

# MINUTES: 36<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Date:** 3<sup>RD</sup> December, 2020  
**Venue:** Zoom Meeting (Teleconference)  
**Chair:** Kirstine HAND (Convenor)  
**Minutes:** Elena DI FABIO (Secretary)  
**Present:** Kirstine Hand, Yvonne O’Callaghan, Cameron Darling, Elena Di Fabio, Dana Savage, Jess Rankin, Reece Martin, Marti Winkworth

## Apologies

## AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Meeting opened at 6:30pm

### 2. Minutes of the 35<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The minutes of the 34<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of Diverse Voices were moved and accepted as a true and correct record.

MOVED: Cameron Darling                      SECONDED: Kirstine Hand

### 3. Report on behalf of the Management Committee

See attached.

MOVED: Yvonne O’Callaghan              SECONDED: Elena Di Fabio

### 4. Presentation of Financial Statements

Cameron Darling (Treasurer) presented the Financial Report. Cam advised the need to use money that DIVO has towards increasing in space – to set DIVO up for the next 5 years and include other forms of income such as training, workshops etc. The report was accepted.

Please see Treasurer’s report (attached).

MOVED: Dana Savage                      SECONDED: Reece Martin

### 5. General Business

#### 5.1. Robert Collins Excellence In Volunteering Award

Over the past few years, the Management Committee has administered a perpetual award system recognising Excellence in Volunteering, named in honour of Robert Collins, a former Honorary Secretary and outgoing Convenor.

Award recipient for 2020: Jessica RANKINE

### 6. Other Business

#### 6.1. Guest presenter talk by Marti WINKWORTH, Trans Person – Queensland Police Service.

Offer of Marti to do a presentation talk to volunteers in the future.

### 7. Meeting Closed at 7:45pm



# Kirstine HAND: Convenor Report

## *to 36<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting*

### **Acknowledgements**

Diverse Voices would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Turrbul and Jagera peoples, and pay our respects to all Elders, past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy (SGBB) community members and their valuable contributions to our diverse LGBTIQ+ community.

We pay our respects and give our thanks to the LGBTIQ+ community members, organisations and allies, historically and currently, that have strived to improve the human rights, health and wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community. Without their collective efforts, organisations like Diverse Voices would not exist today.

This includes our current volunteers and staff. We would like to acknowledge their outstanding effort, dedication and hard work. Diverse Voices was originally established by volunteers and they are still an essential component of the organisation. We convey our deep appreciation for their time and contributions and the incredible work they do in supporting our community. We would also like to acknowledge the valuable contribution and dedication of our:

Paid Staff: QLife Program Coordinator: Yvonne O'Callaghan; Project & Finance Support: Dana Savage; Clinical Supervisor: Sian Tooker; Daytime Paid Counsellors: Reece Martin and Adele Edwards, and the casual pool of counsellors who provide coverage for absences and emergencies, including additional coverage during pandemic restrictions in 2020. CVS program: Ann Matson (located at QC).

Honorary Management Committee: Secretary: Elena Di Fabio; Treasurer: Cameron Darling; Convenor: Kirstine Hand; Co-opted member: Neville Ray.

### **Introduction**

The following outlines the key issues that were addressed throughout 2020 by the Management Committee and Operational Staff of Diverse Voices. With the global Covid19 pandemic, the Diverse Voices team have worked closely together in order to be responsive to quickly emerging and changing needs. While email communication occurred frequently, formal meetings between the Management Committee and Operational Staff were typically held each month, with flexibility of dates and platforms emerging in response to the pandemic.

### **1. Changes to Paid Staff and the Management Committee**

A new position of Project & Finance Support was established in order to provide assistance across the operational requirements of Diverse Voices. This role was filled by Dana Savage. In June, the former Clinical Supervisor, Belinda Birtles, resigned and temporary supervision was provided by Dana Savage (qualified counsellor) until the appointment of our new Clinical Supervisor, Sian Tooker.

Competing work demands saw changes in the Management Committee, with Andrew Thompson (voted in Secretary at the 2019 AGM) and Shannah Lundon (co-opted member) needing to step down from their respective positions. The role of secretary is currently held by Elena Di Fabio. Current co-opted member, Neville Ray will be stepping down at the end of this year. Expressions of interest for co-opted Management Committee members will be conducted in early 2021.

### **2. QLife**

QLife is funded by the Australian government and is the first national telephone and webchat peer support and referral service for LGBTI people. The National LGBTI Health Alliance holds the contract and coordinates nationwide support through partnership with local state-based organisations, including Diverse Voices. The service aims to provide early intervention to LGBTI people of all ages, who may be seeking social connection, or support around the impacts of social isolation, psychological distress, discrimination, mental health and/or other social determinants that impact on the health and wellbeing of LGBTI people. QLife offers anonymous peer-based support, which is strengthened by the shared lived

experiences, specific training and skills held by staff and volunteers to provide LGBTI specialist support. Last financial year, QLife responded to 14,112 phone call and 8606 web chats.

#### **QLife Steering Committee Meeting: Sydney 4-6 December 2019**

Diverse Voices was represented by Yvonne and Kirstine. The meeting covered forward planning, review of state models, service strengths, challenges, and aspirations; issues impacting service operations (telephony, frequent callers, practice framework, policy mapping, data review) and considerations around increasing capacity, growth opportunities, preparation for tender, and future strategic vision.

#### **New Telephony System**

A new Telephony system was implemented to increase the efficiency of the QLife service (e.g. quicker call answer time, improved data collection, handsets can be used off site if needed). Diverse Voices received 5 new handsets.

#### **Frequent Caller Model**

Frequent callers currently account for a large percentage of calls received (62%), contributing to peer supporter burnout and reducing accessibility for other callers. QLife has been developing a frequent caller model to address this. Partner sites, including Diverse Voices, have provided feedback on the model which will be piloted next year.

#### **QLife Practice Framework**

The QLife Practice Framework (including all policies and procedures) was reviewed and updated by a working group and external consultant to ensure a consistent national service underpinned by best practice standards. Partners, including Diverse Voices, received the first full draft to provide feedback. Completion is anticipated by the end of 2020.

#### **Covid19 Impact**

Changes to the QLife service occurred in response to the Covid19 pandemic, including reduced service hours, reduced staff/volunteers on work sites to ensure safety. During COVID19 lockdowns (May-June 2020), compared to the rest of the financial year, there was an increase of contacts relating to referrals for support or counselling services (+45.1%), domestic or family violence (+44%), mental health issues (+41.6%), self-harm or suicidal ideation (+36.6%), and crisis or immediate distress (+4.1%). More detail on Diverse Voices Covid19 response is provided below.

#### **Additional Funding and Services in Response to Covid19**

Additional funds were obtained by QLife by the Government to assist with an initial response to Covid19. These funds were used to enable additional paid staff coverage during pandemic restrictions which kept the service operating. For Diverse Voices, this resulted in casual paid staff being engaged to cover shifts between May-September.

A Specialist Response Fund (until December 2021) was received by QLife to roll out a response to address the lasting impact of Covid19 on wellbeing. Funding will be used across four key areas: an SMS affirmation service, online hang out groups (facilitated by Twenty10), a social media campaign, and staff coverage for an additional 120 paid hours per week nationally. This is anticipated to result in additional funding and paid staff for Diverse Voices in 2021.

Funding for QLife (standard program) has been extended until 2022 by the Government, with recognition of the importance of stability of services given the pandemic occurring across 2020.

### **3. Seniors' Community Visiting Service (CVS)**

Two six-monthly reports (July-Dec 2019 and Jan-June 2020) were submitted to the National Aged Care Grants team. Throughout the second half of 2020, 4 new clients were obtained, intake appointments are being sent with an additional 2-3 more clients and 3 more potential clients have registered to determine their eligibility. Throughout Covid19, adjustments to the CVS were made which were informed by the Government Department of Health. In Queensland, in-person visits were ceased between mid-late March and early June, with contact maintained via phone and video-call visits to all existing matched clients during this period. Training of volunteers in Queensland also moved to online modes of delivery. A new intake of 14 visitor volunteers (November) will be trained using the online platform. CVS promotional material has also been updated this year to include the Diverse Voices logo.

#### **4. Diverse Voices Covid19 Pandemic Response**

In March, Covid19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation. This resulted in several additional National Steering Committee meetings and the Diverse Voices team maintaining frequent contact to develop a Covid19 response plan in alignment with Government announcements, and any required documentation, e.g. a Working from Home Policy. With the safety and wellbeing of staff and volunteers being paramount to Diverse Voices, all staff were transitioned off site and volunteer shifts were suspended until further notice. Additional funding and a new telephony system enabled paid staff (fixed term and casual) to provide coverage for QLife's reduced service hours. Engagement with volunteers still occurred with weekly zoom check ins. Transition back to the office began in September. In recognition of the increased demands placed on staff during this time, additional access to supervision was provided along with access to an extra day of paid leave.

#### **5. Diverse Voices Occupancy of Ann Street Premises**

The lease of our Ann St premises was extended until the 30 June 2022, however, Diverse Voices has identified an urgent need to increase capacity to meet QLife's requirements relating to recently acquired funding. We are currently seeking additional office space which may require relocating.

#### **6. Engagement and Training of Volunteers**

The annual volunteer training intake commenced in March. Induction was completed with 22 people in attendance. Shortly after this, the Covid19 pandemic was announced resulting in the need to cease face to face training and adapt content for online delivery. Online training of new volunteers finished in September. The 15 remaining trainees are currently completing buddy shifts, with most expected to be doing solo shifts by the end of December. The next intake of volunteers will be delayed until mid-2021 to allow full reengagement with the service for pre-existing volunteers after the disruptions of Covid19.

#### **7. Religious Discrimination Bill**

In January, Diverse Voices contributed to a submission co-ordinated by the Queensland Council of LGBTI Health outlining concerns with the draft religious discrimination bill and the harm it would have on the wellbeing of the LGBTIQ+ community. This was a significant collaboration across organisations, with the aim of ensuring that the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people are protected.

#### **Conclusion**

**In a year that included unexpected challenges, it has been a privilege to work with and witness the dedication and commitment of the incredible volunteers and staff that make up the Diverse Voices team. We are incredibly proud to be a part of this organisation and the team of volunteers and staff responsible for delivering an essential service which aims to support the resilience of the LGBTIQ+ community. We look forward to continuing our collective efforts in 2021.**

**Kirstine Hand**

Convenor Diverse Voices

On behalf of the Management Committee

Financial Report (attached)