



Western Australian  
AIDS COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT  
2019-2020

**35,000**  
CLIENT ENGAGEMENTS

**65,140**  
SAFE SEX PACKS  
DISTRIBUTED

**1131**  
HOURS OF  
COUNSELLING  
PROVIDED

**125 PEOPLE LIVING WITH  
HIV SUPPORTED THROUGH  
OUR PEER AND CLIENT  
SUPPORT SERVICES**

**3374**  
VISITS TO OUR M-CLINIC

**1250 YOUNG PEOPLE  
BENEFITED FROM OUR  
EDUCATIONAL 'HIV  
GETTING THE FACTS'  
SCHOOL TALKS**

**1,986,267**  
NEEDLES DISTRIBUTED

**2076**  
HIV & STI TESTS  
UNDERTAKEN

**11,630**  
PEOPLE PROVIDED WITH BRIEF  
INTERVENTION EDUCATION IN OUR  
NEEDLE SYRINGE EXCHANGE PROGRAM

**2800 YOUTH (LGBTQI+)  
ATTENDED OUR FREEDOM  
CENTRE ACROSS 132  
DROP-IN SESSIONS**

**40,000,000+**  
DIGITAL REACH

**83**  
CALLERS ASSISTED VIA  
OUR HIV INFORMATION LINE



## CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

It is with great pleasure that I present the WA AIDS Council's Annual Report on behalf of the Board of Management for the 2019 / 2020 term.

The year has been marked by great challenges due to WAAC's role in our community during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. This unprecedented time has seen every member of our organisation show steadfast commitment to providing first-class services, an achievement for which we can all be immensely proud.

The term began with convening the CEO recruitment subcommittee to manage the process to select our new operational leader. In addition to Board members, a representative from the HIV+ community, a staff representative and a stakeholder from the Department of Health participated.

Following an extensive and consultative process, Lisa Dobrin MBA was appointed as our new Chief Executive Officer in March 2020. I offer my sincere thanks to Kristina Mitsikas (Director of Operations) for serving as interim CEO during this process. I also thank Ms Lisa Bastian from the Department

of Health for her valuable contributions to the subcommittee. In addition, I'd like to thank our community representatives Trish Langdon, Danielle Newport and Marcus Everon, and WAAC staff representative Mick Jackson Pearce for their tireless work on this subcommittee.

Another important task was the continuation of an ongoing dialogue with our close sector partner, Sexual Health Quarters, in relation to aligning more formally. This dialogue included SHQ's former Chief Executive, Julian Henderson, joining the WAAC Board as Vice Chairperson, and the entirety of Board Planning Day 2020 being dedicated to a full and frank exploration of this possibility. I am grateful for the attendance of SHQ Chair Rick Brooks, and CEO, Deborah Barnes for this significant discussion.

Board Planning Day 2020 examined what a merger might look like, and resulted in bipartisan agreement that no ultimate decision can be made without extensive community consultation and support. Both WAAC and SHQ are presently working on a heads of agreement which will serve as a roadmap for this important continuing discussion.

The challenges presented by COVID-19 during the term were unprecedented. (I recall an occasion where I was on the phone to the Australian Tax Office for 45 minutes to ensure a staff member would receive their job keeper benefit!) WAAC admirably met this and other challenges both as a first-class provider of services and as a designated essential service. I'm pleased to report that all scheduled meetings of the Board and its Sub-Committees proceeded either virtually or in person.

Also, in 2020, I was pleased to lead WAAC's robust opposition to the Prisons Amendment Bill. WAAC in coalition with the National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA), Hepatitis WA, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and The Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) made

forceful submissions against that stigmatising and unnecessary Bill.

Although the Bill ultimately passed, our advocacy resulted in an amendment which ensures a mandatory 5th year review of the Bill's operation. WAAC's advocacy appeared in the LGBTQI+ press and Hansard. I would like to thank Alison Xamon MLC, Greens spokesperson for Sexuality and Gender Identity, for leading the charge on our behalf. I would also like to thank Minister Logan's Office and Minister Dawson's Office for their willingness to work constructively with our coalition and, notwithstanding our differences, encouraging further engagement between WAAC and key government departments.

A by-product of WAAC's advocacy is a renewed relationship with the Department of Corrective Services. WAAC will undertake prison guard education about the transmissibility of infectious diseases and participate in the regulation drafting process in the coming months.

2019/2020 has been, for WAAC and the world, a challenging year. I would like to sincerely thank my fellow Board members who have remained steadfast in their dedication to WAAC. I also thank our new CEO, Lisa Dobrin, who has enjoyed a baptism by fire, starting work on the eve of the COVID-19 lockdown. Lisa has already proven her ability to lead the organisation capably during this unprecedented time and has visibly demonstrated her passion and dedication to our sector. I also record my thanks to our management team and WAAC staff, as well as our volunteers, who have gone above and beyond the call of duty.

This year, as with all others, our unwavering objective has been to provide our LGBTQI+ community, and indeed the wider WA community, with the best service possible. Without any doubt, I believe everyone involved with WAAC has admirably risen to the challenge.

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In the coming term, the Board will focus on developing WAAC's next strategic plan, make definite in-roads for our closer collaboration with SHQ and settle on a new brand all the while providing first-rate governance and fiscal oversight. I look forward to working with the Board, staff and community as we continue our vision of building healthy, inclusive and safe communities.

**Asanka Gunasekera**  
WAAC Chair



# OUR YEAR

WA AIDS COUNCIL 2019-2020

## 2019

### JULY

- Our first **Mums and Bubs** support group was launched (five held across the year)
- **Women and HIV: Encouraging women to get tested for HIV campaign.** This digital initiative saw social posts performing 95% better than previous posts, with strong engagement among women from diverse cultural backgrounds
- Launched **International Student Sexual Health Workshop Series**

### AUGUST

- Launch of **LGBTQI+ micro campaign** targeting sexual health of students studying in WA - 62K hits on waacids.com website
- **Blood-Borne Virus (BBV) workforce development** a workshop facilitated at the Department of Correctional Services
- **40 volunteers** were inducted into our volunteer program

### SEPTEMBER

- Our **Crystal Pleasures podcast** series was launched in conjunction with the Centre for Social Research in Health
- We hosted a **Legal and Migration Forum** at the Backlot for people living with HIV
- The **Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) Conference** was hosted in Perth and included two WAAC presentations
- **114 people** participated in the annual **Finger Prick survey** as part of our Needle and Syringe Program (NSEP) for HIV prevention

## 2020

### FEBRUARY

- A joint planning day was held with POWA and WAAC
- A joint Board planning day was held with Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ) and WAAC
- Eight Sexual Health Week grants were awarded in our regions
- An outreach **Safe Sex session** took place on **National Condom day** at Gordon St Garage

### JANUARY

- Our **'Rename' the WA AIDS Council digital campaign** was launched, with **16,000 views** on YouTube
- **Mandatory Testing:** WAAC commenced advocacy for a review of the WA Infectious Disease Act and Prisons Amendment Bill, in collaboration with key stakeholders both state and national
- Launch **Summertime - Time to Test** digital campaign and press release, resulting in an article in the West Australian on Women and HIV

### DECEMBER

- A **World AIDS Day Community Breakfast** was held at Hyde Park in collaboration with POWA
- A World AIDS Day event was held at Government House - our Chairperson had the privilege of delivering a speech alongside the Shadow Minister of Health and community members
- A **World AIDS Day Light the City Red** initiative saw eight city landmarks bathed in red

### NOVEMBER

- Our **Gay Men's Periodic Survey** was undertaken, with over **600 surveys** collected
- Our **Keep it Safe Summer (KISS) 2019** outreach had direct and meaningful contact with approximately **1,874 school leavers**
- Our **Pride WA** float featured the 25-year anniversary of our Freedom Centre
- We became an accredited **Quality Innovation Performance (QIP) Health and Community Service**

### OCTOBER

- Our **Freedom Centre celebrated 25 years of service:** 100% of young people reported that the Freedom Centre is safe and inclusive
- Our first benchmark **social impact report** was published, with **99%** of clients reporting they are likely to return, and **95%** likely or very likely to recommend WAAC
- We hosted an interactive stall at the **Pride WA Fair Day** with activities, games and information on sexual health and testing

### MARCH

- **New CEO Appointment** - Lisa Dobrin - press release and an article in Out in Perth
- The COVID-19 crisis hit WA, with social distancing restrictions implemented and adjustments implemented as we continued to provide essential services for community
- We commenced the trial of our first online module - **HIV Facts Training**
- We released **two new printed resources** - A HIV resource aimed at International Students and a general HIV resource

### APRIL

- We launched a **free counselling service** in WA, resulting in **16,000 hits** on our website, with inquiries and leads to WAAC
- Launch of state-wide **Needle Syringe Exchange Postal Service**
- As a COVID-19 response, we delivered two webinars to Community and Youth Workers

### MAY

- We hosted an **International Candlelight Memorial** at Robertson Memorial Park in collaboration with Positive Organisation Western Australia (POWA) and HIV Consumer Alliance with a live stream option
- We launched a **virtual drop-in service** for Freedom Centre visitors
- Press release - WAAC and Living Proud reaffirm collaboration with focus on LGBTQI+ counselling services, resulting in an article in Post Newspapers

### JUNE

- Our essential service delivery continued with **214 online counselling sessions** taking place between April and June
- Launch of our **Lighthouse virtual weekly event** for people living with HIV
- Our workforce returned to WAAC HQ with all our services returning following COVID-19 restrictions

## TESTIMONIALS FROM WAAC SERVICE USERS

**“Lovely service every time, especially friendly and easy to deal with. From the reception to the service provider, all staff are fantastic and make a sometimes embarrassing service a pleasure. Thank you.”**

**“Extremely polite, helpful and non-judgemental.”**

**“I got to meet someone and interact with him in a way I would never have been able to without being involved in Peer support.”**

**“There’s healing and empowerment when having productive and genuine conversations with peers.”**

## OUR PEOPLE

**Board Members:** Asanka Gunasekera, Chairperson; Julian Henderson, Vice Chairperson; Dr Matthew Skinner, Community Representative; Conrad Liveris, Secretary; Justin Clarke, Treasurer; Dr Mark Polizzotto, Community Representative; Danielle Newport, Community Representative; Marcus Everon, Community Representative; Trish Langdon, Community Representative

**Chief Executive Officer:** Lisa Dobrin

**Total Staff:** 48

**Total Volunteers:** 120 – providing 5758 hours = approx. 3 full time equivalent with an estimated value of \$201,530

## OUR PARTNERS

### Funders

Department of Health - specifically Sexual Health BBV program, Mental Health Commission, Department of Education

### Grants

ViiV, Mac Cosmetics, Gilead, AIDS Trust, HBF, Volunteering WA, Lotterywest

### Pro Bono

K&L Gates; Francis Burt Chambers and KordaMentha, Tonic Digital

### Research Partners

SiREN, Curtin, UWA, Murdoch and Centre for Social Research – UNSW, Kirby Institute, ACON

### Thank you for your support, collaboration and significant contribution:

Australian Federation of AIDS Organisation (AFAO), Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), ACON, Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA), Beyond Bank, CoPAHM WA representatives, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Hepatitis WA, Hepatitis Australia, Kununurra Warringarri Aboriginal Corporation, Kulbardi House, Living Proud, MAC cosmetics, Magenta, Meridian formerly ACT AIDS Action Council, National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA), NTAHC, Nyoongar Outreach Services, Out in Perth, OKMG, Palmerston, Positive Organisation Western Australia (POWA), PRIDE WA, Royal Perth Hospital, SECCA, Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ), Steamworks, Telethon Kids, The Court Hotel, Thorne Harbour Health, HIV Alliance, TasCHARD, Tonic Digital, Volunteering WA, Woodside.



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