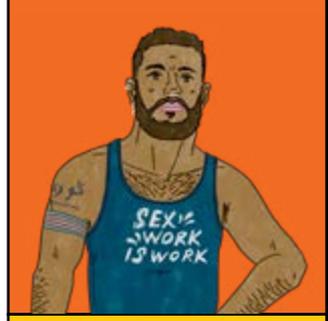


meridian

**Annual
Report
24/25**



Acknowledgement of Country

Meridian acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri people, the traditional and continuing custodians of the lands of the ACT and region.

Meridian recognises the deep and enduring strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and knowledge.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are LGBTQ+, Sistergirls and Brotherboys, who live with HIV and who work alongside and guide us in our work promoting health, welfare and justice. Always was, always will be.

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 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 their lived experience, and we acknowledge their contribution to the elimination of HIV.

Acknowledgement of LGBTQ+ people and communities

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

We also recognise the immense strength and resilience within our communities, and we thank sexuality and gender diverse 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

Language is a powerful tool for building inclusion. The way we speak to each other creates a culture in which everyone can feel valued and respected. Meridian is committed to language that is respectful, accurate and relevant.

We recognise that the term LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+ 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, queer, agender, non-binary, gender fluid, asexual and pansexual.

Contents

2024–25 snapshot	2
President and CEO report	4
Strategic priority one: Contribute to the elimination of new HIV transmissions and improve sexual health in all our communities.....	7
Accessible, community-based HIV and STI testing and prevention.....	7
Health promotion	10
Sex Workers Outreach Program (SWOP) ACT	12
Contributions to research	13
Strategic priority two: Improve access to appropriate, quality support services for people living with HIV and impacted by HIV and AIDS.....	16
Peer Connect: HIV case management and peer support	16
Peer groups	18
Strategic priority three: Create a safe community for all people, empowering our communities and strengthening inclusion	19
Education and training	19
Healthy ageing	21
Groups and programs	22
CBR Pride Hub	23
Strategic priority four: Improve access to inclusive, appropriate and knowledgeable health and wellbeing services for communities who require support around gender identity and sexuality	24
Meridian Wellbeing Services	24
Strategic priority five: Invest in the organisation to ensure sustainability and growth	29
Volunteering	29
Investing in our future	29
Quality and accreditation	30
Events	31
Financial summary	33

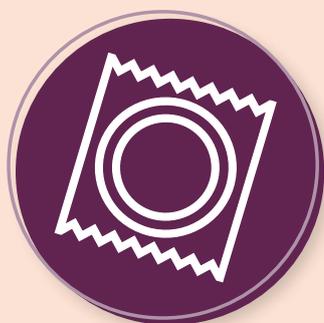
2024–25 snapshot

We supported over
870
people through our
programs and services.

(That's around as many people as have been contestants on Ru Paul's Drag Race, including all seasons worldwide and All Stars!)



STI prevention and treatment:



- held 12 STRIP Clinics in partnership with Canberra Sexual Health Centre, with a total of 170 bookings (89 to receive PrEP)
- distributed 6,810 free safer sex products
- delivered 25 STI and blood-borne virus (BBV) health promotion activities.

Support for people living with HIV:

- provided 942 occasions of service for people living with HIV
- had 83 clients in our Peer Connect HIV case management and peer support program
- held 12 Peer Support Network events
- held 3 Women's Support Group events.



Support for sex workers:

- held 12 Sex Worker Outreach Program (SWOP) peer outreach sessions
- held 9 SWOP Peer Drop-in sessions.



Community member support:



- helped over 340 clients through our Care Finder service
- delivered 49 SMART Recovery group sessions
- launched messy.org.au, providing practical, empowering information for trans and gender diverse folk
- delivered an online safety campaign to empower community members to navigate digital spaces safely.

Wellbeing services:



- helped 178 people with care coordination
- provided 861 counselling sessions
- had 65 clients access our Inclusive Pathways program across 447 occasions of service.

Education and training:

- delivered 195 training sessions
- provided training to 1,649 people.



Corporate:



- had 31 different groups use the CBR Pride Hub, with a total of 178 bookings
- had 78 people volunteer with us, donating a total of 634 hours of their time
- successfully achieved re-accreditation under the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS), and completed our mid-point review for the QIC Health and Community Services Standards.

President and CEO report

As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the continued growth and resilience of Meridian—an organisation deeply rooted in community, lived experience and the pursuit of health equity for our communities.

The 2024–25 financial year was a period of transition and renewal at Meridian, with developments across the organisation setting us up for future growth.

Leadership

Following an extensive recruitment process, Joshua Anlezark was appointed as Chief Executive Officer. Joshua's appointment was confirmed in October 2024, having been Interim CEO from July.

Joshua brings a wealth of experience in HIV, sexual health and community services, and his leadership has already begun to shape a bold and inclusive future for Meridian. His deep understanding of our communities and commitment to peer-led, community-controlled health, wellbeing and community services ensures that Meridian remains a trusted and responsive organisation.

Strategic planning

A significant focus this year has been the development of our new Strategy 2025–30. To ensure the Strategy is effective in meeting our vision, organisational requirements and community demand, we engaged Adjunct Professor Darryl O'Donnell from Praxis Insights to support its development.

The new Strategy centres the ongoing importance of HIV in our work, combined with our continued evolution to respond to the health, wellbeing and social needs of our communities.



Our directions and priorities for 2025–30 are future-focused while still reflecting the rich history and strong legacy of this important organisation. They affirm our purpose and position us strongly to achieve our vision:

A future where our communities thrive: healthy and well, free from stigma, empowered by peer connection and supported by a just and inclusive society.

We are excited to start delivery and implementation of our new Strategy and to see its impacts over the coming year.

Operational highlights

Meridian is proud to continue supporting our communities through a wide range of programs and services that respond to needs.

Over the 2024–25 financial year, we supported over 872 people through nine programs across the areas of STI prevention and treatment, support for people living with or impacted by HIV, inclusion and community building, and empowering our communities.

We started a data quality improvement project, due for completion in March 2026, to understand our current and future needs and ensure we capture the data required to efficiently deliver services in a timely manner, using secured and integrated systems. Once completed, program-level dashboards will support staff to monitor program performance, client needs and staff resources, while organisation-wide dashboards will provide overviews of real-time performance and progress to support decision-making across the organisation.

During the financial year, we successfully achieved re-accreditation for the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS) and our mid-point review for the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) Health and Community Service Standards.

Financial landscape

Meridian, like many not-for-profit organisations, is navigating an increasingly complex financial landscape marked by rising operational costs, uncertain funding streams and growing community demand. Inflationary pressures have led to increased costs across staffing, service delivery, utilities, insurance and compliance, placing strain on already limited budgets.

While long-term funding agreements (such as the seven-year commitment from the ACT Government for HIV and sexual health programs) provide welcome stability, many other critical services remain vulnerable to short-term or project-based funding. This creates challenges in planning, workforce retention and program continuity.

This concern is not unique to Meridian, with the broader community sector experiencing similar pressures. Many organisations are reporting difficulty in sustaining programs, investing in innovation and responding flexibly to emerging needs.

For Meridian, financial sustainability is more than balancing budgets; it is about ensuring that our peer-led services and programs remain accessible, inclusive and responsive to the needs of community. In response to these challenges, we continue to broaden our funding base, foster collaborative partnerships and champion long-term, equitable investment in the health and wellbeing of our communities.

Financial sustainability remains a strategic priority, underpinning our ability to deliver high-impact services and support the communities we serve. However, we also know that sustainability requires investment, in capability and in community.

With thanks

To our board, staff, volunteers, members, partners and community members, we give our deepest thanks. Your passion and dedication fuel everything we do. Together, we continue to build a future where health, dignity and inclusion are not just ideals, but realities. Your support allows us to be more for our communities.

Despite the challenges we may face, we are proud that Meridian continues to deliver for our communities. We hope you enjoy reading about the incredible achievements of our staff and volunteers in this annual report.



David Momcilovic
President



Joshua Anlezark
CEO

Strategic priority one

Contribute to the elimination of new HIV transmissions and improve sexual health in all our communities.

1

Our goal to reduce new HIV diagnoses and achieve virtual elimination of HIV by 2030 can only be achieved through ongoing, meaningful engagement with community.

Meridian contributes to improved sexual health for our communities by:



delivering HIV and STI testing and services that are accessible and community-focused



raising awareness and improving access to HIV and STI prevention



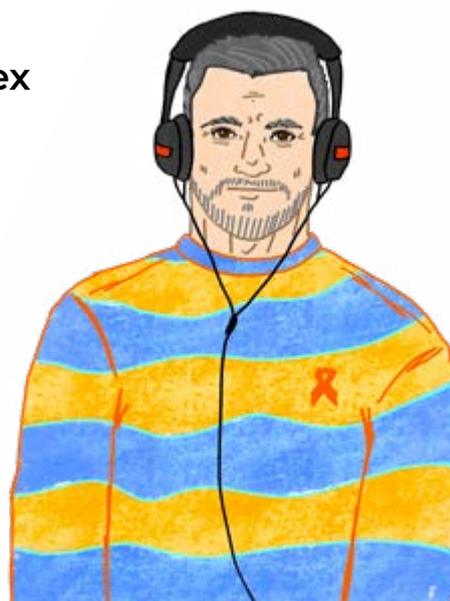
providing high-quality, targeted health promotion campaigns that build knowledge, confidence and practical skills



raising awareness of HIV and STIs across the broader community



distributing free condoms, safer sex packs and resources.

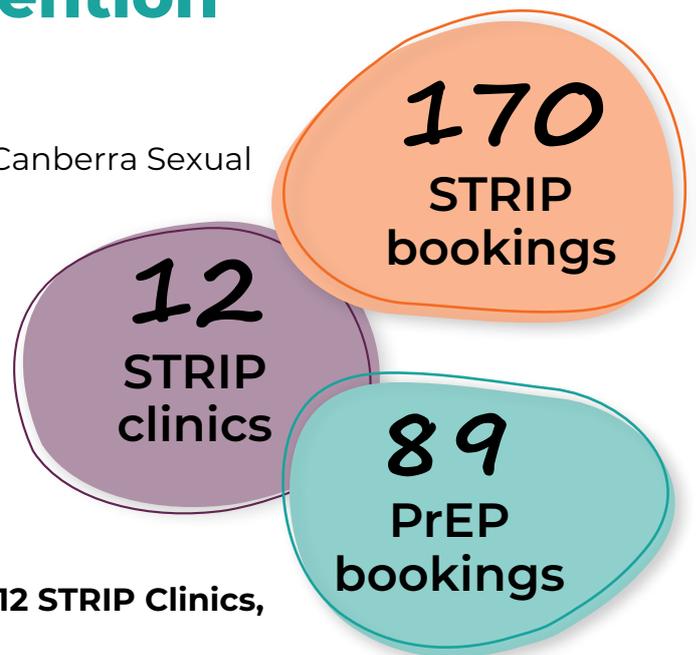


Accessible, community-based HIV and STI testing and prevention

STRIP Clinic

STRIP Clinic, delivered in partnership with Canberra Sexual Health Centre (CSHC), provides free and confidential STI testing for LGBTQ+ communities. Monthly STRIP Clinics also offer prescriptions for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). The friendly and professional clinical team from CSHC provide excellent and inclusive care, and STRIP Clinic continues to enjoy strong service use by community.

Over the 2024–25 financial year, we held 12 STRIP Clinics, with a total of 170 bookings.



New HIV and STI community-based testing service

We have conducted significant work in 2025 to develop a new HIV and STI testing service as part of our seven-year funding agreement with the ACT Health and Community Services Directorate. Our new service, launching in early 2026, will integrate peer navigation along with clinical sexual health screening.

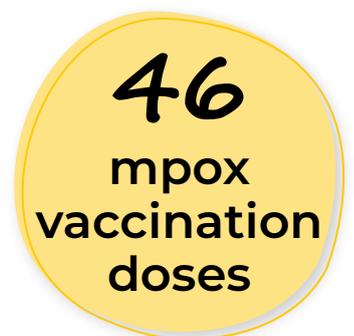
Mpox vaccination

Vaccination is a key tool in preventing infection and slowing the spread of mpox. Over the last 12 months, mpox cases increased across Australia and we had the highest number of cases in the ACT to date. However, the ACT's effective public health response and community engagement has helped stop the spread.

Our targeted community messaging, supported by mainstream media engagement, helped us raise community awareness about the importance of mpox vaccination, symptoms to look out for and the importance of getting tested if symptoms developed.

We partnered with CSHC and Capital Chemist University of Canberra (Capital Chemist UC) to provide a range of community-based mpox vaccination options. CSHC delivered five pop-up mpox vaccination clinics at Meridian between August and December 2024, providing 46 first and second mpox vaccination doses.

In partnership with Capital Chemist UC, we started outreach and after-hours vaccination clinics in June 2025. Offering mpox, COVID and flu vaccinations, this initiative has seen strong uptake among sex workers and gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. This partnership continues as we head into the warmer months.



Supporting community access to PrEP

Over the financial year, we had 89 bookings to receive PrEP.

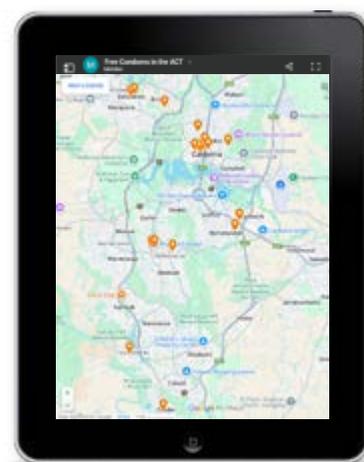
During September 2024, there was a national shortage of medication used for PrEP and PEP (tenofovir plus emtricitabine) which was forecast to last for two to three months. The ACT Government mitigated the impact of the shortage in the ACT by securing additional PrEP stock. Working with ACT Health, we identified community pharmacies that dispensed high volume of PrEP to ensure that access to this critical HIV prevention tool was not impacted in the ACT.

Free safer sex products

Meridian provides free safer sex products across the ACT as part of our work supporting communities to have safe, enjoyable and healthy sex lives. Everywhere we go, we have safer sex products at the ready, each carefully packed by our amazing volunteers. Each safer sex pack contains one latex condom, one sachet of water-based lubricant and packaging with sexual health promotion information.

This year, we introduced **All bodies safer sex packs**. These packs are designed to reduce oral transmission of STIs and include dental dams in addition to the general safer sex pack items.

To increase access to safer sex products and support conversations about sexual health, we developed and launched a free condom-ordering service for organisations and services wanting to provide free safer sex products at their location. This has seen increased distribution of safer sex products and key health promotion messages to over 30 different organisations. Organisations can place an order online for pick-up or delivery and can ask to be listed on our online **Free Condoms in the ACT Map**.



Online safer sex shop

Our **online safer sex shop** provides an accessible, one-stop shop for those wanting to purchase bulk low-cost safer sex products including condoms of various sizes, internal condoms, dental dams, lubricant, sponges and HIV self-tests. The online shop continues to grow, allowing people across Australia to conveniently purchase safer sex products when and where it suits them.



Health promotion

It has been a dynamic year in the health promotion space at Meridian. Our talented and sex-positive team has been out and about in the community, breaking down stigma, providing information and creating welcoming and inclusive environments that spark conversations about the importance of sexual health and wellbeing.

We have empowered individuals to take charge of their sexual health, encouraged testing and prevention, and fostered safer, more informed communities. In every interaction, we took the opportunity to educate, support and inspire.

We also contributed our expertise and insights through advisory roles for projects including:

- BreastScreen ACT's *Inclusive Rainbow Threads*
- ACON's *Word on the Sheets* sexual health campaign for LBQ+ women
- ASHM's *Optimal Care Pathways for LGBTIQ+ People Experiencing Cancer*
- the *Health Promotion Communities of Practice* coordinated by HIV Online Learning Australia (HOLA).

25
STI & BBV
education
activities

We delivered **25 STI and blood-borne virus (BBV) education activities** including stalls, activities and presentations across a range of settings.

We held health promotion stalls at big community events including SpringOUT Fair Day, Reclaim the Night, Bushdance 2024, the Canberra Multicultural Festival and the Volunteering Expo.

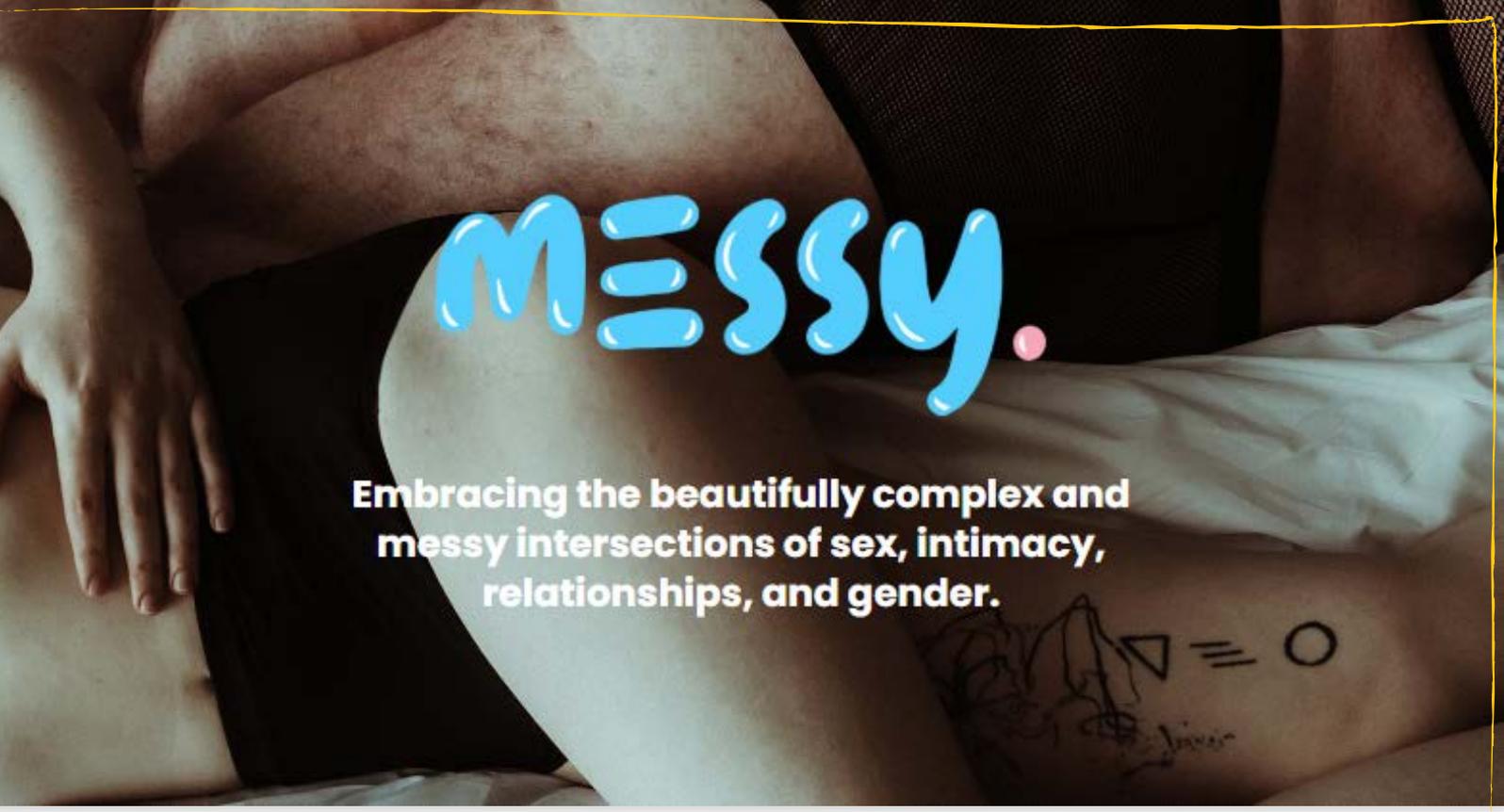
We continue to have a strong presence at O'Week events for Australian National University (ANU), Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and University of Canberra (UC) students and actively engage with residential colleges throughout the year.

Mpox and mpox vaccination information

A big focus this year was on mpox and providing holistic information targeted at those eligible for the mpox vaccine, including gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, their sexual partners and sex workers.

Our social marketing was supported by comprehensive digital resources covering all things mpox: symptoms, transmission, vaccination, travelling and prevention strategies during sex and at festivals, clubs and parties. We harnessed the power of geo-targeted paid advertising to reach community with important mpox information including how to get vaccinated. Between paid and organic posts, our social media campaign reached over 66,000 people.





MESSY.

Embracing the beautifully complex and messy intersections of sex, intimacy, relationships, and gender.

Messy

In September 2024, we launched messy.org.au, the final phase of Risky Business, a multi-year project made possible with the support of the ACT Government through a Healthy Canberra Grant. Messy is an inclusive, community-driven sexual health resource made specifically for trans and gender-diverse (TGD) folk. Created in collaboration with A Gender Agenda (AGA), Messy provides practical, empowering information to help TGD people live safer, more pleasurable and empowered sexual lives.

The development of Messy was informed by community insights. Our focus groups and surveys revealed that many people sought sexual health information on social media. In particular, many TGD individuals relied on platforms like Reddit and YouTube to access lived experiences and peer recommendations. This highlighted the need for Messy to balance evidence-based information with peer-to-peer knowledge.

By incorporating accessible, validating language, we ensured our resources resonated with the lived experiences of these communities, while providing reliable, safe information.

Messy is:

- **empowering:** offering information that assists in making informed choices about sexual health and well-being
- **safe:** a non-judgmental, welcoming space where you can learn without fear of stigma or shame
- **inclusive:** celebrating the diversity of identities, bodies and experiences within the TGD community
- **validating:** designed to make people feel seen, understood and respected in their experience of sex and gender.

Online safety

Violence against our communities continues and the need to be extra cautious online was highlighted by a series of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic attacks against individuals during the year.

Our online safety campaign empowers our community members to navigate digital spaces safely while fostering respectful and informed sexual health conversations. The campaign addresses risks associated with dating and social apps, including harassment, privacy breaches and violence, by promoting awareness, boundary setting and practical safety strategies.

The campaign also promotes support services available if people experience prejudice-related violence and harassment online, on a dating app or from a hook-up. This initiative strengthens community resilience, reduces harm and supports safer, healthier relationships both online and offline.



Sex Workers Outreach Program (SWOP) ACT

SWOP ACT is a sex worker-led, peer-based program focused on the prevention of HIV and other STIs among sex workers through education, referral and empowerment. It also delivers education to encourage the wider community to see sex work as work and ensure that sex workers are treated respectfully in and outside their workplaces.

This year, five members of our SWOP team completed the three-day Scarlet Alliance National Training Program to strengthen their skills and confidence in peer education, challenging stigma and discrimination, sex worker rights and community development.

SWOP peer outreach

Our team of SWOP Peer Educators conduct regular outreach to brothels and studios to ensure all sex workers are empowered to make informed decisions about safer sex, personal safety practices, laws and regulations, and have access to information about their health and rights.

12
SWOP peer
outreach
sessions

9
SWOP Peer
Drop-in
sessions

5
SWOP outreach
testing clinics

SWOP Drop-in

SWOP Drop-in is an invitation-only regular gathering exclusively for ACT-based and touring sex workers. It is place for sex workers to share information and resources, connect with other workers and build valuable networks in a safe and confidential space. We held a special SWOP Drop-in session in March 2025 to mark Sex Worker Rights Day.

Sex worker resources

SWOP ACT produces a range of tailored health promotion resources for sex workers.

- **Multi-lingual posters promoting COVID, flu and mpox vaccines:** Developed to promote COVID, flu and mpox vaccines to sex workers, we developed resources in multiple languages, delivered them to brothels and shared them digitally among independent sex workers.
- **New worker information:** Developed for people new to working in the sex industry, our resources include *Working Independently in the ACT*, *Handy Hints for Sex Workers*, *Safety Tips for Sex Workers* and *Working in a Brothel*.



Contributions to research

We continue to support and promote research projects that grow the evidence base on HIV prevention and treatment and improve sexual health. Research findings help us design and deliver programs that meet community needs and inform HIV and sexual health policy.

Canberra GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey

We have continued our partnership with the Centre for Social Research in Health at UNSW to recruit participants for the Canberra GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey (formerly known as the Gay Community Periodic Survey). This is a cross-sectional survey of gay and bi+ (GBQ+) men and non-binary people who have sex with GBQ+ men, recruited from a range of LGBTQ+ venues and events in Canberra and online throughout the ACT.

The Centre for Social Research in Health published the findings from the 2024 survey in early 2025 and we were honoured to host a presentation on the survey data by Professor Martin Holt and Dr Timothy Broady in February 2025 to unpack the latest data on sexual health, HIV/STI prevention and testing trends in Canberra's GBQ+ community.

SNAPSHOT - CANBERRA 2024

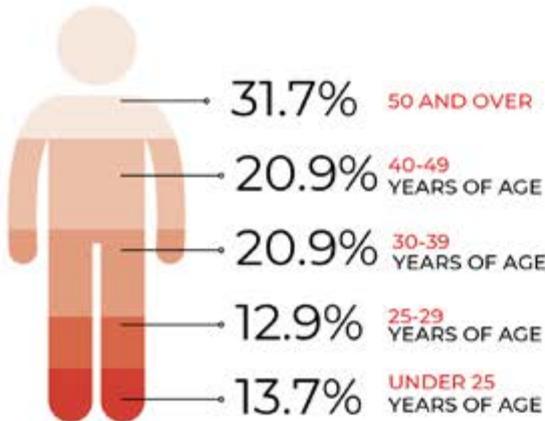
GBQ+ COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

ABOUT THE SURVEY

The Canberra GBQ+ Community Periodic Survey (formerly known as the Gay Community Periodic Survey) is a cross-sectional survey of gay and bi+ (GBQ+) men and non-binary people who have sex with GBQ+ men recruited from a range of LGBTIQ+ venues and events in Canberra and online throughout the Australian Capital Territory. The Canberra survey was conducted in February and March 2024. The major aim of the survey is to provide data on sexual health, drug use, testing practices, and prevention methods related to the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmissible infections (STIs) among GBQ+ men and non-binary people. Since 2000, the survey has been funded by ACT Health and recruitment facilitated by Meridian (formerly the AIDS Action Council of the ACT). The Centre for Social Research in Health coordinates the survey nationally, with support from the Kirby Institute.

ABOUT US

In total, 278 people completed the 2024 survey.



Participants identified as:



OUR SEX PARTNERS

BY GENDER:

(PARTICIPANTS MAY REPORT MORE THAN ONE PARTNER)



OUR RELATIONSHIPS

BY TYPE:



BY PARTNER'S GENDER:

(PARTICIPANTS MAY REPORT MORE THAN ONE PARTNER)



MPOX

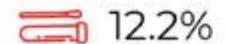
In May 2022, a local mpxo outbreak emerged among gay and bisexual men in Australia. At the time of the survey:



HAD RECEIVED ONE MPOX VACCINE DOSE



HAD RECEIVED TWO MPOX VACCINE DOSES



HAD BEEN TESTED FOR MPOX IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



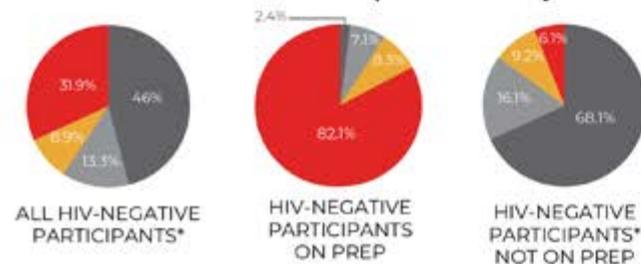
HAD BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH MPOX IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE HIV TRANSMISSION



HIV TESTING

Number of HIV tests in the 12 months prior to the survey:

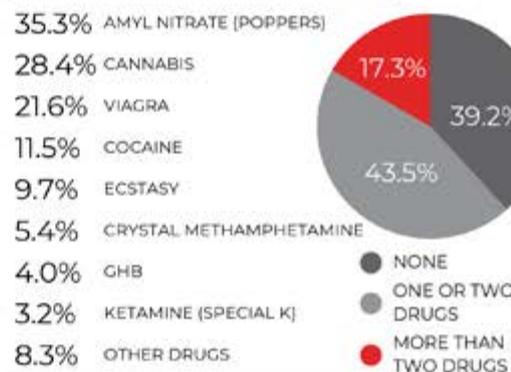


*INCLUDES PARTICIPANTS OF UNKNOWN STATUS

Most common places to get an HIV test in 2024

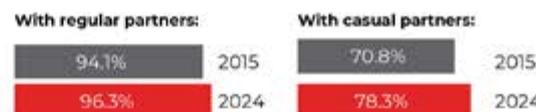


DRUG & ALCOHOL USE



HIV PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Including the use of any HIV-related safe sex strategy, including condoms, PrEP, or undetectable viral load.



HIV POSITIVE PEOPLE

Of Participants Living with HIV:



WHERE WE LOOK FOR SEX

In 2024, mobile apps were the most common way of meeting sex partners.



ACT Health



UNSW Centre for Social Research in Health



GBQ+ COMMUNITY PERIODIC SURVEY

HIV FUTURES 11

HIV Futures 11

Now in its 11th iteration, HIV Futures is Australia's largest and longest-running research project focused on people living with HIV. Run by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University, HIV Futures is a periodic national survey that gathers insights into the experiences, health and wellbeing of Australians living with HIV.

Meridian continued our involvement with ARCSHS on the project by promoting the HIV Futures 11 survey and helping to recruit participants in the ACT region.

Notable findings from HIV Futures 10

- 71.8% of participants reported 'good' quality of life, approaching the *National HIV Strategy* target of 75%.
- Factors associated with lower quality of life include:
 - financial insecurity
 - lower social connection (which may be related to stigma)
 - poorer physical health
 - living in a remote/regional area.
- A substantial number of participants live in poverty and rely on social security.
- Even though uptake of antiretroviral therapy (ART) is high (98%), participants reported ambivalence and uncertainty about side effects and harm from long-term ART use.
- The number of participants who see benefit in being, or who would like to be, connected with a community of people living with HIV currently outweighs the number of participants who feel they are connected to this community.
- There is an ongoing need to promote leadership within the HIV sector of people from diverse communities.

Strategic priority two

Improve access to appropriate, quality support services for people living with HIV and impacted by HIV and AIDS.



Supporting people living with HIV is core business for Meridian. We are a trusted provider of



counselling



case management



peer support



navigation services

helping people access the care and connection they need to live healthy and enjoyable lives and be part of a positive community.

Peer Connect: HIV case management and peer support

Our Peer Connect program provides comprehensive services and support for people living with and impacted by HIV, offering testing, treatment, counselling and access to medications. Peer navigation, case management and peer support are core components of our approach, ensuring that individuals receive holistic care tailored to their needs.

This year, we strengthened our ability to respond to community need by creating a new Peer Navigator role in our HIV team. The Peer Navigator uses their personal experience and professional skills to support clients with their diagnosis, navigate the disclosure of their HIV status and navigate complex health and social systems. They also work to improve health literacy related to HIV and facilitate meaningful peer connections, providing essential support and understanding throughout their journey.

942
occasions of
service for
people living
with HIV

83
Peer Connect
clients

'There was a time when managing my HIV care felt overwhelming. I was struggling to keep up with appointments and treatment, and it started to feel like too much...

Having someone who truly understands what it's like made all the difference. I feel supported, motivated, and proud of how far I've come.'

— A client living with HIV engaged with our Peer Navigation service.

We continue to see a growing number of individuals seeking HIV-related support for the first time, often due to HIV-specific knowledge gaps in other services. Clients are seeking assistance with housing, medical care, migration, social support and peer connection. While we see an increase in the average age of people living with HIV, we also encounter a younger cohort whose needs differ significantly from those of older individuals.

Ageing with HIV

Addressing the needs of ageing people living with HIV remains a key priority. We provide tailored, ongoing support and resources to address this population's unique health, emotional and social challenges. By focusing on the individual, we aim to improve quality of life, promote wellbeing and ensure access to compassionate and comprehensive care.

While people living with HIV have previously accessed aged care services, we are now seeing a growing cohort navigating complex decisions around ageing, such as whether to remain at home or enter residential aged care. These choices raise important questions about privacy, stigma and potential discrimination. To address these concerns, we provide education and awareness initiatives to build shared understanding about what safe, inclusive and affirming care looks like for people living with HIV.

Women living with HIV

For younger women living with HIV, challenges often revolve around childbirth, disclosure within relationships and migration. In contrast, older women face issues related to relationship disclosure, retirement and financial security.

Many of these women, particularly those considering retirement, find themselves without adequate superannuation and may be living in private rentals. They are concerned that once they retire, they may struggle to afford the rising costs of private rental housing. With limited income from superannuation and government support, they risk being ineligible for government housing and facing stiff competition in a shrinking market for affordable rentals.

Our case management for women with living with HIV helps with accessing affordable and accessible housing, relocation expenses and individual advocacy.

Peer groups

Peer support and peer networks are crucial for people living with HIV. They provide connection and psychosocial support, reduce feelings of isolation and offer safe spaces for sharing experiences.

12
Peer Support Network events

3
Women's Support Group events

Peer Support Network

Peer Support Network (PSN) is our longest-running support group for people living with HIV. Held monthly and open to all people living with HIV, PSN's peer-led events provide people living with HIV the chance to come together, connect and share. Events include dinners, excursions and social events.

Women's Support Group

Our Women's Support Group allows women living with HIV to share experiences in a safe, peer-led environment. Supported by CSHC, group events are held in family-friendly venues to allow participants the space and time to connect while reducing barriers to participation.



'I have enjoyed connecting with other women with HIV and also using Meridian's psychology services. It is great to know that in a small place like Canberra, I have support when I need it.'

— Women's Support Group participant

Strategic priority three

Create a safe community for all people, empowering our communities and strengthening inclusion.

3

Meridian works across the ACT and region to create a safer and more inclusive community. Through our training and education, programs and events, we foster genuine community connection and cohesion, while creating meaningful opportunities for community engagement.

Education and training

We provide a range of training programs to build capacity, knowledge and confidence in delivery-inclusive and affirming practices and services for people from sexuality and gender diverse communities (LGBTQ+), people who are impacted by HIV and sex workers. Thanks to the support of the ACT Government Health and Community Services Directorate, we provide free training to ACT Government bodies, community organisations and health service providers.

All sessions are delivered by skilled and dynamic Meridian educators who bring a wealth of lived experience, professional skill and local knowledge. Our training methodology uses an intersectional approach and is a combination of presentation and discussion, incorporating multimedia and case studies.

Our key training modules are:

- HIV Awareness Education
- Sex Worker Awareness Training
- LGBTIQ+ Awareness and Inclusion – Foundation
- LGBTIQ+ Awareness and Inclusion – Tailored
- Affirming Healthcare
- LGBTI+ Silver Rainbow Aged Care Training.

Over the year, we held a total of 195 training sessions, with:

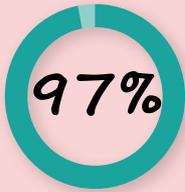
- 33 for community NGOs
- 133 for ACT Government
- 17 for health NGOs
- 12 fee-for-service sessions.

195
training
sessions

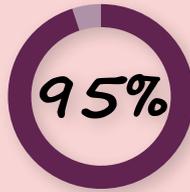
1,649
training
participants

Impact of our training and education

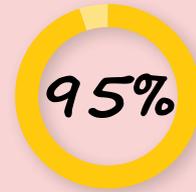
Feedback on our facilitators



agreed or strongly agreed the facilitators were skilled at creating a respectful place to explore personal and sensitive topics.



agreed or strongly agreed the facilitators were skilled at facilitating discussion and learning.



agreed or strongly agreed the facilitators were knowledgeable about relevant issues.

Feedback on the impact of our training



agreed or strongly agreed that they now have a better understanding of stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ people in workplaces and services.



agreed or strongly agreed that they now have a better understanding of what they can do to create a more inclusive workplace or service.



agreed or strongly agreed that the training was effective at building staff knowledge and confidence to create a more inclusive workplace or service.

What participants told us

'I really valued the depth of knowledge conveyed as it has given me even more empathy which I can use in my professional and personal life.'

'The examples were so simple and impactful, really normalising and humanising the experiences of different groups. Very insightful and impactful!'

'Warm, frank, safe discussion. Felt comfortable to ask questions about how to do things better!'

'Harry was very personable and generous with his stories which made it a really safe place to learn and be curious.'

Healthy ageing

Aged Care Services Navigation (Care Finder)

Meridian provides a free Care Finder service as part of the Australian Government's My Aged Care program. Care Finders support vulnerable older people who have no one else who can support them to navigate the aged care system and find support services to improve their quality of life.

340
Care Finder
clients

Our Care Finder service continues to grow. Over the financial year, our Navigators helped **over 90 clients in the ACT and 250 clients in southeastern NSW** (SENSW). With roughly 36 active clients in the ACT and 140 in SENSW at any given time, we have doubled our clientele in the last year.

'I cannot thank you enough for everything you have done for both my parents & all the help you have provided... Don't know what I would have done without your help.'
— Care Finder client

Our strong relationships with other Care Finder organisations in the ACT, Shoalhaven and Illawarra have resulted in numerous opportunities to share training, resources and diverse knowledge bases. Our Navigators bring specific expertise in issues relating to housing, dementia, and hoarding and squalor, and they have been able to share perspectives and best practice for engaging with people experiencing marginalisation or trauma from other life experiences.

Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme

Meridian is a proud provider of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme (ACVVS). Funded by the Australian Government, ACVVS is a free service where a volunteer is matched with an older person and visits them weekly or fortnightly to provide companionship and friendship.

Anyone can refer someone to this service, including by self-referral, and it is available to recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care services and home care packages. This includes care recipients receiving or waitlisted for residential care or home care packages.

We interview, screen and train volunteers. Then, once a suitable match is identified, our Volunteer and Engagement Coordinator organises for the recipient and volunteer to meet. Matches are made using a person-centred approach, based on interests, hobbies and each recipient's individual needs.

Over the year, we had 28 volunteers and 31 older people in our ACVVS program. Volunteers conducted 273 visits, each around two-hours long.



Groups and programs

MAGNET

Now in its 10th year, MAGNET is our very popular social group for gay and bisexual men aged 40 and over. MAGNET runs monthly events to support participants making meaningful connections and share information of interest to the group.

Volunteers are vital part of MAGNET and help with event organisation.

Held every four to six weeks, MAGNET events are always welcoming new members.

The Roundabout Project

Following the success of The Roundabout Project in 2023–24, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia funded us to run the program for a further 12 months, through to 30 June 2025.

The Roundabout Project reduces social isolation for LGBTQ+ people with disabilities by matching them with trained peer support volunteers for social activities, events and connections.

Over the year, we had 23 participant and volunteer matches.

From gallery outings, board game nights, coffee catch ups, a trip to the arboretum, there were a range of activities to support participants with their matched volunteers, with **a total of 34 activities over the year.**



SMART Recovery

Self-Management and Recovery Training (SMART) is an evidence-based recovery method grounded in cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), that supports people with substance dependencies or problem behaviours to lead a balanced life.

With a team of trained facilitators from diverse backgrounds, we host one of the only online LGBTQ+ SMART Recovery meetings in Australia, ensuring a welcoming space. Held weekly, our meetings are free and open to anyone over 18, providing a confidential space for community experiencing addiction or seeking to change their behaviour.

Over the 2024–25 financial year, we delivered 49 SMART Recovery group sessions.



PRIDE HUB CANBERRA

CBR Pride Hub

Thanks to the support of the ACT Government, we operate the CBR Pride Hub as a venue for LGBTQ+ communities, community groups and organisations providing services to LGBTQ+ people and their families.

Facilities offered at the Pride Hub include computer access, videoconferencing facilities (including access to Zoom Rooms, Microsoft Teams and Webex) free WiFi, kitchen access, tea and coffee making facilities and supplies, gender neutral restroom access, a microwave and a small refrigerator.

Some of our amazing Pride Hub users over the year were:

- A Gender Agenda
- ACT Aces
- ACT Disability, Aged and Carer Advocacy Service (ADACAS)
- Focus Toastmasters
- Legal Aid
- NA Rainbow Group
- Pride Grows
- Rainbow Mob
- Rainbow Ranters Toastmasters
- Seahorse Playgroup
- SEE Change.

178
Pride Hub
bookings

31
unique Pride Hub
users



Strategic priority four

4

Improve access to inclusive, appropriate and knowledgeable health and wellbeing services for communities who require support around gender identity and sexuality.

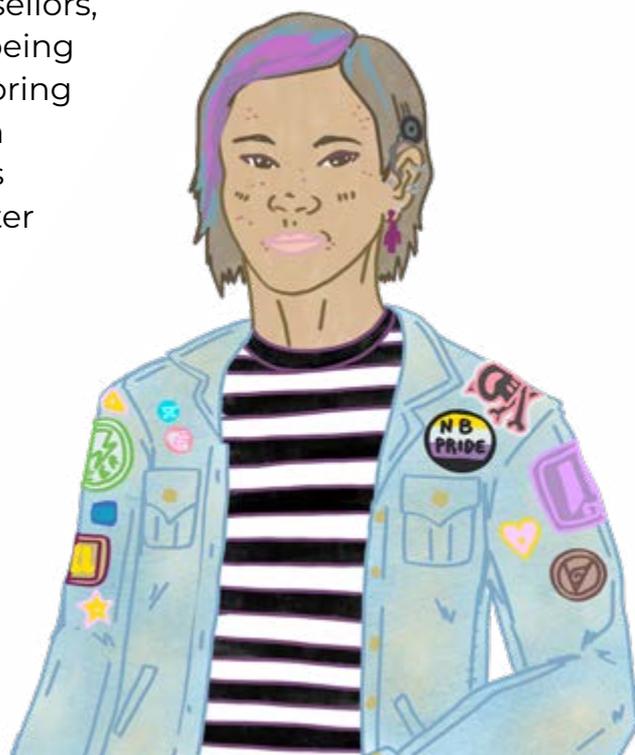
While working to build a safer and more inclusive community, we are simultaneously supporting LGBTQ+ communities to build their resilience against the harmful effects of stigma, discrimination and marginalisation.

Meridian Wellbeing Services

Meridian Wellbeing Services is a multidisciplinary service offering psychological support, counselling and clinical care coordination to people living with and impacted by HIV, sex workers and the broader LGBTQ+ community, including allies.

Our high-quality, trauma-informed and evidence-based services are delivered by a team of professionals, comprised of counsellors, psychologists, a clinical care coordinator, wellbeing peer worker and clinical lead, many of whom bring lived experience to their roles. Wellbeing Team members accompany clients on their wellness journeys, fostering a shared resilience to counter the challenges that affect our communities.

Our wellbeing services are person centred and trauma informed. Our approach is sex positive and affirming of gender, sexuality, kink, intersectional identities, neurodivergence and diverse relationships, including monogamy, non-monogamy and polyamory.



Counselling

Our team of professional, qualified and registered counsellors provide counselling for LGBTQ+ communities, people living with or impacted by HIV, sex workers and their families-of-choice and allies.

This free and confidential service is made possible through the support of the ACT Government. It is accessible to anyone aged 15 and over who lives, works or studies in the ACT; no Medicare card required.

Clients are supported through a segment-of-care model of six to eight sessions. Counselling is available both in-person and online, ensuring flexibility and accessibility.

Our counsellors bring lived experience and deep understanding to their work, fostering trust and connection with clients navigating identity, stigma, trauma or isolation.

This year, we delivered 861 counselling sessions across 177 segments of care.

861
counselling
sessions

178
people given
clinical care
coordination

Clinical Care Coordination

Our Clinical Care Coordinator supports clients to identify their wellbeing needs and goals to make an informed decision about which services to access, ensuring clients receive the right care at the right time.

They support clients with service planning and navigation, risk assessment, needs conceptualisation and support to obtain Mental Health Treatment Plans.

This year, our Clinical Care Coordinator helped over 178 clients.



Impact of our counselling services

100%

of our counselling clients agreed or strongly agreed that our service was:

Approachable and welcoming

Professional

Safe and inclusive

Counselling client self-reported key outcomes

I have a better understanding of my emotions and decisions.

I have more information and support.



I feel more confident using other services.

I feel empowered and supported to achieve my goals.

I have a stronger support system.

What clients told us

'The time with my Counsellor at Meridian helped me to reconnect with who I am, leave an abusive marriage and rebuild a new life of freedom with support of our community.'

'The counselling was excellent. I learned something in every session and always felt a noticeable difference before and after.'

'Overall, my experience was excellent... my Counsellor was able to professionally and effectively challenge the assumptions I had made about myself and my place in the world.'

'I had gone through many changes in my life. I felt lost and sometimes I couldn't see myself out of a hole. My Counsellor helped me navigate my feelings and created a safe space for me to be vulnerable but also to find my inner strength.'

Wellbeing Peer Support

Our Wellbeing Peer Worker draws on their lived experience to create a safe and understanding environment for clients. They provide tailored peer support in a range of areas, including exploring gender identity, navigating gender affirmation processes, affirming and understanding sexuality, engaging with the queer community, supporting clients with the coming-out process and developing strategies for stress management.

Inclusive Pathways

Our Inclusive Pathways program provides free psychological therapies and social and emotional wellbeing support to LGBTQ+ people and those questioning or exploring their identity aged 16 years and above who live, work or study in the ACT.

Inclusive Pathways is funded by the Capital Health Network. To access the service, clients need a valid Mental Health Treatment Plan or we can support them to get one.

Inclusive Pathways is built on a dynamic, strengths-based and person-centred model of care, co-designed by our Service User Reference Group to affirm and support people of diverse sexualities and genders. The program is especially valuable for those exploring or questioning their identity, offering culturally safe and trauma-informed support from psychologists experienced in working with LGBTQ+ communities.

In the last year, 65 clients accessed our Inclusive Pathways program across 447 occasions of service.

65
Inclusive
Pathways clients



What Inclusive Pathways clients told us

'Meridian provides a level of understanding about the nuances of my life where my sexuality and mental health issues intersect that I haven't received from any other health professional I've seen. This service does amazing things for the LGBTQIA+ community.'

'Having someone help me who is also a part of my community has been massively healing. It's very easy to feel understood and heard.'

'I feel very welcome using the service. The reception is warm and responsive. The space is able to be tailored to my sensory preferences.'

'I feel a strong sense of ownership and accountability during the sessions, as the psychologist sets a flexible agenda and refers back to my goals.'

'[My psychologist] was fantastic! As a queer and trans person, I was nervous about finding a psych who would be knowledgeable and understanding of my identity/experiences but [my psychologist] was an absolute gem: friendly, approachable, nonjudgemental and professional.'

'The wraparound care the service provides has set me up to achieve quite a lot during sessions. I feel supported through appointment making, signing in, settling into the space and beyond. Neurodivergence and sensory preferences are well catered for.'

'I appreciated the psychologist doing research and bringing an evidence-based perspective to issues I identified.'

Strategic priority five

5

Invest in the organisation to ensure sustainability and growth.

Meridian continues to invest in our organisation's sustainability and growth, including by building and maintaining strong partnerships and empowering our communities through our thriving volunteering program.

Volunteering

Meridian came into being through the hard work and dedication of our volunteers. They remain an essential part of our organisation, bringing enormous enthusiasm and energy. From the Board members who volunteer their time, to condom packing to the Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme, our volunteers support our mission promoting health equity, reducing stigma and empowering our communities.



Over the 2024–25 year, we were honoured to be assisted by 78 volunteers, who donated a total of 634 hours of their time.

78
volunteers

634
hours
volunteered

Investing in our future

Strong financial performance over the last five years and accrual of reserves enabled us to invest in the future of the organisation this year, using our equity to maintain organisational capability and capacity. We have seen increased returns on investment decisions aligned with our risk appetite.

Fundraising continues to be an important part of our financial sustainability. We raised over \$10,000 through our participation in the 2025 Canberra Day Appeal, run by Hands Across Canberra, and strong donor support for the Trevor Daley Fund.

We continue to pursue funding opportunities to grow and diversify our services for community and expand the impact of our work.

Quality and accreditation

We continue to uphold high standards of quality and continuous improvement through formal accreditations.

In 2025, we successfully achieved re-accreditation under the National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS), affirming our commitment to safe, person-centred and rights-based care. These standards reflect our values of dignity, empowerment, and inclusion, and ensure that our mental health services remain responsive to the needs of our communities.

The NSMHS report stated that:

‘Meridian has a sophisticated understanding of the concepts of diversity and inclusion in both theory and practice. This is evident in the content of policies and procedures, in the language used in all documentation, and in the language used by all staff during interviews. There are literature and imagery on display throughout the premises that affirms the diversity and identities of the clients, and a safe and comfortable counselling space is provided for use by neurodivergent staff and clients.’

This year, we also completed our mid-point review for the Quality Improvement Council (QIC) Health and Community Service Standards, maintaining our accreditation status. This framework supports continuous improvement across all areas of our organisation—from governance and service delivery to community engagement. It reinforces our dedication to providing inclusive, high-quality and peer-led health and wellbeing services.

These accreditations demonstrate our commitment to excellence, transparency and community-driven care.



Events

Through our diverse calendar of events, we connect with and empower community, raise awareness, strengthen inclusion and increase wellbeing within our communities.

Floriade Pride Morning Tea

Our Floriade Pride Morning Tea is fast becoming a favourite annual celebration of pride, community and spring in full bloom. There were lots of activities to enjoy while partaking of morning tea, including building Bee Hotels with ACT for Bees and take-home plants, courtesy of Landcare ACT, for attendees to plant in their home garden, giving them continuing opportunities to stop and smell the flowers.

Over 60 people attended this event.

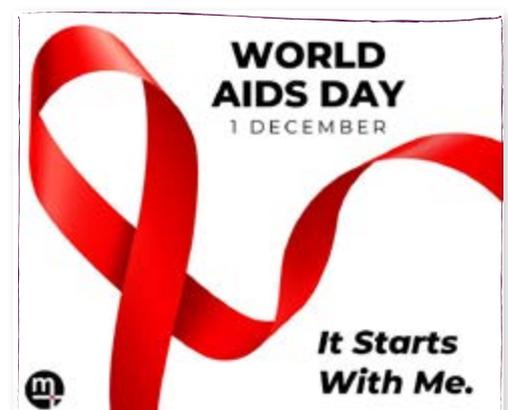


World AIDS Day

On 1 December, we held our 2024 World AIDS Day event at the AIDS Garden of Reflection at the National Arboretum. Observed annually on 1 December, World AIDS Day is a time raise awareness about HIV, show support for people living with HIV and celebrate the achievements in prevention, treatment and care.

The 2024 national World AIDS Day theme was 'It Starts With Me.'

The early morning event included reflections from former Meridian President Andrew Robertson and a performance by Canberra Qwire. This was an opportunity to gather as a community, show solidarity with people living with HIV and remember those we have lost to an AIDS-related illness.



SpringOUT and Meridian Open Day

We had a significant presence at many events as part of Canberra's annual pride festival, SpringOUT, in November 2024. In addition to holding stalls at SpringOUT annual favourites like Fair Day and Bushdance, we hosted a Meridian Open Day on 8 November 2024. This was an opportunity for community members to drop in, say hello, meet the team and learn more about the services we provide and opportunities to get involved.

Over 70 community members joined us at our Open Day.



Canberra International AIDS Candlelight Memorial

Held annually on the third Sunday in May, the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial is a time to remember and reflect on the many lives lost to HIV and AIDS. It is also an opportunity to honour those who have and continue to dedicate their lives to supporting and caring those living with and affected by HIV.

Our 2025 event was held on 18 May in the Theatrette at the National Film and Sound Archive. Around 50 members of our community joined us and we had the privilege of hosting Vic Perri as our guest speaker.

Vic is a giant of the community response and an exceptional leader in the HIV sector. This solemn event also included reflections from Minister for Health Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA and Meridian President David Momcilovic. Quiet moments of reflections followed the memorial roll of lives lost to HIV/AIDS.

Our dear friends from Canberra Qwire performed several solemn pieces of music that captured the spirit of resilience and belonging.



Financial summary

Meridian's revenue for the 2024–25 financial year was \$3,564,637, down 13% on the previous year. Total expenses for the year were \$3,690,466. The end of year result was a deficit of \$125,809.

Meridian's equity at 30 June 2025 is \$412,509.

Funding from government and non-government sources continues to account for most of Meridian's revenue. We continue to pursue opportunities to diversify our fee-for-service programs, increase investment income and pursue donations to support the long-term financial sustainability of Meridian.



Acknowledgement of funders

The impacts detailed in this report would not have been possible without the support and commitment of our funders:

- ACT Government Health and Community Services Directorate
- Australian Government Department of Social Services
- Capital Health Network
- Coordinaire Primary Health Network
- LGBTIQ+ Health Australia.



meridian

PO Box 5245 Braddon ACT 2612

02 6257 2855

contact@meridianact.org.au

meridianact.org.au



@meridianact