



DiversityACT
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Diversity ACT Community Services.
Annual Report 2019-20

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Diversity ACT Community Services Inc. (DACS)

Acknowledgement of traditional custodians

DACS 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 LGBTIQ+ community

DACS also acknowledge the members of the LGBTIQ+ community past and present who have advocated for our cause, convictions, rights, and future.

About DACS

DACS is a membership-based registered charity that operates out of the Diversity Hub in Kambah, ACT. We 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 comprised 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.

During the reporting period, DACS received the largest portion of our funding from grants and donations.

President's report

2020 has been a new type of difficult for all of us. I could not be prouder of the incredible committee I have had the honour to serve with for the last 2 years as President. The members of your committee have very successfully managed a strange and difficult time. Without the amazing volunteers and committee,

Diversity ACT would be lost. I cannot begin to properly express my gratitude for the people I have met and the opportunities I have gained during my time at the head of this fantastic organisation.

The committee set several strategic goals for the organisation during the 2019/20 financial year.

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

I am sure I don't need to tell you why we had less socialising at the Hub this year! There were events held at the Hub before and after the lockdown, as well as Management Committee meetings and gatherings of Queer Youth Together. Across the financial year the Hub hosted the *Christmas Soiree*, *People, Pets and Potluck* and *Southside Women's Day*.

Prior to the COVID lockdown we had maintained opening the Hub twice weekly on Wednesdays and Saturdays. After the lockdown that has unfortunately been reduced to Saturdays only. Many of our volunteers are officially in COVID high-risk groups, which has impacted on the numbers of people available to open the Hub.

To ensure the safety of those physically attending the Hub, we have developed a COVIDsafe policy, which will shortly be available on our website.

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

During the reporting period, DACS volunteers delivered multiple lectures on working with diverse clients to community services students at CIT. We also continued to assist in the education of community services students by providing student placements. There are more details on our media engagement later in this report.

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

We sought to increase our community profile and diversify our funding base throughout the 2019/20 financial year. We ran information stalls at *Southfest* and *Woden Arts Fair*, and catered BBQs at external functions such as *Out & Loud* and the *SpringOUT Picnic*. Before the lockdown, committee members met with representatives of Tuggeranong Arts, Woden Arts, PhotoAccess, Agender Agenda and Meridian. We have made submissions to government at

Territory and Federal levels. We continue to seek out opportunities to build our relationships with other community organisations.

As you will note from the audit report, the draft budget for 2020/21, and the financial report found later in this document, our financial position has continued to improve. The diversification of funding sources is particularly pleasing.

Included later in this document is a report on our media engagement. I am particularly keen to see the results of the work currently being undertaken on the development of a new website for the organisation.

| CLIENT CONTACT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|------|-----|----|---|----|---|---|------|------------------------|-----|----|----|---|---|------|-------|
| Year | DACS | LGB | T | H | Nb | I | A | Open | Referral Clearinghouse | LGB | T | Nb | I | H | Open | Total |
| 2020 | 10 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 2 | | | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 11 |
| 2019 | 4 | | 2 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | | 3 | | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 0 | 7 |
| 2018 | 2 | 1 | | 1 | | | | 0 | 15 | 6 | 9 | | | | 0 | 17 |
| 2017 | 9 | 5 | 3 | 1 | | | | 0 | 13 | 9 | 4 | | | | 0 | 22 |
| 2016 | 8 | 5 | 3 | | | | | 0 | 10 | 9 | 1 | | | | 0 | 18 |
| 2015 | 7 | 4 | 3 | | | | | 0 | 2 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| 2014 | 1 | | 1 | | | | | 0 | | | | | | | | 1 |
| 2013 | 6 | 3 | 2 | | | 1 | 1 | 0 | | | | | | | | 6 |
| | 37 | 18 | 14 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | | 43 | 25 | 15 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 80 |

Figure 1 - Client data

Throughout the year, including throughout the lockdown period, we have continued to have clients reach out to us and seek support, generally via telephone or online. As shown in the table above, during 2020, over 50% of our clients have been transgender or non-binary, continuing the trend of previous years. This year the bulk of our clients have been self-referrals, rather than coming to us through a referral clearing house. This is a noticeable change from previous years. Our clients have needed support in a range of areas, including housing, education, and health. I note that the client contact numbers in the table do not include one off telephone conversations, only clients for whom there have been multiple points of contact.

This is my final report as President. I hope to continue contributing to the growth of DACS from a different role. I am excited to see what we get up to next! DACS has the best volunteers I have ever had the pleasure to work with and I can't wait to see how the organisation flourishes under its new leadership.

Thank you, all of you, for your amazing dedication and commitment.

2019-20highlights

- Awards: two of our Committee members received awards in ACT Children's Week 2019. Megan Watts received an Intergenerational Award for her outstanding contribution to the wellbeing of children and young people in the ACT for her work with Queer Youth Together (QyouT). Shay-Leigh Willis received an Exceptional Young Person award for making an extraordinary contribution to other young people for her work with QyouT and the ACT Youth Advisory Council
- Submissions: DACS provided submissions on a wide range of topics across the year, copies of which can be found at <https://diversityact.org.au/resources/> :
 - September 2019: Adequacy of Newstart and Related Payments
 - January 2020: Federal Religious Freedom Bill
 - March 2020: Department of Social Security Volunteer Management Activity
 - June 2020: ACT Government Conversion Therapy Ban
- Substantial grants and donations were received from:
 - Department of Social Security
 - Community Services Directorate
 - Tiny's Green Shed
 - Lesbians Incorporated
 - GiveOUT Day
- Public Events:
 - Wear it Purple Day Trivia Night August 2019
 - Christmas Soiree December 2019
 - People, Pets and Potluck February 2020
 - Southside Women's Day March 2020
- Continued listing of vacant committee positions on the ACT Diversity Register.
- An online survey of members – the first such survey since the establishment of the organisation
- Referral assistance and support provided for agency and self-referring clients
- Diversification of funding sources including GiveOUT Day, and an ongoing online fundraising link from the website.

- On-going pastoral care and support services with the Uniting Church (Canberra & Goulburn)
- Distribution of Christmas hampers to LGBTIQ community members in hardship (in partnership with Tuggeranong Uniting Church)
- Hub hires for activities such as parties and community events

Media

Across 2019-20, DACS continued to engage with a range of media. In addition to providing submissions on issues of note, we persisted in the practice of sending out media releases around our public events and on specific issues. While it is difficult to quantify the impact of the submissions and media releases, there has been more media traction for the organisation this year, with direct approaches on issues such as mental health and conversion therapy from ABC Canberra and the Canberra Times.

Social media remains a significant element of our media strategy. Social media platforms engage directly with citizens and opinion-shapers as well as facilitating mainstream media engagement. Thus, to achieve our goal of increasing our community profile, an active social media presence is required. The Management Committee have been exploring the impact of advertising on Facebook – our most recent advertisements reached over 4,000 people. We have 1272 followers on Twitter.

The process of updating the website has proven more challenging than we initially imagined. That process continues, and we look forward to the launch of a new and improved website during 2020-21.

In line with our strategic goal to deliver information to LGBTIQ+ people and the community on a range of LGBTIQ+ topics and issues, the Diversity Digest (our newsletter) is distributed to our members, interested members of the public, and a range of public and private organisations. There were 2 editions of the Diversity Digest during 2019-20. The Management Committee thanks Noel Kwon for her work as newsletter editor. Due to her other commitments, Noel resigned from that position shortly after the COVID-19 shutdown. The Management Committee continues to seek a new editor, but in the interim our Secretary has taken on the role.

Our library has continued to grow, and book/movie reviews feature in all issues of the newsletter. There are hopes for an increase in the DVD collection.

The Management Committee have recently begun to work with a volunteer marketing strategist. The results of that relationship will be reported in the 2020-21 annual report.

Financial Report

COVID-19 was a thing that happened; thankfully, DACS was, and still is, in a position to handle it financially. Due to previous donations and current grants the drop in fundraising opportunities was a manageable problem. In the last twelve months we have successfully diversified our funding sources and as a result we ended the financial year in a strong position.

As mentioned in the President's report, the audit report for 2019/20 and a draft budget for 2020/21 are attached to this document.

Here is a list of our current grants and what they are doing for us.

- Pink Tennis grant – This grant is supporting our efforts to hold monthly events to bring our community together and raise membership. As COVIDsafety allows, these funds will be used to offset event expenditure.
- ACTEW Community grant – This grant is directly going to pay almost all our insurance costs for the year.
- Capital of Equality – This grant is allowing our members and those in the community interested to participate in a collaborative art project that is scheduled throughout the coming year.
- DSS Volunteers grant – This grant has helped supplement our maintenance and gardening costs and upgrade our computer system, which is still in the stone age. There are also funds here for training courses for our volunteers.
- Youth Week grant – the planned event was suspended due to COVID and in negotiations about how to progress this.
- Lesbians Inc grant – this grant has been spent largely on events and raising awareness but has also allowed us to allocate funds to upgrade some elements of Diversity's style and flair for out of Hub events, including new fliers and banners.

Some other interesting points:

- Our event income went up in 2019/20, despite COVID, which is a positive thing. This suggests that if things return to normal, we can expect a further rise in this figure.
- Our accounting fees have been dropped significantly, being capped at a maximum of \$800. This is ongoing for the foreseeable future.
- We should be seeing a drop in telephone and internet bills as we have recently adopted a new plan to lower these ongoing costs.
- Our electricity bills should stabilise, as a new Smartmeter has recently been installed.

As far as the future is concerned, we are still looking for motivated members and interested parties to go forth and spread the word of DACS' good work to their local businesses in attempts to either secure donations for our various events or become corporate members to help consolidate our incoming funds.

Any and all suggestions to find ways around some of our big costs, like event expenditure, power, heating, insurance, repairs and maintenance, please step forward, there mostly no bad ideas and I'm still happy to listen to bad ideas.

Hopefully we can see a return to form with our BBQ fundraisers, because in conjunction with our excellent grant work and continued efforts to find more efficient ways to go about things, we can really start throwing some huge events and getting the community together.

In closing this report, I must express my thanks to everyone who has helped out with grant writing and other fundraising activities. We would not be in this improved financial position without your hard work!

Volunteers & Membership engagement

COVID-19 had a dramatic impact on the opportunities for members and volunteers to physically engage with DACS.

Four community events and several fundraising BBQs occurred during the reporting period. The plan to increase member and community opportunities for engagement through monthly community events across 2020 was unable to be realised. Two events were held before the shutdown – *People, Pets and Potluck* in February and *Southside Women's Day* in March.

Opening of the Hub for community drop in opportunities can only be achieved through the availability of volunteers. Our current extremely limited opening hours are the result of current availability of appropriately trained and mentored volunteers, who are not members of a COVID high-risk group.

Electronic communication with members has increased during the reporting period. In addition to the circulation of newsletters, email updates were provided during the COVID shutdown and prior to community events.

DACS Committee - June 2020

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| Executive |
| President Shay-Leigh Willis |
| Vice President Bruce Moore |
| Treasurer Morgan Sedaitis |
| Secretary Megan Watts |
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| Ordinary Members |
| Liz Stephens |
| Elizabeth Kerrison |
| Penny Cilento |
| Vacant |
| Vacant |
| |

| |
|-----------------------|
| Public Officer |
| Douglas Jackson |