

ACT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+)

Ministerial Advisory Council

Annual Report 2021

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Introduction

The ACT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) Ministerial Advisory Council (the Council) provides practical, strategic advice to the Chief Minister on policy issues affecting LGBTIQ people and communities living in the Canberra Region. The Council's key function is to provide this advice by working with the Office for LGBTIQ Affairs (the Office) which sits within the Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate (CMTEDD), as well as other Government and non-Government stakeholders. Full terms of reference can be found [here](#).

Council members at 31st December 2021:

Sue Webeck (Chair)

Christine Healy (Co-Deputy Chair)

Scott Clouder (Co-Deputy Chair)

Mohamed Al Abri

Shona Cloake

Renee Dixon

Ciára Duggan

Suzanne Eastwood

Gabriel Filpi

Arushi Ganguly

Vincent Li

Craig Middleton

Annika Reynolds

Monica Serci

Corey Trembath

Chair's Report

2021 for the Council like for everyone has been challenging. We started with strong intentions to support the consultation and development of the Second Action Plan (2022-2023) of the Capital of Equality Strategy, the reforms ensuring the prohibition of deferrable medical interventions on intersex people, continued monitoring and advocacy in regards to the "Federal Religious Discrimination" Bill as well as building a robust community engagement and consultation plan for Council to reach into the ACT Community. This was however in parts delayed or more difficult to progress due to the pandemic.

The Council has worked alongside the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs in developing the Second Action Plan of the Capital of Equality Strategy. The Council took a leading role in providing accessible consultation on this for young people through a range of face to face engagements. This provided a rich and robust set of ideas and advocacy points to place alongside the broader consultations run by the Office.

Council has had the privilege of providing regular input into the work of the Office on the prohibition of deferrable medical interventions on intersex people. This has been a significant piece of work and we have been grateful to be led by people with lived experience as well as the service sector which directly supports those who will be impacted by this reform. We thank you for your collaborative and supportive approach in this work.

Among these significant pieces of work through 2021 which have required a range of "on the run adjustments", Council has undertaken significant recruitment during the year. I had the privilege of taking an interim position as Chair while recruitment was undertaken for the role as well as a new cohort of general members. Cabinet appointed six new appointees in 2021 and we said farewell to the previous Chair. We extend our deepest thanks to Isabel Mudford, who stepped down from the role of Chair on the Council to pursue other professional ventures. Isabel was a stable and energizing force on Council as we underwent a transformative recruitment and onboarding period. We also farewelled two general council members this year; we thank Tate McAllister and Sia Ahmed for their work during their time on Council.

Late in 2021 we were able to recruit a dynamic and engaged group of people to carry the work of Council into 2022 and beyond. I was formally appointed as the Chair and am delighted to serve the ACT LGBTIQ+ community in this capacity. The following individuals joined the Council in 2021 and we look forward to their immense contributions:

- **Mohamed Al Abri**, a senior learning advisor with a passion for improving lives of queer, trans, non-binary, lesbian, bi+, gay people of all races and abilities in Canberra.

- **Renee Dixson**, a non-binary queer feminist academic, community builder and an advocate for the inclusion and equality of LGBTIQ+ forcibly displaced people.
- **Arushi Ganguly**, a student of International Relations and an emerging researcher with an interest in feminist inquiry.
- **Vincent Li**, a university student with a passion for social justice and policy making.
- **Annika Reynolds**, a non-binary young leader in the Australian environment movement, advocating for an inclusive vision of climate justice.
- **Corey Trembath**, a proud Transgender Koori man (brotherboy) with an interest and expertise in access to essential healthcare services, adequate policy and protections for trans and gender diverse people.

I encourage you to read about the work the Council was involved in across a breadth of subject areas in 2021 both through collective effort and also the individual member representation on behalf of the Council.

Sue Webeck

Chair

2021 highlights and achievements

Representing our community in various consultations

Council often participates in a range of consultations across the ACT Government:

- **April 2021 Review of the Canberra Health Services Website:** members contributed to a ‘card sorting’ exercise to assist ACT Health to improve site navigation for Canberra Health Services, including Canberra Hospital

The Council prepared a submission response to the ACT Government discussion paper ‘Key issues in the prohibition of deferrable medical interventions on intersex people’. This was one of many interactions with the Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs surrounding their Capital of Equality commitment to “Collaborate with intersex people, human rights organisations and healthcare professionals to form a plan on how prohibition of deferrable medical interventions on intersex people could operate in Canberra”.

- **May 2021 Meeting with Major Projects Canberra on the Canberra Theatre design**
- **July 2021 Draft Territory-wide Health Services Plan 2021-2026**

- **October 2021 ACT Commissioning Roadmap:** the Council provided advice to the Industry Development, Community Services Directorate on inclusivity in the Commissioning for Outcomes initiative .
- **December 2021 ACT Discrimination Law reform:** Council provided feedback to JACS, and promoted the public response to the [Discrimination Law Reform | YourSay ACT](#)

Representing LGBTIQ+ community on panels and committees

- The Chair of the Council regularly attends the Joint Advisory Councils Chair's meetings to progress shared advocacy initiatives across ACT.
- A Council representative was invited to sit at the recruitment panel for CMTEDD employment positions.
- A Council's member sits at the Calvary Hospital Regional Community Advisory Council, enabling the Council to highlight issues of importance to the community, such as recognising our same sex partners as our next of kin in visitation and medical decisions, respecting transgender patients' affirmed gender and pronouns, ensuring people with HIV/AIDS are provided with their appropriate medication whilst in hospital and understanding the dynamics of accessing aged care services.
- The Council has been a member of the Reference Group for the [ACT Health LGBTIQ Scoping Study](#) run by the ACT Health Directorate

The ACT Government committed \$360,000 in the 2021-22 ACT Budget to begin addressing the Scoping Study's recommendations including developing an implementation plan and the co-design of a gender-focused health service in collaboration with NGOs and LGBTIQ+ stakeholders. The assessment panel for the tender to do this work comprised representatives from ACT Health, the LGBTIQ Affairs Office and one member of council. The final tender panel report was submitted in December 2021.

Community events

It goes without saying that COVID curtailed many events in 2021, but Council was able to honour its longstanding commitment to the annual Canberra Spring Out Fair Day (albeit virtually!), to reach out to underrepresented communities with in-person consultation events, and to provide support and information by way of a virtual briefing in conjunction with Equality Australia.

At Spring Out Canberra's Virtual Fair Day in October 2021 we shared a virtual booth with the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs.

Consultations with young people

78 young people were consulted by the Ministerial Advisory Council in relation to the development of the Second Action Plan of the Capital of Equality Strategy. The Council visited both school groups and community groups at the locations they felt most comfortable, and the sessions were facilitated by an experienced youth worker. The aim of the consultation was to gain insight and conduct a needs analysis of young LGBTIQ+ youth in the Canberra Community.

The young people reported concern about support and rights when they felt discriminated against; they expressed they did not know where to access support or help in a safe way if they were not out to parents or caregivers.

Young people explained through the consultation that teachers or staff were not proactive in establishing LGBTIQ+ safe spaces in a school setting, but that these initiatives, as well as visual symbols such as Pride flags were important to them.

They strongly expressed the need for more education on queer history and education for school staff and students within the directorate. Other ongoing school themes concerned a need for non-gendered bathrooms and school uniform options as well as reiterating the importance of mental health support within schools



Due to the ongoing community concern about the Federal Government's Religious Discrimination Bill, Council organised a Community Briefing about the Religious Discrimination Bill in December 2021. Council members introduced Equality Australia's Legal Director Ghassan Kassisieh to make a presentation about the status of the bill, and answer questions from community members.

Council members are often invited to attend other events to bring LGBTIQ+ representation, to connect with community, promote visibility of our work and act as contact points for other attendees.

Events attended:

- Canberra Quire's Rise Up! concert at Llewellyn Hall
- David Atfield's 'Chiaroscuro' play at the Canberra Theatre Centre
- Launch of Eastlake Football Club and Ainslie Football Club's Pride round

- Launch of the Guidance to support gender affirming care for mental health
- In May 2021 Council attended the US Embassy's IDAHOBIT day reception with Chargé d'Affaires Michael Goldman and ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr



Photographs © US Embassy in Australia

Communications

Due to the lack of in-person events, our social media channels become more important as a way to engage with the community. The LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council continued to use the social media channels of Facebook and Twitter as a primary point of ongoing communication throughout 2021.

Over the past 12 months the Council used social media for:

- marking of significant days on the LGBTIQ+ calendar
- information sharing of news content relevant to ACT LGBTIQ+ communities
- information sharing of nationally significant and international significant news
- promotion of programs and events to support ACT community sector organisations
- promoting programs and projects relevant to LGBTIQ+ communities to support ACT Government departments
- highlighting projects that received Capital of Equality grants funding through the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs
- other targeted Council communications including updates, advocacy, and recruitment activities

Below are some key statistics from our social media:

 **The ACT LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council** ...
Published by Craig Robert Middleton · 26 October 2021 ·

Today is Intersex Awareness Day, an internationally observed awareness day designed to highlight human rights issues faced by intersex people.

Awareness is important and so is action. Council advise the [ACT Government](#) on issues relating to LGBTIQ+ communities and we support recent actions on intersex inclusion.

The ACT Government is funding [A Gender Agenda](#) to employ a dedicated intersex peer support worker, the only jurisdiction in Australia with such a position. See commitment in the 21/22 budget here: <https://www.treasury.act.gov.au/.../social-inclusion...>

The ACT Government is committed to a plan for prohibiting deferrable medical interventions on intersex people. More information here: <https://www.cmtedd.act.gov.au/.../the-office-of-lgbtq...>

We continue to work with the Government to champion inclusion.



Facebook:

By 31 December 2021 Facebook Followers grew to 1300 Followers. The page was launched in December 2018 and has experienced a 33% growth in followers per year since then. As expected, the majority of followers are based in Canberra; but other Australian capital cities and regional NSW (specifically Queanbeyan, Bungendore, and Newcastle) are also represented. Over 10% of followers are based overseas, which demonstrates a wide reach of the page.

The highest performing Post was recorded on 26 October 2021 and was posted to mark Intersex Awareness Day and identified key issues and activities that Council advised and supported the ACT Government on.

Twitter:

During 2021 the council's twitter Followers grew by 14% and the account recorded 16,106 Impressions. Impressions on Twitter is a total tally of all the times individual Tweets have been seen on the Twitter platform by Twitter users. As with our Facebook posts, the highest performing Tweet was posted to mark Intersex Awareness Day.

2022 and beyond

There is no doubt that the challenges which faced the LGBTIQ+ community in 2021 will continue. Canberra is not alone in attempting to navigate a way out of a pandemic that has increased stress, isolation and severed social connections for many of our people. The Federal government legislative agenda continues to present challenges in the form of the Religious Discrimination Bill, though it has been shelved for the foreseeable future, and the LGBTIQ+ community recognises the continuing need to support our youth as they often bear the brunt of this particular issue. On a positive note, we look forward to a continued close working relationship with the Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs and the launch of the Second Action Plan of the Capital of Equality Strategy which will continue the strides made to ensure that Canberra is a place where LGBTIQ+ people, their families and communities are visible, valued and respected.