June 2022, increase the membership of the subcommittee.
4. By the end of June 2022, have begun the mentoring process to allow for the handover of the Treasurer role at the next AGM.
5. At the 2022 AGM, handover the Treasurer position to another member of the organisation.

### Events and outreach

1. By the end of January 2022, develop an event calendar for 2022.
2. By the end of February 2022, form a team of three to four volunteers to help plan and assist at events.
3. By the end of March 2022, collaborate with the Communication committee to develop a media strategy to promote events.
4. By the end of March 2022, review and update current event planning guidelines and procedures.
5. By the end of June 2022, develop an event resource list.
6. By the end of June 2022, increase attendance at events and activities by 70 per cent.
7. By the end of June 2022, form partnerships with three organisations to plan two to three events at the Hub or alternative venue.
8. By the end of June 2022, network and invite three organisations to the Hub.

## Communication

1. Develop our social media presence, including adding an Instagram account by December 2021 and having a social media strategy in place by February 2022.
2. By December 2021, develop and implement a new website.
3. By December 2021, implement cloud-based phone services to increase responsiveness.
4. By the end of June 2022, develop Diversity ACT's reputation as a local thought leader in the LGBTIAQ+ space through media, social media, events and campaigns.
5. By the end of June 2022, increase community awareness of activities and services, resulting in increased attendance at events and membership engagement.
6. By the end of June 2022, increase the membership and intersectionality of the subcommittee.

## Education and training

1. By the end of June 2022, increase the membership and intersectionality of the subcommittee.
2. By the end of June 2022, establish relationships with identified schools with the view to engage at risk LGBTQIA+ young people and build leadership and inclusivity amongst teachers, LGBTQIA+ young people and their youth allies.
3. By the end of June 2022, work with a vocational student from CIT to build their knowledge and experience in and about the community.

## Research and analysis

1. By the end of June 2022, increase the membership and intersectionality of the subcommittee.
2. By the end of June 2022, in cooperation with other subcommittees, submit a grant application to fund research into the demographics of the LGBTIAQ+ community in South Canberra.

## Health and wellbeing

1. By the end of March 2022, have at least two members of the subcommittee.
2. By the end of March 2022, develop a forward work plan for the subcommittee.

## Property management

1. By the end of September 2021, contact volunteers to join the subcommittee.
2. By the end of October 2021, have at least two members of the subcommittee.
3. By the end of December 2021, hold a meeting of the subcommittee at the Hub to develop a work plan/checklist (depending on COVID restrictions).
4. By the end of March 2022, develop a forward work plan for the subcommittee.
5. By the end of June 2022, develop a maintenance register and WHS checklist.



## How you can help

1. Become a member using the form on our website: <https://diversityact.org.au/support-us/membership/>
2. Volunteer your time, whether that's at an event, around the Diversity Hub or on one of our subcommittees: <https://diversityact.org.au/support-us/volunteer/>
3. Make a donation so we can continue our work: <https://diversityact.org.au/support-us/donate/>
4. Take part in our events: <https://diversityact.org.au/upcoming-events/>
5. Follow us on social media and share our posts:
  - a. Facebook: @diversity.act
  - b. Twitter: @DiversityACT