



DiversityACT

Diversity Digest

Issue 2 2020

President's Report – Shay-Leigh Willis

Diversity ACT, like everyone, has been hit hard by COVID-19. Our operations were significantly reduced for months, and our group meetings had to be put on hold. We are funded through community events, but restrictions took that away as well.

Despite these challenges, our brilliant volunteer team has continued to provide support to the community and our clients through virtual means. The Hub has recently re-opened for drop ins and we also have a couple of online fundraisers just around the corner.

While things have been tough, your community at Diversity ACT is still here for you. If you need support, reach out. I can't wait to see you all participating in our online trivia night! In the meantime, groups, such as QyouT and Southside Women are reconnecting and

meeting (within social distancing requirements) again. If you are interested, email info@diversityact.org.au for more information on our services. Stay safe, everyone

Management Committee News

There have recently been a few changes to the committee. Noel Kwon, general committee member and our newsletter editor, has resigned from the committee due to the crazy workload she has been dealing with during COVID. We miss Noel, and hope to see her return to the organisation in the post-COVID world.



A newcomer to the committee is Penny Cilento. Penny joined Diversity ACT during the 2020 lockdown. In her paid employment she is a service coordinator with

Community Options. Like many members of Diversity ACT, she is a strong supporter of social justice and an advocate for disability and the aged. Penny has numerous members of the LGBTIQ+ community in her family and social network. As well as her role as a General Committee Member, Penny is a member of the Events Subcommittee. Welcome aboard Penny!

There remains a vacancy on the Management Committee for a general committee member. And with Noel's departure we are also missing our newsletter editor. If any members are interested in serving on the committee or taking on the editing of the newsletter, please send an email to info@diversityact.org.au. If

you would like to chat about what is involved, please feel free to call Megan on 0450 502081.

New phone number

The management committee have decided that a better way to share the load of answering the Diversity phone is to move across to a mobile phone number. This means that the phone itself can be moved around the committee members. The new phone number is 0419 964948.

Huge thanks to Shay for having solo responsibility for answering the phone since March 2019. What a champion!

Treasurer's Report – Morgan Sedaitis

With COVID-19 our fundraising operations have been drastically limited, but our phenomenal team, headed up with our incredible secretary have led a strong charge to online options. We are very grateful for the funds we have promised by the ActewAGL Community Partnership Program, which will nearly cover this year's insurance bill.



If you were thinking about making any donations to help Diversity ACT weather the storm that is 2020, the best possible day would

be 16 October, as GiveOUT is holding an amazing one day doubling of any donations given. This is a yearly event that helps LGBTIQ+ organisations such as ours continue to provide support, outreach, and advocacy for our community. So if you are in a position to do so, please make a calendar entry for 16 October to donate at

<https://giveout.org.au/onlinesausagesizzle>

The finance sub-committee is always looking for people with a bit of spare time on their hands to help with the occasional metaphorical tin shaking or ideas about how we can more efficiently use the resources we have. If you have any questions or ideas, or just want to see how helpful half an hour of your time is, drop me a line at msedaitis@gmail.com

COVID-19 & Hub Re-opening

As the restrictions around COVID-19 have lifted in Canberra, we have been able to re-open the Hub. At present, we are open for drop-in from 1.30-3.30pm on Saturdays, with the Youth Group meeting from 2-4pm.

The Management Committee approved our COVIDsafe plan prior to the re-opening. A total of 14 people is permitted inside the Hub at any one time: 3 in the front room, 4 in each meeting room, 1 in the bathroom and 2 in the kitchen. There is hand sanitiser beside the front door, and a sign in sheet at the front desk. We are cleaning the Hub and disinfecting where possible once the Hub closes every Saturday afternoon.

Diversity ACT volunteers will continue to provide client and community support, while practising social distancing and looking after their own health and wellbeing. We would like to increase opening hours as the weather warms up but need more volunteers. Please email info@diversityact.org.au if you would like to assist the organisation by joining the current volunteers on the Hub opening roster.

Queer Youth Together

Queer Youth Together is affectionately known as QyouT (pronounced “cute”). It is Diversity ACT’s Youth Program, that caters for young people between the ages of 12 and 25.

QyouT has recommenced after the COVID shutdown, much to the joy of the young people and the leadership team. Due to the extreme cold in the Hub during winter, sessions have moved to Saturday afternoons. We acknowledge that this impacts on possible attendance for some members, and we will be returning to Wednesday nights as temperatures increase. Hopefully that will be the start of Term Four – we will make that decision closer to the date.



Figure 1 - Board games

Since returning to the Hub, the young people have enjoyed a couple of unstructured afternoons just catching up and rebuilding their relationships after a long break. Indoor Rock Climbing in Mitchell at the LGBTQ+ social night

was challenging, but great fun. Board games

are a good way to spend a cold and wet Saturday afternoon.

Plans for the rest of this term include a craft session creating scarecrows for the garden at the Hub, celebrating some August birthdays, and figuring out how to participate in the Wear It Purple Trivia Night on September 5th. There will also be some afternoons set aside for just dropping into the Hub and relaxing in each other’s company.

Several of our members and one of our leaders have been unable to return to the group as they are still in social isolation due to COVID risk. We miss them all terribly. This does mean that we need another leader for the group. If you are looking for a volunteer role working with young people, please email info@diversityact.org.au

Southside Women



Southside Women provides regular social activities to LBT women living on the Southside (and all areas of Canberra).

The group met for lunch at Rose Cottage Inn in July; we sat by a roaring fire, eating, chatting, laughing and making new friends.



On 16th August we walked around Jerrabomberra Wetlands through the puddles and then to As Nature Intended cafe for a coffee and chat. A very relaxing and enjoyable afternoon.

Our next meetup is Tuggeranong Southern Cross for dinner in the bistro Sunday 20th September 6.30pm.

Check Southside Women FB for details of future events:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/573671329770553/>

All our activities comply with COVID safe requirements.

Subcommittees

Our sub-committees are working hard on the work of keeping Diversity ACT running and active in the community. If you have skills in any of these spaces, you are most welcome to join in. Send an email to info@diversityact.org.au to nominate for a role.

Strategic Planning & Governance – Bruce Moore (chair), Beth Kerrison & Penny Cilento. Currently working on preparing for the

annual general meeting and a 5-year strategic plan

Education & Training – Megan Watts (chair). We have one student placement currently, who is almost halfway through his placement. We have another placement on hold due to COVID restrictions.

Events & Networking – Liz Stephens (chair), Megan Watts & Penny Cilento – see elsewhere in the newsletter for all the upcoming events.

Research and Analysis – Megan Watts (chair). Our major focus recently has been submissions to the NSW parliament in response to the various One Nation anti-LGBTIQ+ bills there. We completed a submission to the ACT Government on the ban on “conversion therapy”. And Beth’s article in the Canberra Times was a corker:

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6896589/conversion-therapy-ban-recognises-and-protects-people-just-as-they-are/>

Fincance – Morgan Sedaitis (chair) – see Morgan’s report elsewhere in the newsletter.

Upcoming Events

Trivia Night



We can’t get together to enjoy our annual Trivia Night this year, so we are going to gather in the comfort of our own homes instead!

You are encouraged to gather with a COVID safe group of friends and family and join the online event from 7.30pm on September 5th. Eat and drink whatever you have prepared for yourselves. Answer questions. Win prizes. Raise funds for Diversity ACT and Wear it Purple.

Entry: \$10 (waged) \$5 (concession) - pay via direct transfer to the Diversity ACT bank account or online at <https://www.givenow.com.au/diversityact>

Register via the Facebook event, which is where the Zoom link will be posted: <https://www.facebook.com/events/703209356899790/>

Floriade High Tea – 27 September



Figure 2 - Tulips

Did you know that the Diversity Hub is one of the sites for Floriade Reimagined?

On 28 May our volunteers planted 250 tulips and 400 annuals, and since then there has been a concerted effort

to keep everything alive and healthy. There was much excitement when the tulips started poking their heads through the mulch, and when the first buds appeared on the annuals.

To celebrate our success on the gardening front, and (hopefully) a continued reduction in COVID restrictions, we will be gathering at the Hub on September 27th for High Tea. More details will be available on the Facebook page in the near future.



Figure 3 - Pansies

Mental Health Month 2020

The Events team are exploring the options for a wellbeing day in mid-late October.



Annual General Meeting

The date for the AGM isn't set yet, but we hope to arrange it for some time in October. Members will receive an email notification with the meeting papers.

SpringOUT – November

The Events team are also exploring the options around a Tuggeranong arts-based event in November. Watch the facebook page/the website for more details.



Christmas Soiree – December 20th

We have a date – everything else is TBA!

Community News

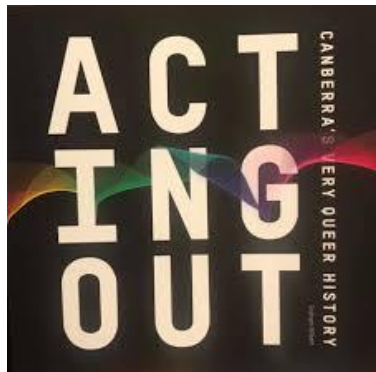
Conversion Therapy Bill

There's been a flurry of activity in response to the ACT Act to ban "conversion therapy". If this has brought up issues for you, we strongly encourage you to reach out for some support.

Exploring the Library at the Hub – Bruce Moore

Graham Willett. *ACTing Out: Canberra's Very Queer History*. 2019.

2019 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the Homosexual Law Reform Society of the ACT (the first organisation to campaign for homosexual rights in Australia), and as part of this anniversary the ACT Government Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs commissioned a book on the ACT's queer history.



The book, *ACTing Out: Canberra's Very Queer History*, was researched and written by well-known Melbourne

historian Graham Willett, author of many LGBTIQ+ historical studies, including *Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia* (2000).

The book is a chronological study, so it ends on a very positive note with the achieving of marriage equality in 2017, and the recognition that 'it was in its attitude toward same-sex relationships that the ACT really made the running in Australia'.

Amid all this concluding positivity, however, it is good to be reminded that for most of Canberra's history the lives of LGBTIQ+ people were often anything but joyous, and survived in an environment of hostility and ignorance.

The incident in 1969 that led to the formation of the Homosexual Law Reform Society of the ACT is representative of that past time. Two men, named as Brian K and Walter S, met at a beat in Garema Place and drove out to an area alongside Yowani Golf Club for sex. They were arrested by police and charged with indecent assault. The charge against Walter was dismissed in the Magistrates Court, but Brian was committed for trial in the Supreme Court, where a jury found him guilty. He was sentenced to six months jail with hard labour. The case prompted a group made up of Canberra academics, a lawyer, and a journalist to set up the Reform Society to lobby for the repealing of the anti-homosexual provisions of the law code.

The chronological structure of the book means that the major social movements and events are highlighted: the glimmerings of a gay and lesbian subculture in Canberra in the 1960s, the movement towards homosexual law reform in the early 1970s, the heady days of gay liberation in the 1970s, lesbians and the women's movement, the shadow of Aids and the development of the Aids Action Council of the ACT, and the public emergence of community newspapers, groups, places, and events in the late 1980s and 1990s—such as the newspapers *PanDA* (1992-96) and *Quirk* (1997-2001), the Canberra Gay and Lesbian *Qwire* (1993-), the Meridian Club (1985-2002) and Heaven (1993-2004), and the annual festival *SpringOut* (1999-).



Figure 4 - Graham Willett

Graham Willett has said he hopes that his book will inspire others to follow up his work with further research. In the first section of the book there are

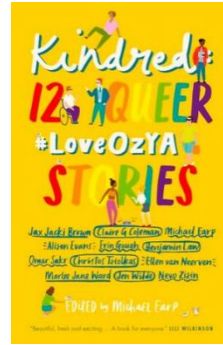
some personal histories of gay and lesbian people who lived in Canberra in the 1950s, and it seems to me that there is room for more personal testimonies of this kind from that early period and from later periods. Perhaps this could be a project for a Capital of Equality grant? Many people who were significant in the LGBTIQ+ history of Canberra are mentioned in the book, but we lack any kind of biographical register that sets out their achievements—a kind of Canberra LGBTIQ+ ‘Hall of Fame’. And we lack an LGBTIQ+ ‘map’ of Canberra, which records significant places—where clubs, social groups, nightclubs, gay-friendly pubs, and the like existed, or where important events took place.

You can borrow ACTing Out from the Diversity ACT Library. ACT Libraries also has multiple copies, and the National Library of Australia has an online version. You can buy a copy from Harry Hartog Booksellers at ANU.

Two other recent Australian additions to the Diversity Library will be of great interest to members.



Benjamin Law in Growing Up Queer in Australia (2019) gathers together a collection of 50+ autobiographical stories from Australian writers across the LGBTIQ+ spectrum.



Michael Earp in Kindred: 12 queer #LoveOzYA stories (2019) brings together short stories aimed at a Young Adult audience by such writers as Erin Gough, Nevo Zisin, Omar Sakr, and Benjamin Law.

Trans Musical

Tuggeranong Arts Centre is currently developing an all-trans musical show (for premier April 2021) as part of our community development portfolio and they are seeking expressions of interest from the trans and gender diverse community to take part. The project has been funded by the Capital Equality Grant from the Office for LGBTIQ Affairs and was conceived as a response to a demonstrated need for targeted vocal training and artistic development for the gender diverse community in the ACT.

Some further information about the project below:

Building off the success of last year’s Trans Voices Cabaret (premiered at TuggersPride), the project has taken on the new direction of creating a unified, original and community driven creative work. Cast members will work to create an original musical performance from September 2020 – December 2020 through a series of workshops supported by TAC. Following successful creation, cast members will have the opportunity to rehearse and premier the show as part of TAC’s queer arts festival in April 2021 (subject to COVID restrictions). The project recognises that voices and bodies are intimately tied to the experience of gender and expression and will showcase emerging local queer talent and offer

performers vocal coaching and artistic development.

All levels of singing, music and performance experience are welcome. Opportunities for vocal coaching and performance direction will be provided. Creative development will be led by the cast and supported by emerging producer Kat Reed (Electra Powerhouse) and artist and vocal coach Dianna Nixon.

Contact: Kat Reed | Project Officer (Trans Voices creative development)
(They/them/theirs pronouns). Tuggeranong Arts Centre ph: 02 6293 1443 e: cacd.projects@tuggeranongarts.com

Forward Together

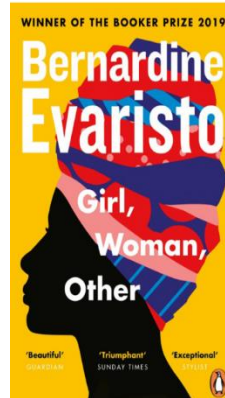
PhotoAccess, in collaboration with Gen S Stories, A Gender Agenda and Meridian, are looking for ten people from across the LGBTIQ+ communities to join Forward Together

The team are looking for five people aged 25 years or younger and five people aged 55 and over to join a supported multi-week workshop exploring the wisdom and skills of people of different generations and producing your own short film sharing your perspectives and life experiences. No prior film-making experience is needed and the program is free for participants. Deadline for expressions of interest is: Monday, 14 September, 2020, at 11.59pm.

For details:

<https://www.photoaccess.org.au/create/forward-together/>

Some other reading – Elizabeth Kerrison



If you fancy a dip into some current, absorbing, original LGBTIQ+ fiction here is one for you to consider.

You've likely heard of Girl, Woman, Other – after all it won the Booker Prize 2019, and a host of other awards. Girl, Woman, Other is the eighth novel by Bernardine

Evaristo (<https://bevaristo.com/>). Bernardine is a novelist, critic, poet, playwright, academic.

For me it was vibrant, contemporary, unconventional, majestic and enriching. It is a choir of women's voices with amazing stories, views and experiences and what an ending. Did not see that coming!

Fancy listening to [an interview with Bernadine?](#) The ABC and loads of other folk have interviewed her on this book and her experimental writing style – warning if you are a punctuation zealot – you may have to adjust to this style but it is sooooo worth the effort!

Some extra info...

Bernardine is a longstanding activist for inclusion in the arts, initiating many successful projects to address the underrepresentation of people of colour.