



WAAC IS EVOLVING...

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

7,507

NSEP client engagements

1,687,685

needles & syringes
provided

1,134

referrals provided
to NSEP clients

120,720

safe sex packs distributed

510

'Find Your Fit' condom
sample packs distributed

12,426

print resources &
items distributed

738

professionals received
LGBTQIA+ inclusion training

1,784

visits by young people to
Freedom Centre sessions

528

hours of drop-in
sessions provided

3,958

M Clinic appointments

2,568

HIV, BBV & STI
screenings conducted

683

vaccinations provided

1,488

PrEP prescriptions
provided

139

clients provided with
WAAC counselling

901

hours of counselling

8,489

engagements through
outreach, expos & events

1,878

individuals received sexual
health presentations

430

professionals received HIV
& BBV training

40+

HIV Information Line
calls taken

78

clients supported by
case management team

TESTIMONIALS

"The lovely well-informed staff are always a delight, I find myself enjoying my visits without any stigma or shame and there's always answers and information for any questions one might have"

WAAC client

"Thank you for your contribution to our event. I think the discussion was a success and the audience appreciated your thought provoking and informative comments"

Professional development client

"I don't know how to thank you, except saying your team has been amazing, good things I am sure will come to you all. Please remember at any time, you saved me and made me feel amazing with your support, knowledge and kind words"

M Clinic client

"The counselling services at WAAC continue to provide me with an invaluable source of information, support and understanding and allows me to discuss personal issues in a welcoming and non-judgmental setting. Thanks to services at WAAC I have managed to understand, learn and grow as a person more than I ever could have imagined"

WAAC counselling client

"Many people here, especially our Asian friends because they will not go to a normal doctor...it's very important that we keep you [M Clinic] going"

M Clinic client

"I recently dealt with an unsafe sexual encounter and developed severe anxiety as a result of waiting for testing results and the HIV window period. I am extremely grateful to the M Clinic team for assisting me during that period"

M Clinic client

"The counselling and support I've received at WAAC has been crucial to healing the issues I have with childhood trauma, allowing me to find joy in life...Every aspect of my life has improved, from my mental health, career and even personal life"

WAAC counselling client

"Thank you sincerely for the support you have provided to one of our students and to those of us on staff who have been supporting this student... We thank you for your professionalism, support and willingness to work with us in this way"

Inclusive Education WA client



"My experience at WAAC has been great. The staff are always friendly, and I feel supported and safe in the space. I was referred by the Freedom Centre, and overall having Freedom Centre and WAAC as safe spaces really helps my overall confidence existing as a queer person. Counselling at WAAC has greatly improved my quality of life... I've made so much progress in healing because of the service WAAC provides"

Counselling and Freedom Centre client

Note: Some testimonials have been altered to preserve confidentiality



CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

2021 was an extraordinary year for WAAC.

It celebrated its 35th birthday, developed a strategic plan, launched a new brand, obtained a five-year Department of Health contract and, in the shadow of a global pandemic, continued to provide exceptional service to the WA community.

For the WAAC Board of Governance, WAAC's new strategic plan, "Strategic Direction 2021 – 2024" is a banner achievement.

Providing strategic direction is the cornerstone of a Board's responsibilities. I am proud that "Strategic Direction 2021 – 2024" will not only provide guidance for the crucial years ahead but is also the product of many diverse voices.

Inclusivity was the watchword of this project. I thank the Board for devoting two Saturdays of their time. I also thank WAAC's staff, stakeholders and the community for their ideas, insights and for sharing their experiences.

In reimagining its brand, and after much debate, WAAC courageously pivoted away from classic AIDS symbolism. The new brand, developed after extensive community consultation, befits a modern and agile organisation. Its official launch-event was held on 15 September 2021. I was delighted to welcome our friends in the LGBTIQ+ and PLHIV communities not to mention our extended family of friends, stakeholders and community. I thank all those involved in this launch.

Operationally, WAAC has returned to preferred provider status with the Department of Health. WAAC also developed a new contract with the Department and in doing so secured another 5 years of service to the WA Community. This is an extraordinary achievement and I acknowledge the hard work of WAAC CEO, Lisa Dobrin, for leading this project.

Community engagement remained a priority this year with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement with Positive Organisation WA.

The Board's HIV+ Community Representative also engaged with a wide variety of PLHIV. Further, WAAC continued to seek out collaboration opportunities with our sector partners Hepatitis WA and SHQ.

Against these significant milestones, the Board undertook red-letter governance work including CEO Appraisal, revising disciplinary and grievance policies, undertaking a comprehensive OSH audit and developing a risk register and risk appetite statement.

The Board also undertook a skills matrix self-assessment to determine where it can improve its oversight over the organisation. I thank Board Secretary, Conrad Liveris, for his leadership on a number of these projects.

I am delighted that the new leadership team encapsulates all the hope of generational change tempered by the strong hand of experience.

I have had the privilege of serving this wonderful organisation since 2013. Since 2016, I have had the honour of leading it. Thus, there are a great many I'd like to thank in this, my final Chairperson's report.

I am also incredibly grateful for the service of Willie Rowe and Kristina Mitsikas who served the organisation as interim CEOs during unprecedented and difficult times.

Asanka Gunasekera
WAAC Chairperson



FUNDING SUCCESSES

WAAC core service funding

After an collaborative co-design process, WAAC was awarded close to \$20 million in funding to deliver community-based HIV and sexual health services in WA over the next five years.

The funding, awarded under the WA Department of Health's Sexual Health and Blood-borne Virus Program Communicable Disease Control Directorate, enables WAAC to continue the delivery of its core programs, including support for people living with HIV, counselling, case management and health promotion services, the needle and syringe exchange program (NSEP) and M Clinic.

Syphilis project funding

M Clinic was awarded \$150,000 grant from the WA Department of Health for a Syphilis Health Promotion pilot program. This enables the employment of a health promotion officer focusing on the growing outbreak of syphilis in WA.

A range of health promotion activities will be delivered to reduce the transmission and negative health outcomes of syphilis and other STIs, particularly amongst bisexual men and males-who-have-sex-with-males-and-females (MSMF).

Regional LGBTQIA+ project funding

WAAC was awarded \$500,000 by the WA Mental Health Commission to deliver a pilot project providing support for LGBTQIA+ people in regional WA over the 2021-2022 financial period.

The pilot project will provide capacity building, community support services and counselling for LGBTQIA+ young people in Bunbury, Geraldton and Kalgoorlie and creates the possibility for future projects to support regional communities.

CONSULTATION AND COMMUNITY

World Café

A World Café community consultation was held in late October 2020 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel with WAAC staff, members and stakeholders to kick off the strategic planning journey.

In partnership with Dee Roche from DRLDC, WAAC facilitated and hosted a metro-wide, whole of community consultation to inform and input into WAAC's new strategic plan and directions.

WAACIFY

WAACIFY (short for WAAC Input from You) began in late 2020. This consumer advisory committee is made up of people living with HIV, ensuring the continued and meaningful engagement and voice of positive people in the services, projects, resources and campaigns that WAAC provides.



HIGHLIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENTS

Redevelopment of the WAAC brand

In recognition of our growth as a community-focused organisation, we embarked on a series of consultations with OKMG, engaging with staff, community groups, stakeholders and communities to examine the perception of WAAC, the organisation's brand and feelings about WAAC.

The results were clear, we needed a new name and logo that acknowledged our history whilst looking to the future.

It was decided to change our name from WA AIDS Council to WAAC, removing the AIDS connotations but still holding onto the organisation's history.

A new logo and brand style were approved by the board, and were officially launched in September 2021.

WAAC's 2021-24 Strategic Direction

Following the World Café in October 2020, the Board worked in partnership with DRLDC in the development of WAAC's strategic direction. The document outlines WAAC's values, purpose, vision, strategic pillars and objectives.

You can find the strategic direction document at waac.com.au/about-us

World AIDS Day

WAAC ran a day of activities in Yagan Square to celebrate World AIDS Day and raise community awareness of HIV. The day included a community breakfast, evening movie screening, interactive art installation, onsite testing, and information stalls.

The activities facilitated conversations with community members about the issues surrounding HIV and AIDS, particularly the continuing impacts of stigma and discrimination.

Find Your Fit

WAAC launched the Find Your Fit condom sample pack initiative. The pilot resource contained six different sized condoms and three lubricant sachets to provide people with the opportunity to try out different sizes and find their best fit.

Feedback from users and community organisations have been overwhelmingly positive and the project's success has led to WAAC offering this innovative resource on an ongoing basis.

AIDS Candlelight Vigil

WAAC hosted the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial on 16 May 2021 at the WA AIDS Memorial in Robertson Park.

Forty staff and community members attended the event, one of the largest turnouts in the past decade. Feedback from the event was resoundingly positive with a number of attendees stating it was the most meaningful and well attended vigil in a long time.

M Clinic's move

After a decade at its location on Cleaver Street, M Clinic moved to new premises. The new clinic at 2 Clive Street, West Perth, is easily accessible by public transport and has multiple parking options in the area.

The move has brought the M Clinic service closer to WAAC's main offices and has enabled for greater collaboration and partnership opportunities between staff.



ADVOCACY AND CONSULTATION

Response to Mandatory Testing (Infectious Diseases) Act

WAAC submitted a policy position paper to the WA Police Force on the statutory review of the Mandatory Testing (Infectious Disease) Act 2014 (WA).

WAAC opposes laws – in WA and elsewhere – that allow for the mandatory testing for infectious diseases of people whose bodily fluids come into contact with public officers. Mandatory testing is not in line with the Australian National HIV, Hepatitis B or C Testing Policies, nor supported by global health organisations and peak bodies.



WAAC outlined its concerns with mandatory testing and provided sixteen recommendations to improve the operation and effectiveness of the Act. A full copy of WAAC's submission is available upon request and contains the full suite of recommendations, as well as the policy considerations underpinning each recommendation.

The WA Police Force has indicated that an Issues Report will be circulated sometime in 2021.

Historical Homosexual Convictions Expungement Scheme

In October 2020, the Office of the Commissioner

for Victims invited WAAC to participate in a consultation process about the Historical Homosexual Convictions' Expungement Scheme.

WAAC proposed seven recommendations on how to better improve the accessibility to the Scheme:

1. Adopt an automatic expungement approach
2. Change the decision-making authority to special advisers consisting of members of the LGBTQIA+ community
3. Expand types of offences that are eligible for expungement
4. Expand the definition of 'conviction'
5. Procedural fairness to underpin the Scheme
6. Proactively publish and continuously advertise the Scheme
7. Amendments to the application form.

WAAC's submission was incorporated into the Commissioner's report to the Attorney General.

Religious Discrimination Bill

The federal government has indicated they will be issuing an updated Religious Discrimination Bill to Parliament this year.

Concerns raised by AFAO indicated the updated bill would be dangerous and detrimental to LGBTQIA+ communities and priority HIV populations in Australia.

In response Equality Australia initiated a campaign to demand freedoms that are respectful of all communities and people, WAAC, in partnership with AFAO, has supported Equality Australia's leadership and advocacy to highlight the impact of the proposed legislation.

Submission on Equal Opportunity Act review

In October 2020, the Law Reform Commission of WA invited WAAC to provide a submission on the review of the Equal Opportunity Act 1984 (WA) (the Equal Opportunity Act).

As an advocate for people living with HIV and members of the LGBTIQ+ community, WAAC's submission focussed on how the Equal Opportunity Act may be amended to provide remedies in respect of discrimination to these communities.

WAAC recommended that the Equal Opportunity Act be amended to:

1. Introduce anti-vilification provisions on

various grounds, including sexuality, gender identity, transgender status, intersex status and HIV/AIDS status

2. Introduce intersex status as a new ground of discrimination
3. Amend the ground of gender history to gender identity
4. Religious exemptions be repealed or amended to restrict the rights of religious bodies to discriminate.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP

Colocation partnerships

WAAC established colocation partnerships with ACON's Pride in Diversity program and PFLAG WA at WAAC's main office on Murray Street.

UNAIDS Civil Society Declaration

WAAC, AFAO and other state AIDS councils supported the Civil society declaration for the United Nations General Assembly 2021 High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS.

The Declaration calls for sustained momentum to be created for the policies, programmes and funding that are needed to end HIV as a global health threat by 2030.

The document also calls out the failures to meet any of the targets for prevention, diagnosis and treatment set out in the 2016 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS and lists the keys actions required to make lasting and effective change.

Evaluation partnership

WAAC established a five-year partnership with Curtin University to co-design and develop a whole-of-organisation evaluation framework.

The collaboration aims to transform existing evaluation structures to ensure more effective data collection and enable WAAC to better use its evidence, feedback and data to improve programs and services.

Waste for WAAC

WAAC established an exciting and innovative partnership with WA Return Recycle Renew Ltd and the Containers for Change initiative.

WAAC created its "Waste for WAAC" community initiative in partnership with Ability WA. This program facilitates the donation of eligible containers for people and organisations wishing to raise funds for WAAC and Ability WA, as well as contribute to a more sustainable local and global environment.

Work and Development Permit Scheme

WAAC partnered with the WA Department of Justice with the Work and Development Permit Scheme, an initiative to help people experiencing difficulty in paying court fines due to hardship. Under the scheme, people can complete approved activities (volunteer work, drug and alcohol counselling, etc.) in place of paying off the amount owed.

As WAAC works with many clients and communities who have had or may have contact with the justice system, being a sponsor for the scheme is another way we can continue to support clients who are experiences hardships, as well as open up opportunities for new clients to engage with our services.

Our People

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

Chief Executive Officer – Lisa Dobrin

Total staff – 45

Total volunteers – 137 – providing 4,528 hours of supporting and engagement

Partners

Funders

WA Department of Health, Mental Health Commission, WA Department of Education, WA Police Force

Grants

Gilead, Lotterywest, MAC Cosmetics, US Consulate of Perth, ViiV Healthcare

Key partners

Aboriginal Health Council of WA, Ability WA, Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO), National AIDS Fundraising Limited (as trustee of the AIDS Trust of Australia), PFLAG WA, Pride WA, Rainbow Futures, Shine Communications, TransFolk of WA, WA Primary Health Alliance, WA Return Recycle Renew Ltd, Youth Affairs Council of WA, Youth Pride Network, YMCA WA

Pro Bono

Development WA, Floreat Maintenance, Francis Burt Chambers, K&L Gates, Metaxas Legal

Research Partners

The Kirby Institute, SiREN, Centre for Social Research, ACON

Thank you for your support, collaboration and contributions:

ACON, Hon. Alison Xamon MLC, Annette Hasluck (Rubis), Australian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, Constable Care, Dee Roche (DRLDC), Department of Justice, Equality Australia, Fiona Stanley Hospital, Gordon Street Garage, GRAI, Hepatitis WA, HIV Consumer Alliance, Inspired Adventures, LGBTIQ+ Health Alliance, Senator Louise Pratt, National Association of People with HIV Australia (NAPWHA), OKMG, Out in Perth, Peer Based Harm Reduction, POWA, Pride in Diversity, Rainbow Community House, Richmond Wellbeing, Royal Life Saving WA, Royal Perth Hospital, SciTech, Sexual Health Quarters, Sheila McHale, Steamworks, Tonic Digital, Volunteering

