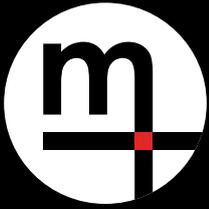




Annual Report  
**2021-22**



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

Meridian acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as the Traditional Owners and the ongoing custodians of the land on which Meridian operates. We pay our respects to Elders, past, present, and emerging, and to those who have partnered with us in the response to HIV.

### **Acknowledgement of our HIV positive elders**

Meridian was built on the foundation of the community response to HIV. We acknowledge the elders who led the way in the early days of HIV, and who continue to support their community and fight against stigma and discrimination. We acknowledge and are inspired by the various ways HIV positive people continue to live with the impact of HIV.

Meridian continues to place the needs and experiences of people living with HIV at the centre of our organisation and our work. We are committed to ensuring that people living with and impacted by HIV and AIDS are not overlooked as the world works toward the elimination of HIV. We see the immense value of the lived experience of people living with HIV, and we acknowledge their contribution to the elimination of HIV.

### **Acknowledgement of LGBTIQ+ people and communities**

We are proud to be a part of the LGBTIQ+ community. We see the rich diversity in our LGBTIQ+ communities, we honour it, and we celebrate it together. We recognise that individuals within our LGBTIQ+ communities have multiple, distinct, and overlapping identities and experiences.

We recognise the immense strength and resilience within our communities, and we thank LGBTIQ+ people and organisations for their continued and tireless work to build a stronger community. Because of their efforts, the ACT is becoming an increasingly inclusive, safe, and welcoming place where everyone can be their whole selves and diversity is celebrated.

### **A note on terminology**

We recognise that the term LGBTIQ+ does not fully capture the diversity of identities, sexualities, relationships, bodies, and experiences within our communities. However, we also recognise the value of the term when exploring collective experiences of stigma, discrimination, and marginalisation, and when advocating for more inclusive services. We use LGBTIQ+ in this report to refer to people with diverse identities, sexualities, relationships, bodies, and experiences, including but not limited to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, agender, non-binary, gender fluid, asexual, and pansexual.

Meridian would like to thank the ACT Government, Capital Health Network, and the Department of Health and Aged Care for funding the programs and services that we deliver to our communities.



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# PRESIDENT AND CEO REPORT



The health, safety, and wellbeing of our communities remain at the heart of our work at Meridian. While Canberra was relatively sheltered from COVID-19 early on, we were hit hard by the pandemic in the first half of this financial year. In response, we rallied to support our communities, working hard to ensure they had access to appropriate health information and resources, COVID-19 vaccinations, and mental health support. We also made sure that our communities could meet their ongoing healthcare needs, including having access to HIV testing facilities, HIV medication, and harm-reduction resources and support.



When it was not safe to run community programs and activities in person, we adapted quickly and created innovative ways to engage our communities virtually. This included the successful online delivery of three of our key annual community events: World AIDS Day, the Candlelight Memorial, and CBR Fair Day. When it was not safe to run our regular HIV peer support activities, our staff regularly checked in with our clients, providing one-on-one support to people who were feeling the effects of social isolation.

We also advocated on behalf of our communities to ensure that government responses to the pandemic addressed their experiences and needs. We were grateful for the opportunity to support the government by offering vaccination services at Meridian, where we administered COVID-19 vaccinations to over 500 community members. This remarkable achievement demonstrates that we are a trusted source of information and services among our communities. It also shows the pivotal role we play in supporting government to offer services to communities that they find difficult to reach.

As the vaccination rate increased and the impact of COVID-19 subsided in early 2022, we were able to refocus on responding to the needs of our communities outside of the pandemic. In the last six months, Meridian has gone from strength to strength. Our programs and services have evolved and expanded in response to community need, and we are increasingly being recognised as leaders in our areas of work. We have heard the concerns

of our LGBTIQ+ and HIV positive elders about the aged care system, and we are playing a leading role in ensuring our communities can access inclusive aged care services as they age. We have also been growing Meridian Wellbeing Services to respond to the high demand for our psychological support services. We continue to receive excellent feedback about these services, and our evaluation data confirm that we are improving the health and wellbeing of our community members.

Our reputation continues to strengthen within our communities, the sector, and among government stakeholders. Government regularly turns to Meridian for advice, expertise, and input, and we have continued to expand and strengthen our partnerships with other organisations.

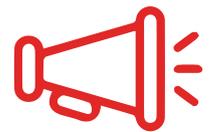
We have also been looking inward, strengthening the foundations of our organisation that position us to deliver positive outcomes for our communities. We are immensely proud to have completed our inaugural Meridian Reconciliation Action Plan this year – an essential step in ensuring our services are culturally safe. And we continue to utilise the Service User Reference Group to review and improve our programs and services, ensuring we are always working to improve and respond to the needs of our communities.



**COMMUNITY**



**HEALTH**



**ACTION**



## **We are Meridian:**

**We are a community-controlled, peer-led organisation that provides health and social support services to our community. We celebrate diversity, strengthen community, and empower individuals to live their best lives. Community, health, and action are the core of Meridian and how we work ■**

OUR YEAR > 2021-2022

# SNAPSHOT



**410**  
MEMBERS

VOLUNTEER  
HOURS

**710**



**28** HIV SELF-  
TESTS SOLD



**1,202**

HIV CLIENT  
OCCASIONS OF SERVICE



**1,680**  
WELLBEING  
SESSIONS



**148**  
PRIDE HUB BOOKINGS

**1,230**   
SAFE SEX PACKS

SAFE INJECTING EQUIPMENT

 **1,200**



SOCIAL MEDIA STATS (ENGAGEMENT AND REACH)

**31,048**

WEBSITE  
VISITS

**64,528**

SOCIAL MEDIA  
VIEWS

MOST VISITED PAGE  
'WELCOME  
TO MERIDIAN'  
VIDEO

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY ONE

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE ELIMINATION OF NEW HIV TRANSMISSIONS AND IMPROVE SEXUAL HEALTH IN ALL OUR COMMUNITIES

Meridian contributes to the elimination of HIV and the improvement of sexual health in our communities through a range of programs and activities.

### PROMOTING SAFER SEX



**Condoms:** We promote condom use as an important strategy to prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and we provide free condoms at our safe sex shop and community events. This year we ran the Cover Yourself in Canberra campaign to promote condom use (see 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS below for more information).



**PrEP:** Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is a key HIV prevention strategy used by gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. We deliver PrEP education sessions for health practitioners and the community, and we assist our communities to access PrEP.



**U=U:** We promote the Undetectable=Untransmittable (U=U) campaign to raise awareness that an HIV positive person with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV to another person during sex.

### IMPROVING ACCESS TO STI AND HIV TESTING

We continue to run STRIP Clinic, a monthly STI screening clinic providing sexual health testing and prescriptions for PrEP. STRIP Clinic is quick, simple, and free to access, making it easier for our community members to look after their sexual health. STRIP Clinic is an initiative of the Partnership Approach to Comprehensive Testing (PACT) – a collaboration between Meridian, Canberra Sexual Health Centre, Capital Health Network, Sex Worker Outreach Program (SWOP) ACT, and Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT). We also continue to sell home testing kits, selling an average of three to four testing kits per month.

## DELIVERING TRAINING TO SERVICE PROVIDERS

We provide high-quality and tailored information, peer-led education, services, and resources about HIV prevention in a range of forums and to diverse audiences. This year, we delivered blood-borne virus (BBV) education sessions at Calvary Public Hospital, the Alexander Maconochie Centre, Karralika, and Oaks Estate. We also provided training to medical students at the Australian National University (ANU) about the needs of people living with HIV.



Shane Vincent, our Community Engagement Officer, hosting our stall at a community event.

## EDUCATING OUR COMMUNITY

We provide information about sexual health, HIV, and safer sex and distribute health promotion materials (including condoms, posters, postcards, business cards, and flyers) at a range of community events. This year, we held stalls at the ANU, Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), and the University of Canberra (UC) O-Weeks, and distributed health promotion materials through Hepatitis ACT, Karralika, the Blue Door, ANU Queer Department, ANU Residential Colleges, UC Supporting Women in STEM, UC Queer Club, CIT Student Association, UC Student Support, Headspace, The Junction, Canberra Sexual Health Centre, and more.

## SEX WORKERS OUTREACH PROGRAM (SWOP) ACT

SWOP ACT promotes BBV and STI testing to Canberra's sex worker community through peer education activities and increasing access to testing in safe spaces. This year, we continued our monthly peer education visits to brothels, ran drop-in sessions for sex workers, provided testing services, and delivered Sex Worker Awareness Training to service providers.

After the 2021 COVID-19 lockdown and Omicron wave of early 2022, we went back to trialling a mixed outreach and in-reach testing model in February 2022. Through SWOP Clinic On the Road, sexual health nurses visited local brothels to provide onsite testing for sex workers. We also offered sexual health testing through SWOP Clinic @Meridian, which was provided on premises at our monthly community development activity, SWOP Drop In.

Due to the disruptions of lockdown and high rates of COVID-19 in the community, we started running SWOP Drop In virtually. While we returned to face-to-face sessions in 2022, we have also kept our online offerings. This decision was made in response to feedback that virtual sessions enable our immunocompromised community members and those with chronic illnesses to stay connected to our community.

We have noticed greater diversity among community members reaching out to SWOP, and we are hearing from more trans, gender diverse, and cisgender men sex workers and street-based sex workers than in previous years.

## 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS

### COVER YOURSELF IN CANBERRA

We finalised our new condom pack designs in July 2021. The new designs were inspired by Meridian's successful Cover Yourself in Canberra campaign, launched in 2002. Cover Yourself in Canberra uses popular Canberran iconography (Telstra Tower, the Belconnen Owl, the Rainbow Roundabout, Parliament House, and Captain Cook Fountain) covered with a condom. This campaign imagery aims to empower Canberrans to take care of their sexual health. We contracted the artist Yiannis Nikodellis for this project due to the popularity of his previous work with Meridian. Nikodellis' designs have been used for condom packs, postcards, and social media tiles and have rapidly gained popularity, reaching 11,323 people across Facebook and Instagram.



### 100% CONFIDENT HOOKUPS CAMPAIGN

We continued with this major health promotion campaign in 2021–22. 100% Confident Hookups promotes confident, empowered, and informed hookups among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men in the ACT. The campaign promoted safer sex practices, consent, boundary setting, regular sexual health testing, app safety, and treatment plans. Meridian ran the campaign online and through our social media channels. We also created postcards, condom packs, and posters, which we broadly distributed to partners, doctors, and health professionals throughout the community.



# STRATEGIC PRIORITY TWO

## IMPROVE ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE, QUALITY SUPPORT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV AND IMPACTED BY HIV AND AIDS

Meridian is a crucial point of contact for people living with and impacted by HIV, including partners, allies, and families. We are a trusted source of counselling, HIV case management, advocacy, peer support, and peer navigation services. We provide peer-based, professional, non-judgemental assessment, support, advocacy, and referral services, with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of people living with HIV in our community.



1,202

We provided 1,202 instances of support to people living with HIV and impacted by HIV and AIDS, including counselling, case management, and peer support.

### WELLBEING SERVICES

Meridian Wellbeing Services provide free counselling and psychological services for people living with and impacted by HIV. Our multi-disciplinary team use peer-informed and evidence-based therapeutic approaches that are tailored to the needs of people living with HIV. This includes a focus on building community, which can support clients to process and manage the stigma and discrimination that is still associated with HIV. We provide therapeutic support to people newly diagnosed with HIV to help them navigate the impacts of the diagnosis on their self-identity, self-worth, and relationships.

Our Wellbeing Services work alongside Meridian's Client Services to provide wrap-around support to people living with HIV, including case management and peer support.



**1,136**  
instances  
of case  
management  
support were  
provided to

**55**  
people living  
with HIV

## CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Through our case management program, we support people in managing activities of daily living, such as buying medications, having a healthy sex life, and getting regular sexual health testing. We also assist with issues around housing, intimate partner violence, and the challenges associated with ageing with HIV.

This year, we provided 1,136 instances of case management support to 55 people living with HIV. We had to be flexible to meet the rising demand for case management services during 2021–22. Our strong case management framework allowed us to continue supporting clients to meet their goals despite the challenges of operating during the pandemic. We supported our clients to use telehealth and online services, which ensured that they remained connected to care and support services and peer activities.

We are committed to continuously improving our service offerings. This year, we surveyed current and previous case management clients to get their feedback about the service and to find out if it had positively impacted their lives. See *2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS* below for the results of the survey.

## HIV POSITIVE PEER SUPPORT

Peers have been at the heart of the HIV response from the very beginning. We work to ensure that people living with HIV continue to have opportunities to benefit from peer support.

The Peer Support Network (PSN) is our longest-running peer support group. Formed in the wake of the AIDS epidemic, the PSN provides a safe and non-judgemental space for our HIV positive community members to come together and share their stories and experiences. It is a vital platform of connection and support, helping members navigate and cope with the stigma and discrimination they still encounter in everyday life.

The network continued to play a vital role for members during 2021–22, especially in light of the unique challenges faced by these community members as a result of the pandemic. One particular challenge has been dealing with language used by the media, which has been reminiscent of the language first used during the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The return to sensationalist reporting that uses stigmatising language has re-traumatised many community members.

Due to COVID-19, we had to halt our in-person PSN gatherings. We pivoted and held online activities, but the virtual format was not meeting all the needs of the group. Many PSN clients contacted Meridian to request that the in-person network be reinstated, but we had to ensure our members' safety came first. We worked with each and every member of the PSN to ensure they stayed connected, and we linked members to additional services wherever possible. We recommenced holding in-person gatherings as soon as it was safe to do so. Although we could not hold as many as we had hoped for, those that we did run were well attended, and all attendees celebrated the return of the network.



## 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS

This year, we surveyed current and previous case management clients to get their feedback about the service and to find out if it had positively impacted their lives.

Thirty-two people responded to the survey. Most respondents (60%) had received a case management service in the last 12 months.

### WHY DO PEOPLE CHOOSE MERIDIAN'S CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES?

The most common reasons respondents chose Meridian's case management services were:



They felt it would be non-judgemental



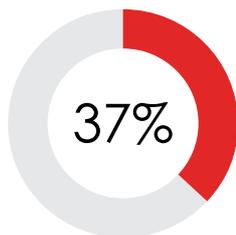
The service is confidential



They had used a Meridian service before and had a positive experience



Staff have relevant expertise

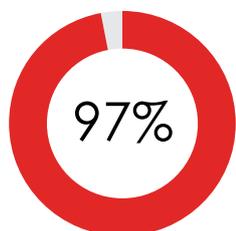


37% of respondents said that outside of Meridian, they do not have services or spaces where they feel safe and included and can get the information and support they need.



It's a safe place, and we don't have any other support network to discuss these matters.

## HOW WAS THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH THE SERVICE?



97% said that overall, their experience with Meridian's case management service was good or excellent.



100% would use Meridian's case management service again.



It was exceptional and that was because I felt I could trust [them], and they understood where I was at.



Staff were professional (4.7/5)



Staff were knowledgeable about the issues relevant to me (4.6/5)



I felt safe to be myself and accepted (4.7/5)



I felt that my experiences and needs were understood (4.5/5)



I felt I could trust the staff with my personal information (4.5/5)



I felt the staff acknowledged, respected, and affirmed my identity and experiences (4.5/5)

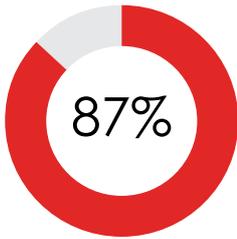
**Average rating** 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)



I feel safe with my peer support worker.



I feel valid and I am myself. I can crumble or I can soar. I am so lucky to have Meridian ACT as part of my life.



**87% of respondents said it is important or very important to them that the case management service is delivered by a peer-led organisation.**



I believe it is crucial that support is led by peers, because they understand your situation as they have their own lived experience with HIV.

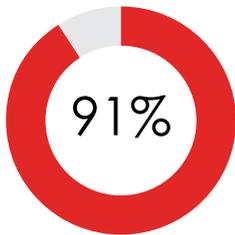


For me it was essential for [it to be] peer led. I wouldn't attend otherwise and wouldn't deal with the situation.



Accessing Meridian's client services usually means discussing my life, or aspects of my life, in a way that includes my experiences as a gay man. I do not wish to be tolerated, I wish to be understood, and only a gay man can truly understand what it is to be a gay man. I also believe that an HIV+ person is more likely to relate to my experiences and fears than someone who does not have HIV.

## HOW HAS MERIDIAN'S CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICE IMPACTED CLIENTS' LIVES?



**91% said Meridian's case management service had a positive impact on their life.**



Have increased access to HIV-related information, support, and treatment



Feel more positive about their lives



Feel more socially connected and included



Feel more resilient to stigma and discrimination



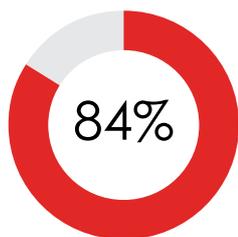
Are more aware of available services and support



Have more information about sexual health and HIV



Engaging with other gay poz [HIV positive] men broke down my sense of isolation.



**84% said their health has improved because of Meridian's case management service.**

### Factors contributing to improved health among respondents:



Achieved/sustained an undetectable viral load



Learned new ways of looking after themselves



Were supported to access medical and/or mental health services



Were supported to address issues that were affecting their wellbeing such as those related to housing, finances, or employment



Have reduced anxiety about HIV



**My mental health has turned positive not just through therapy but by being able to engage with other people with a similar life-health situation.**

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE?

We received overwhelmingly positive feedback about Meridian's case management service, but we know there is always room to improve. We heard from respondents that we could do more to cater our services to women, younger people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

We also heard that our clients want more services, more often. They would like us to run meditative and relaxation therapy, to re-establish the dietician clinic and massage service, to deliver more peer-led services, and to have more regular MAGNET events, STRIP clinics, and social events.

The feedback provided in the survey will inform our work to continuously improve our services. We deeply value feedback as it supports us to learn and grow so we can better respond to the needs of our communities.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY THREE

## CREATE A SAFE COMMUNITY FOR ALL PEOPLE, EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITIES AND STRENGTHENING INCLUSION

Meridian works across the community through multiple projects, platforms, and partnerships to bring our vision of a safer and more inclusive community to life. Through our programs and events, we foster genuine community connection and cohesion and create meaningful opportunities for community engagement.

### CANBERRA INCLUSIVE PARTNERSHIP SERVICE USER REFERENCE GROUP

The Service User Reference Group (SURG), established in 2020 by the Canberra Inclusive Partnership, is a mechanism for LGBTIQ+ people to draw on their lived experience to contribute to the design and implementation of policies, programs, and services that impact their lives.

An additional three people joined the SURG this year, further enriching the diversity of experiences, identities, and cultural backgrounds within the group. At the end of the financial year, the SURG had eight active members.

This year, the Australian Government and ACT Government consulted the SURG on several key projects, including:

1

The development of the Disability Strategy 2021–2031.

2

The development of the National Strategy for Volunteering.

3

The design of a gender-focused model of care for the ACT.

The SURG also continued to inform the work of the Canberra Inclusive Partnership, including the development of a best-practice guide on collecting data on sex, gender, and sexuality and the Inclusive Pathways program.

## EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Meridian has consistently delivered comprehensive and engaging training and education packages to organisations and businesses in Canberra and the surrounding regions. As the threat of COVID-19 began to recede, we saw the return of face-to-face training as the gold standard in education delivery. However, many organisations still prefer the online format as it encourages broad participation. As a result, Meridian's training and education program has become increasingly agile and accessible.

In 2021–22, we continued to deliver the following well-established and in-demand training packages:



LGBTIQA+ Awareness and Inclusivity.



LGBTIQA+ Inclusion and Alcohol and Other Drugs.



LGBTIQA+ Mental Health.

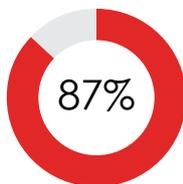
We also developed a new training program in allyship this year (see *2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS* below for more information).

In addition to our regular training offerings, we were engaged by the Capital Chemist Group to develop a customised training package to deliver to staff across their stores in the ACT and surrounding regions. We commend Capital Chemist for their commitment to providing inclusive services to LGBTIQA+ people, and we are grateful for the opportunity to work with them in this regard.

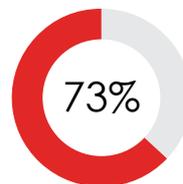
Overall, we delivered 19 training sessions to 369 people. Training participants continue to provide us with positive feedback. Our evaluation data show that our training is high quality, relevant, and effective.



**93% said that Meridian's training will contribute to their service being more inclusive of LGBTIQA+ people.**



**87% said that Meridian's training was relevant to their organisation.**



**73% said they feel more confident in their use of language and terminology when engaging with LGBTIQA+ people.**



It was easy to listen to and was engaging... It did not alienate anyone. The training was inclusive of all.



I thoroughly enjoyed this training and thought the presenters were engaging and knowledgeable.



It was very informative and well presented, lots of knowledge shared and very experienced presenters, well done!



Facilitators were great. Bright, enthusiastic, engaging, and very passionate about the training. Both were excellent, thanks.

## SMART RECOVERY

Meridian's Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART), a legacy project of our SOBAR Not So Straight Up program, was relaunched this year. SMART is a peer-led program that encourages skill-sharing, goal-setting, and productive discussion about alcohol and other drugs among LGBTIQ+ people. Meridian hosts the only LGBTIQ+ SMART Recovery program in Australia.

The new and refreshed program has moved from in person to online, is held once a week, and is delivered by a new team of peer facilitators. Each of our five SMART facilitators brings with them diverse lived experience and represents numerous LGBTIQ+ intersections.

This year, we ran 33 SMART sessions, reaching 77 people. Participants were from the ACT and surrounding regions. On average, eight to ten people participated in each session.

Participants regularly provide positive feedback about the program. In many cases, Meridian SMART Recovery has been a lifeline to our LGBTIQ+ participants; it has offered them much-needed peer support and provided a safe and inclusive space to begin conversations around personal experiences relating to alcohol and other drugs. Through the program, participants have also learned about Meridian's Wellbeing Services as a potential avenue for further assistance should they feel they need it.



**33**  
SMART sessions

**77**  
participants

**8-10**  
participants per session

## DISABILI-TEA

Every fortnight, Meridian facilitates Disabili-Tea – a psychosocial support group for LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities. It is a space for LGBTIQ+ people with disabilities to talk, laugh, share, celebrate, commiserate, and connect. This year, Disabili-Tea included a mixture of online and in-person social events, conversations with guests, and outings to some of Canberra's attractions. The conversations with guests covered topics on health literacy and navigating systems; helping injured animals; Intersections – Wiradjuri, queerness, and disability; self-advocacy; cooking; baby birds in Australian gardens; and how to share your story with the Disability Royal Commission. The group also went to the National Gallery of Australia, the National Museum of Australia, and the Australian National Botanic Gardens.



## CONNECTING WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

We connect with our communities in a range of ways, including by participating in community and workplace events and activities, such as Pride events, to raise awareness of Meridian and promote safe and inclusive communities. We also connect with our communities through a range of communications platforms, including a monthly newsletter and Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We also have a page on Facebook called Mr Meridian, which provides content specifically for gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. We use these channels to share information about relevant topics, projects, events, research, and opportunities at Meridian and more broadly in the ACT, Australia, and the world. These established communication channels ensure our communities have access to accurate and up-to-date information about the issues that affect their lives.



Shane Vincent, Philippa Moss, and Marcus Bogie with players from the Ainslie AFL Club at the Pride Round.

## OUR WORK IN AGEING AND AGED CARE IN 2021–22

Meridian is a leader in LGBTI+ inclusion in the aged care sector. We work to improve the health and wellbeing of older LGBTI+ people and older people living with HIV, and to improve their access to inclusive and culturally safe aged care services. We do this by:

1

Advocating for government to provide health services and policies that meet the needs of older LGBTI+ and HIV positive people.

2

Encouraging inclusive practice service delivery that not only respects diversity but embraces it.

3

Delivering LGBTI+ and HIV awareness training to healthcare providers, so elders feel culturally safe and comfortable when accessing their services.

4

Establishing an evidence base to document the needs of older LGBTI+ and HIV positive people and the difficulties they face accessing appropriate services.

5

Providing professional counselling to deal with mental health issues.

6

Hosting social groups for older LGBTI+ and HIV positive people to help reduce social isolation.



Our team at a Seniors Expo. Left to right: Kyla Harvey and Sharon Alles.



Our Team at a Seniors Expo. Left to right: Sharon Alles and Shane Vincent.

### SILVER RAINBOW AGED CARE TRAINING FOR THE AGED CARE SECTOR

Meridian is the ACT partner for Silver Rainbow Aged Care. Through this program, we provide LGBTI+ inclusion and awareness training to frontline aged care sector workers. This year, we delivered over 50 training sessions, and demand for the course remains high.



50  
training  
sessions

### AGED CARE NAVIGATORS SCHEME

The Aged Care Navigators Scheme was established in response to the Aged Care Royal Commission and is supported by the Australian Government. Through the scheme, we provide support and navigation services to assist older LGBTI+ and HIV positive people and their carers, loved ones, and allies to access aged care services. This includes educating these community members about what aged care services are available to meet their needs, assisting them to connect with My Aged Care, and supporting them to choose and access aged care services.

### COMMUNITY VISITORS SCHEME

Meridian received funding from the Department of Health and Aged Care to provide 10 pride morning teas in aged care facilities across the ACT. Approximately 15 to 20 residents attended each of the morning teas across 10 aged care facilities. We received wonderful feedback, with participants having lots of fun while learning about inclusion and awareness.



10  
pride  
morning teas

### AGED CARE SECTOR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AND INTERAGENCY NETWORKS

Meridian is an active participant in numerous communities of practice (CoP) and interagency networks in the aged care sector. These forums provide an opportunity for us to educate stakeholders about LGBTI+ inclusive practice and to ensure that discussions, strategies, and initiatives consider the needs of LGBTI+ elders. This year, we participated in 12 CoP and interagency network meetings.

### ELDERS DANCE CLUB

In partnership with All the Queens Men and Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres, we delivered regular Dance Club sessions throughout the year, each attended by roughly 30 people. Dance Club is a fun and fabulous regular event for LGBTIQ+ elders. It provides an opportunity for LGBTIQ+ elders to connect and to participate in physical activity in a safe space. Participants can dance, learn new moves, and express themselves without fear of discrimination and judgement. It also provides an opportunity for elders to share stories of their past and current experiences, which fosters peer-to-peer exchange and support and strengthens community.



30  
people  
attended  
regular Dance  
Club sessions

## 2021–22 EVENTS

Meridian's community events play an important role in achieving our strategic objectives. They provide a source of community connection, an opportunity to share information, a way to celebrate who we are, and a way to reflect on how we got to where we are today.

This year, we faced the challenge of delivering community events within the context of the pandemic. We know that our events are important to our community, so we worked hard to find ways to deliver these events safely. While we were unable to run all events this year, we found new and innovative ways to deliver our key annual events, including World AIDS Day, the Candlelight Memorial, and CBR Fair Day.



Our president, Andrew Robertson, speaking at the Candlelight Memorial.

### CANDLELIGHT MEMORIAL

Candlelight Memorials are held every year across the globe on the third Sunday of May. Each year in the ACT, we bring the community together to remember those who lost their lives to AIDS and to show solidarity for those living with, impacted by, and fighting against HIV and AIDS.

The event takes a different focus each year. 'We Remember, We Take Action, We Live Beyond HIV' was this year's theme, and it saw us explore both the history of the AIDS epidemic as well as the current journeys of those living with and impacted by HIV. Speakers on the day included Jeff Anderson, Counsellor for Public Affairs at the U.S. Mission to Australia, and Joshua Anlezark, former Deputy Director at Meridian. The Canberra QWIRE also performed at the event. Held at the Belconnen Arts Centre, 2022's Candlelight Memorial was once again well attended by a wide range of diverse community members.

## CBR FAIR DAY

Due to COVID-19 and public health restrictions, 2021's CBR Fair Day was held using social engagement software – TOPIA. It was a bold and daring attempt to ensure that the tradition of CBR Fair Day lives on, and that our community had a forum to connect with others, celebrate who we are, and find out about groups, organisations, and services that may be relevant to their needs. While TOPIA provided a unique, engaging, and fun way for our community to connect safely in the context of COVID-19, we are very much looking forward to hosting Fair Day – Pride in the Park at Glebe Park in 2022.

## WORLD AIDS DAY

Every year we come together as a community on World AIDS Day to show support for people living with HIV and to commemorate those who lost their lives to AIDS. We continued this important tradition this year, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the event looked a little different. We filmed a video at the AIDS Garden of Reflection at the National Arboretum and hosted an online event on World AIDS Day to stream the video. The video began with a beautiful acknowledgement of Ngunnawal Country from Scott Sadler, Executive Branch Manager for the National Arboretum and proud Wiradjuri man. Our President, Andrew Robertson, gave opening the remarks and reflected on the theme for this year: '40 years of HIV. Where to next?' John McKay and Richard Allen spoke of their work to create the AIDS Garden of Reflection, which they designed as a space for people to think about those we have lost to AIDS and the people who are still living with it today. We heard reflections from Dr Clara Tuck Meng Soo, Dr Sarah Martin, and Danny Ryding. The video also featured a beautiful and moving performance by the Canberra Qwire. You can watch the video on our website.



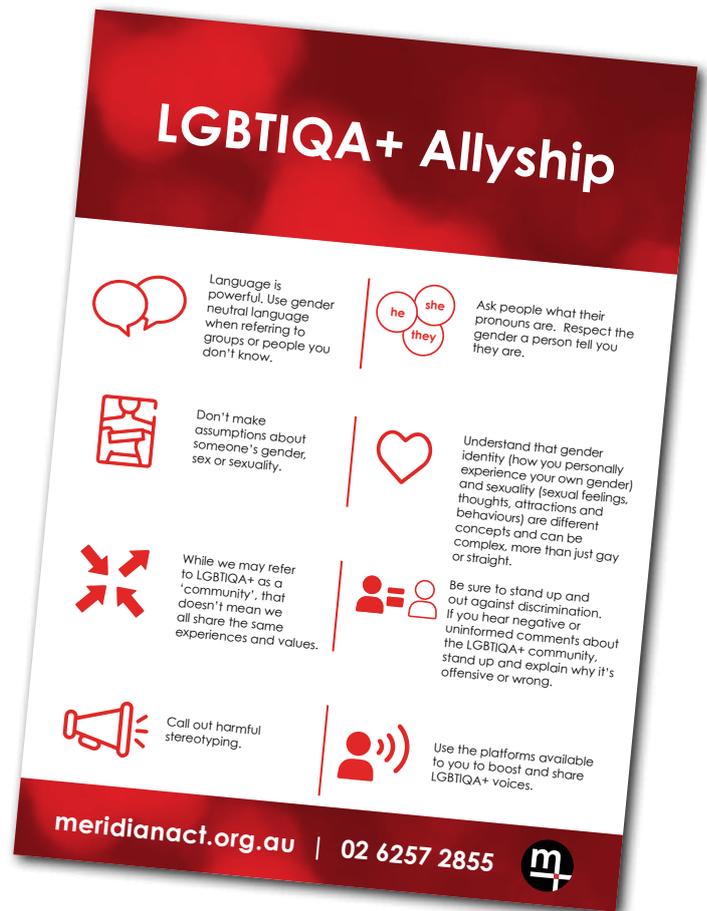
The Canberra QWIRE.



## 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS

### NEW ALLYSHIP TRAINING

This year, we developed a new training package in allyship. Allyship is an overarching theme for all of Meridian's inclusion training. After increasing interest, we developed a training package specifically designed to understand and practically apply concepts of allyship, broadening the scope of shared information beyond any one minority group.



### MERIDIAN'S RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN (RAP)

We are proud to have created the inaugural Meridian Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2021–2022. Our RAP signifies Meridian's sincere intent to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety through a structured process of establishing and strengthening meaningful and respectful relationships with First Nations community members. The plan was developed by Meridian in consultation with members of the ACT's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and Meridian members.

As part of the RAP, we commissioned this painting from Ngunnawal Elder Tina Brown, which acknowledges The Ngunnawal Nations.

These are Tina's words describing the meaning of her work:



"This artwork acknowledges The Ngunnawal Nations – Kamberly – Ngunnawal word, meaning Meeting Place ... my Brothers and Sisters across our Nations and Meridian ACT.

Ngunnawal Songlines spread across the whole entire Nation. Boss Men with all their Warriors, Family and Children travelled these ancient Songlines here to Country, Ngunnawal Nations for Ceremony and Lore. My great, great, great, great Grandfather King Andy Lane was the last Master of Ceremonies and Boss Man for Country and Lore ... I'm truly honoured, proud, and blessed to carry on this ancient legacy.

The artwork, the green on the bottom are my mountains, the blue river is the Murrumbidgee, Ngunnawal word – Pathway of Bosses. My Ancestors are along the river, then the rainbow, these colours, the blue is the ocean, green my mountains, white our snow and Songlines to Victoria, yellow, orange, and red represent my peoples to the west and north.

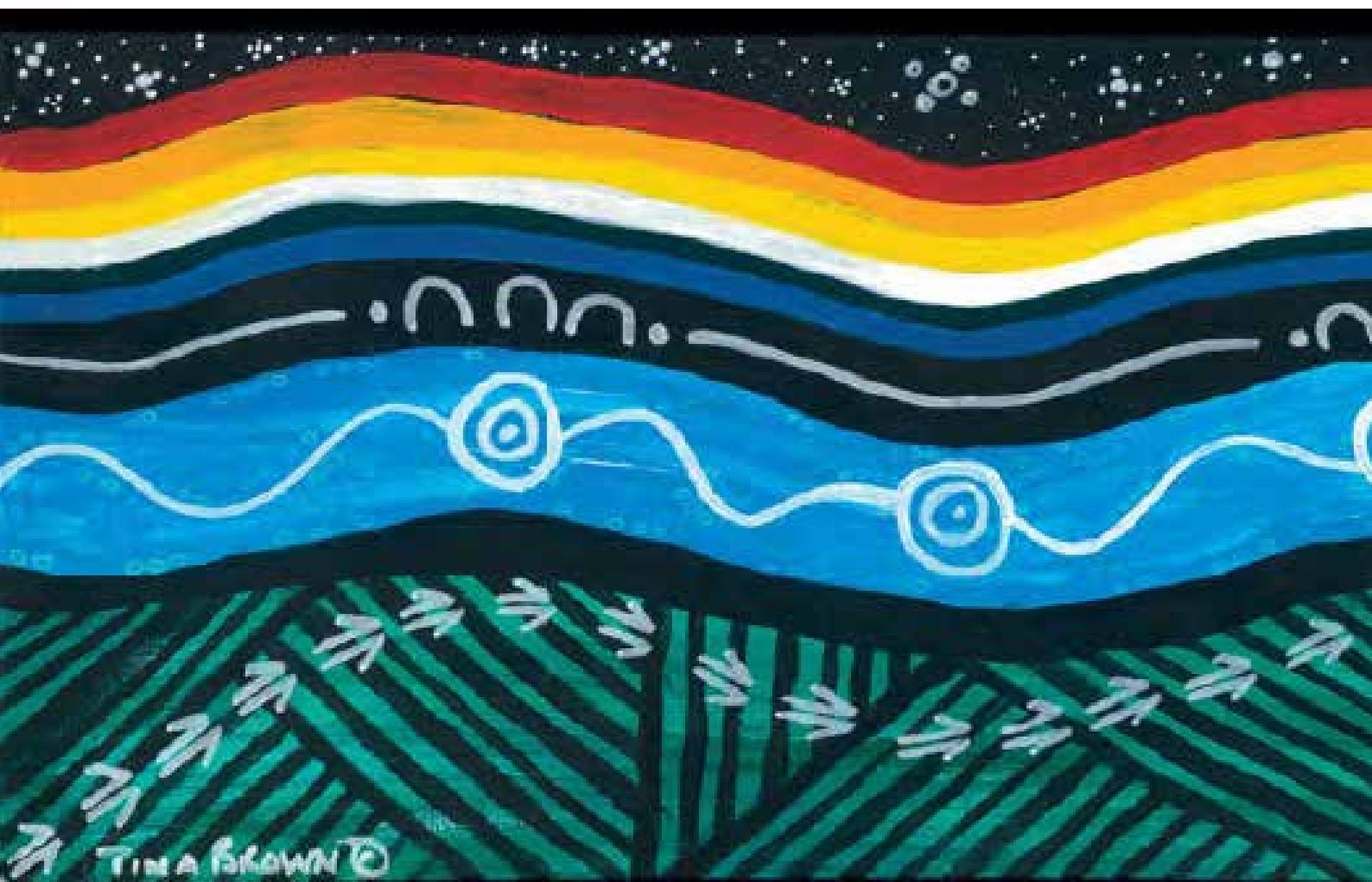
These are the colours of their landscapes and Country they cross to meet at our Ancient Gathering places.

These colours also represent my LGBTIQ+ Brothers and Sisters across the Nation.

The Milky Way up the top, our creator and Dreaming Mullein, she created the Milky Way to protect high creator, Darramullan, ancient star and Lore man ... Darramullan.

Dreaming is ... Higher Learning ...

Always was, always will be, Ngunnawal Nations."





## STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOUR

IMPROVE ACCESS TO  
INCLUSIVE, APPROPRIATE,  
AND KNOWLEDGEABLE  
HEALTH AND WELLBEING  
SERVICES FOR COMMUNITIES WHO  
REQUIRE SUPPORT AROUND GENDER  
IDENTITY AND SEXUALITY

While working to build a safer and more inclusive community, we are simultaneously supporting LGBTIQ+ communities to build their collective resilience against the harmful effects of stigma, discrimination, and marginalisation.

## WELLBEING SERVICES

Through our Wellbeing Services, we provide professional, peer-led, psychological, social work, and counselling services for people living with and impacted by HIV and LGBTIQ+ people and their allies over the age of 15 years, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, lifestyle choice, cultural background, religious belief, or economic circumstances. Our expert team of clinicians bring lived experience to their roles, so they can walk beside clients and build collective resilience against the adverse experiences that impact our communities.

The evaluation of Meridian's Wellbeing Services overall found that they are relevant, safe, inclusive, professional, and effective.

Of the 37 clients who completed surveys in the 2021–22 financial year:



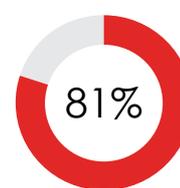
**100% said that overall, they had a good or excellent experience with Meridian's Wellbeing Services.**



**96% said that Meridian's Wellbeing Services met their needs.**



**100% are satisfied or very satisfied with the outcomes they have achieved in counselling.**



**81% said their health and wellbeing has improved because of Meridian's Wellbeing Services.**



I think this service plays such an important role in the community because often it is uncomfortable to talk to unspecialised counsellors/psychologists about sexuality and gender identity. This was the first counselling service I've found where I could voice these feelings because I wasn't sure if my previous counsellor would understand or be able to give me the right advice... I've recommended this service to a number of my younger queer friends already!



My counsellor was personable, honest, and had an intuitive sense of things and how to deliver topics that may be confronting or hard to hear. Most of all, they gave me easy tools to use in my everyday life so I could better self-regulate and manage stressful situations, which was very empowering to see I could do that.



Because of this service, I have been able to be less judgemental of myself and my ADHD diagnosis, and I am treating myself more kindly. I feel healthier and happier.

## INCLUSIVE PATHWAYS

Co-designed by the Service User Reference Group (SURG), the Inclusive Pathways program continues to go from strength to strength. The program was designed to deliver flexible, client-driven, integrated mental health care to LGBTIQ+ people in the Canberra community under one roof. The program aims to bridge a significant gap in mainstream service settings and to remove key barriers to accessing mental health services for LGBTIQ+ communities.

Through the Inclusive Pathways program, we continue to deliver safe, high-quality, evidence-based, community-focused, and affirming psychological therapies and psychosocial strategies to the LGBTIQ+ community in the ACT. Our clinicians are either community peers or community allies; they have diverse identities and experiences that are integral to the delivery of mental health services to LGBTIQ+ community members.

We are committed to growing the evidence-based practice of our clinicians through professional development to provide the most up-to-date mental health support to our LGBTIQ+ communities. This year, we worked on improving our evidence-based practice in the following four key areas:

 1	 2	 3	 4
A phased approach to trauma recovery.	Gender-affirming care.	Working therapeutically with people who are neurodivergent.	Sex-work inclusive psychological practice.

We capture client feedback from Inclusive Pathways clients before and after they receive therapeutic services. Responses have been overwhelmingly positive. These excellent evaluation results, combined with the fact that our services continue to be in high demand, demonstrate that the Inclusive Pathways program is successfully meeting the needs of our community.

Of the 47 clients who completed surveys in the 2021–22 financial year:



- ★★★★★ I felt safe to be myself and accepted (4.8/5)
- ★★★★★ I felt comfortable to discuss my gender and/or sexuality (4.6/5)
- ★★★★★ I felt the staff acknowledged, respected, and affirmed my identity and experiences (4.7/5)
- ★★★★★ I felt that my experiences and needs were understood (4.6/5)

**Average rating** 1 (strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)

- “ It is so incredibly healing to be in a space where I am able to be wholly myself; without filter, censor, or fear of rejection or hostility. I really appreciate how Meridian staff are so receptive to nuanced life experiences and have been very helpful for me in navigating them.
- “ I felt supported and it was a straightforward process. I had friends who had seen a queer counsellor, and I felt that was the gap in my then-therapist's knowledge. I didn't feel she could help me further.
- “ This organisation has been with me since the beginning of my transition. The faces in this place are faces I trust more than family and friends. I've been going to Meridian for years because it's the one group of people I trust and believe can help me.



A counselling room at Meridian.

## 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS

### A NEW LOOK FOR THE STRIP CLINIC

This year, we noticed an increasing trend of broader LGBTIQ+ communities accessing sexual health testing through our STRIP Clinic. STRIP Clinic has always catered to LGBTIQ+ communities; however, gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men previously made up the majority of STRIP Clinic clients. With the return of STRIP Clinic after the lockdown, this change of trend called for a new look to better reflect the diversity of community members who were accessing the service. In February 2022, Meridian released the STRIP Clinic rebrand, which included an update in the colours used to represent our LGBTIQ+ communities. STRIP now uses the colours of the Progress Pride Flag to ensure the many communities under the LGBTIQ+ umbrella feel represented and safe when accessing the service.

## STRIP CLINIC

Free and confidential STI testing for LGBTIQ+ communities.

*Clinic operating every month, PrEP prescriptions available, no Medicare required.*



Havelock House  
(Gould St entrance)  
85 Northbourne Avenue  
Turner ACT 2612  
(02) 6257 2855



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One of the new low-sensory spaces at Meridian.

### ENHANCING THE INCLUSIVE PATHWAYS PROGRAM

In November 2021, we expanded the Inclusive Pathways program to include a pop-up GP registrar clinic at Meridian Wellbeing Services. The pop-up clinic provided clients with a safe and affirming access point for primary healthcare engagement, including accessing Mental Health Treatment Plans, managing mental health issues, and receiving gender-affirming care.

This year, we also created low-sensory spaces to ensure that people who are neurodivergent or have a need for low-sensory environments can access psychological services safely.

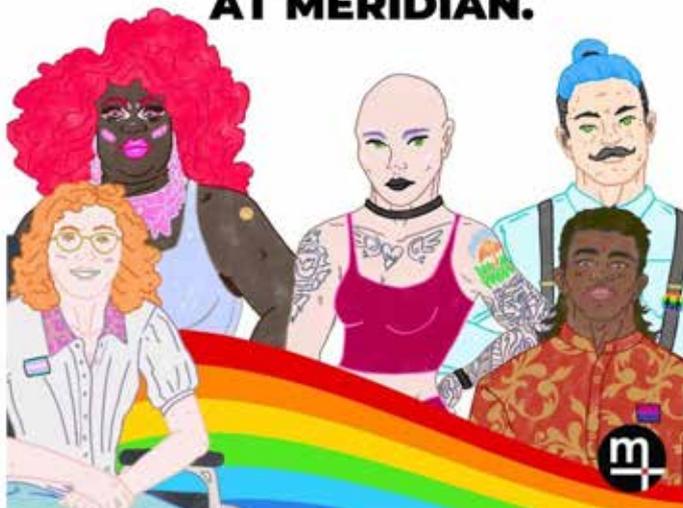
## POP-UP COVID-19 VACCINATION CLINIC

In recognition of Meridian's strong relationships with communities that experience health inequity and that are hard for government to reach, the ACT Government invited us to host a pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinic.

With funding from Capital Health Network, we created Get Jab-ulous – a vaccine awareness raising campaign – and undertook community engagement activities to encourage marginalised members of our communities to come to our vaccination clinic. In partnership with Directions ACT, we also provided outreach to brothels and studios to reach sex workers. We provided COVID-19 vaccinations to over 500 people. Many people who attended the clinic were not engaged with mainstream healthcare services, so Meridian played a crucial role in ensuring they had access to vaccines.



### COVID19 BOOSTER VACCINATIONS NOW AVAILABLE AT MERIDIAN.



**500+**  
COVID-19 vaccinations provided



Our team running the pop-up COVID-19 vaccination clinic.  
Left to right: Rosemary Agnew, Sharon Alles, Kyla Harvey, Marcus Bogle, Tushar Bist, and Deborah Simpson.

# STRATEGIC PRIORITY FIVE

## INVEST IN THE ORGANISATION TO ENSURE SUSTAINABILITY AND GROWTH

### WORKING TOGETHER TO ACHIEVE BETTER OUTCOMES FOR OUR COMMUNITIES

Strong partnerships are critical for achieving positive outcomes for our communities and for building a strong community sector in the ACT. We nurture relationships with partner organisations that share our core values and long-term purpose and vision.

We continued to play an important role in leading and nurturing the Canberra Inclusive Partnership (CIP) this year. Under the CIP, we work in partnership with A Gender Agenda (AGA), Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT (SHFPACT), and Northside Community Service to contribute to a community where LGBTIQ+ people are healthier, more resilient, and have greater opportunities for increased connection and improved social capital. The CIP is funded by the ACT Government.

Meridian continues to expand our service offerings to respond to the health and wellbeing needs of our communities. This year, we explored opportunities to respond to the primary healthcare needs of our communities by increasing access to GPs. We built and strengthened relationships with primary healthcare services and stakeholders, including Canberra Sexual Health Centre, Hobart Place General Practice, and the Interchange Health Co-operative. These relationships created opportunities for cross-organisational learning and mutually beneficial partnerships.

Left to right: Philippa Moss (Meridian), Sel Cooper (AGA), George Vallance (ACT Health Policy Unit), and Susan Freiberg (Canberra Health Services) during a trip to Melbourne to visit gender clinics and services.



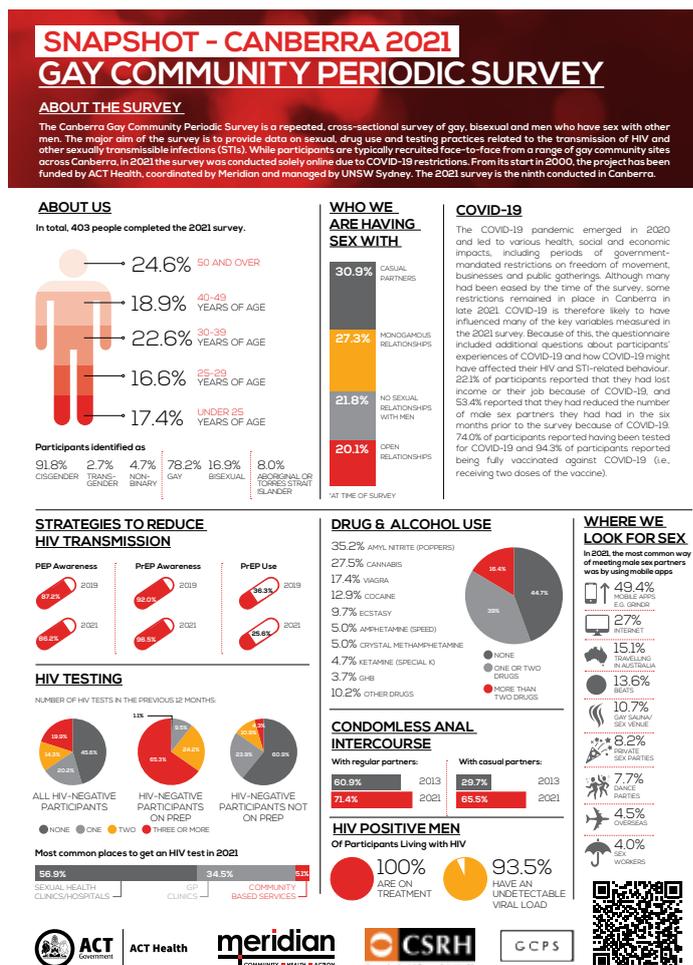
## SUPPORTING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

We continued to collaborate with academic institutions and other organisations to increase the evidence base about the experiences and needs of our communities. We hope that this research will assist government and other stakeholders in developing programs and policies that meet our communities' needs.

### GAY COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

Throughout November 2021, Meridian partnered with the University of New South Wales (UNSW) and the Centre for Social Research to recruit for and promote the Gay Community Periodic Survey (GCPS) – one of the key methods for monitoring HIV, sexual practices, drug use, and patterns of testing for HIV and other STIs in Australia.

Previously, Meridian's recruitment for the Canberra GCPS largely occurred during events such as CBR Fair Day and Bushdance. However, as these events were either cancelled or virtual this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, all recruitment efforts were moved online. We used social media sites (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter) and a hook-up app (Grindr) as our main recruitment platforms. As a result of these efforts, UNSW and the Centre for Social Research acquired over 400 responses, one of the ACT's highest recruitment totals in the last 10 years. The results of the 2021 Canberra GCPS, as well as an infographic highlighting the key data from the report, can be found on our website.



### HIV FUTURES 10

In late 2021 to early 2022, Meridian supported La Trobe University in the promotion of the tenth round of their longitudinal study, HIV Futures. HIV Futures 10 is a survey about the quality of life of people living with HIV in Australia. This body of research covers the health, treatments, work, finances, sex, and relationships of people living with HIV. It is the most influential and important study of people living with HIV in Australia. HIV Futures 10 is yet to be published. We look forward to seeing the results of this prestigious report, specifically looking at the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of people living with HIV.

## Recommended ACT Priorities for Action: HIV

### PRIORITIES

- 1 Increase access to targeted, evidence-based, and culturally appropriate **prevention programs** to meet the United Nations and Australian goals to virtually eliminate HIV, focusing on working with priority populations, supporting peer based-approaches, and promoting access to new and emerging prevention technologies;
- 2 Increase provision of accessible, evidence-based, and culturally appropriate **testing for HIV and other STIs**, including expanding access to new and emerging testing and treatment technologies;
- 3 Improve implementation of **management, care, and support** of HIV in the community, increase early treatment of HIV, and promote peer support models as a key delivery mechanism; Support national and global strategies and implement appropriate support for the "the other 5%";
- 4 Increase the provision of appropriate care and support for people diagnosed with and impacted by HIV through strengthening **workforce capacity**, including increased availability of community prescribers for HIV treatments. Ensure care and support for people living with HIV are person centred, peer-based and community-based when possible. In this, ensure that services are meeting the needs of the growing group of ageing individuals who have survived and are managing long term multiple chronic conditions;
- 5 Ensure an **enabling environment** and a human rights approach for people impacted by HIV in the community. In this, continue targeted campaigns aimed at priority populations on the importance of prevention, testing and treatment. Build on collaborations with relevant community organisations to continue addressing stigma and discrimination towards people impacted by HIV in our community, and use new and innovative models to ensure access to appropriate education, prevention, testing, treatment and support services for hard to reach and vulnerable populations;
- 6 Improve collection and access to relevant **surveillance and evaluation data** regarding prevalence and management of HIV in the community and support high quality social, epidemiological, and behavioural and clinical research. Encourage research that involves people impacted by HIV in the design, planning and implementation of research and data collection. In this, examine the complex and changing needs of the ageing population living with HIV.



## KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES INFORMED

We regularly create resources to keep our communities informed and up to date about matters relevant to their health and wellbeing. Developing these resources also ensures that we remain an influential reference point of interest and expertise for our communities, government, and stakeholders. A few examples of our work in this area for 2021–22 are listed below.

### RECOMMENDED ACT PRIORITIES FOR ACTION: HIV 2021

Meridian developed a factsheet on the *Recommended ACT Priorities for Action: HIV 2021*. The document, which can be found on our website, outlines six key priority areas: prevention programs, effective testing, treatment programs for HIV, care and support, stigma and discrimination, and research, data, and information.

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

August 2021 saw a dramatic rise in COVID-19 cases in the ACT and a territory-wide lockdown. During this time, our health promotion team produced resources including *COVID-19 FAQs for people living with HIV in the ACT* and *Hooking up in lockdown*. You can find these resources on our website.

We also used our social media channels to keep our communities informed and to highlight the importance of our community members taking care of themselves and each other during lockdown.



## IMPROVED WEBSITE DESIGN

We made important updates to the Meridian website, restructuring the Safer Sex, Drugs & Alcohol subsection to allow for a smoother user experience and to provide more information for our communities.



31,048  
website visits

64,528  
social media views

'Welcome to  
Meridian' video  
most visited page



## ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering has been a mainstay of the organisation since it was founded almost 40 years ago. Today, Meridian continues to embrace volunteering as a way to engage and empower our diverse communities and to ensure that the organisation remains community led and community driven. Our volunteers bring enormous energy and enthusiasm to our organisation. Without them, much of the work that we do would be impossible. They are dedicated and skilled individuals, whose diverse lived experience enriches our operations and projects. We deeply value their contribution to the organisation.

Volunteers play a pivotal role in supporting Meridian operations and activities, including by attending the reception desk at Meridian and during STRIP Clinic, creating and packaging resources such as badges and condom packs, and distributing Meridian's resources to other organisations.



In addition to providing invaluable ongoing support, volunteers led and participated in a range of fun and community building activities in 2021–22. For example:

1

Meridian participated in the Floriade Community program again this year. Thanks to the program, we were provided with tulip bulbs to plant in our front gardens. Richard Allen, one of our regular and long-term volunteers, planted nearly 1000 tulip bulbs, creating a beautiful garden to be enjoyed by Meridian and the broader community.

2

In conjunction with Landcare ACT, Greening Australia, and the ACT Government, Meridian supported an initiative to plant 1000 trees in an area of the Stony Creek Reserve. Over 50 volunteers joined us on the day, with some taking the opportunity to share messages of love and inclusion on the tree guards.

3

Volunteers also joined us at a range of community events to connect with the community and promote Meridian's services.

Additionally, two volunteers created the following new initiatives to support our communities this year:

- **The Wednesday Club:** A relaunch of an earlier project known as Stepping Out, this program was rebranded and run twice in the year. Approximately 12 people met up weekly for eight weeks, with a new and exciting curriculum of learning and exploration. The group is for same-sex attracted women, including trans women and non-binary femme people.
- **Be your best self:** In partnership with AGA, we provided an opportunity for transgender women to get support finding their own unique fashion style.

## MEASURING THE IMPACT OF MERIDIAN'S WORK

Our impact measurement system – the Contribution to Change (C2C) Framework – allows us to measure and demonstrate the impact of our programs and services. We regularly survey our stakeholders, clients, and members to ensure that we are responding to the needs of our communities and meeting our strategic priorities. This process ensures that our programs and services remain targeted, effective, and of the highest quality. We have used data collected by C2C throughout this report to demonstrate our achievements in various areas.

One of the key features of the C2C Framework is that we can compile evaluation data from Meridian's programs and services. This allows us to evaluate Meridian's performance at an organisational level. This year, 149 people completed evaluation surveys across Meridian's programs and services. Overall, 95% said that they had a good or excellent experience with the service or program they accessed.

Our surveys ask respondents to rate our services and programs against key criteria related to the quality and effectiveness of services. Looking at the average ratings (shown below), we can see that Meridian is providing safe, inclusive, knowledgeable, accessible, and professional services.

★★★★★ Safe and inclusive (4.6/5)

★★★★★ Knowledgeable (4.5/5)

★★★★★ Accessible (4.3/5)

★★★★★ Relevant (4.5/5)

★★★★★ Professional (4.6/5)

**Average rating** 1 (Strongly disagree) – 5 (strongly agree)



95% said that they had a good or excellent experience with the service or program they accessed.

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*you belong here*

## 2021–22 HIGHLIGHTS

### LEADING NEW RESEARCH INTO THE VALUE OF LGBTIQ+ PEER-LED ORGANISATIONS

This year, in addition to contributing to the research of other institutions and organisations, we conducted our own research. In partnership with the Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO) and state and territory members (previously called AIDS Councils), including ACON, Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council, Tasmanian AIDS and Hepatitis Council, Thorne Harbour Health, and Western Australia AIDS Council, we undertook research to explore the value of peer-led services to LGBTIQ+ people.

It has been well recognised that peers played a critical role in leading Australia's HIV response in the early days of the epidemic – which is widely acknowledged as one of the most successful HIV and AIDS responses in the world. The value of peers in supporting people living with HIV and driving the prevention of HIV is still evident today through the work of Meridian and other AIDS Councils.

As our organisations have evolved over the last decade to respond to the broader health needs of LGBTIQ+ people, we have seen the effectiveness of peer models in meeting the needs of these communities. However, there has been limited research exploring the value of LGBTIQ+ peer-led services. Our research sought to address this gap by asking LGBTIQ+ people about their experiences with LGBTIQ+ peer-led services and the value of these services to the LGBTIQ+ community.

We had a strong response to our calls for participants, and we have gathered immensely valuable information about LGBTIQ+ people's experiences, priorities, and needs. A report on the findings of this study will be published soon, so stay tuned for updates.



**Do you identify as LGBTIQ+?  
Have you used an LGBTIQ+  
peer-led service?**

We're undertaking research to explore the value of peer-led services to LGBTIQ+ communities in Australia.

**We would love your input!**



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Meridian realised a surplus of \$18,488 for the 2021–22 financial year. This resulted in a net asset position of \$464,652 at 30 June 2022. This surplus compares with a surplus of \$235,115 for the 2020–21 financial year, which included government assistance of \$194,100 from the JobKeeper program.

Excluding the reduction in COVID-19-related government assistance, revenue for the 2021–22 financial year increased by \$45,538, to a total of \$2,346,947. This increase resulted from a combination of factors, including an increase in funding from Capital Health Network. Donations for the year totalled \$28,879. Expenditure for the year increased by \$68,065 compared to the previous year, which was mainly a result of increased communication and program costs.

Meridian's continued objective is to increase its capacity and ability to support people living with and impacted by HIV and AIDS, LGBTIQ+ people, and sex workers. To achieve this, we need to grow and develop new and existing services.

Approximately 70% of Meridian's income comes from government grants, which totalled \$1,648,052 for the 2021–22 financial year. Consistent with our strategic plan, the continuation of our programs has seen Meridian expand its footprint in Canberra, and more people living with and impacted by HIV are receiving information, support, education, and advocacy. Meridian received \$28,879 in donations and bequests and \$28,229 through sponsorships during 2021–22. Over the past three years, donations, bequests, and fundraising activities have raised over \$129,000. This continued generosity has enabled Meridian to invest in and further expand its range of services for people living with and impacted by HIV, LGBTIQ+ communities, and sex workers. It has also allowed us to strengthen our financial position for future growth opportunities.



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