



A Gender Agenda  
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**A Gender Agenda**

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# **ACT Budget Submission**

**2012-2013**

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012

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## Introduction

A Gender Agenda is an ACT based organisation providing information, community education, support and advocacy services on issues affecting the sex and gender diverse community. We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the 2012-2013 ACT Budget. In preparing this submission we have consulted widely within our own membership, the broader sex and gender diverse communities within the ACT, interstate and national transgender and intersex organisations, as well as a number of mainstream community organisations within the ACT.

If you require any further information, we can be contacted via Peter Hyndal by email on peter@genderrights.org.au or on 0408 111 410. We consent to any part of this submission being made public.

## Recommendation

**That the 2012-2013 ACT budget provides operational funding to A Gender Agenda to allow us to continue the valuable and effective work we undertake with the sex and gender diverse community.**

### ***OPTION ONE - \$630,000 pa***

This option would provide us with capacity to meet existing demand for our services and also to embark on working in areas of high need that we have not had the financial capacity to start to engage in. This would include working with counsellors and other health professionals. This option allows for an increase to our existing low cost counselling service and expansion of our existing training capacity. It also allows for increased capacity to assist organisations in developing inclusive policies and practices. It includes funds for legal and medical specialists to provide much needed information and support to community members. It also provides funds for the development and production of resources including fact sheets, employer information kits and website.

### ***OPTION TWO - \$450,000***

This option would provide us with capacity to meet the existing level of demand for our services. It allows for an increase to our low cost counselling service and expansion of our existing training capacity. It also allows for increased capacity to assist organisations in developing inclusive policies and practices. It provides funds for the development and production of resources including fact sheets, employer information kits and website.

### ***OPTION THREE - \$250,000***

This option would fund existing levels of service delivery (but would not fully meet existing demand for services). It provides funds for the production, but not development, of resources including fact sheets, employer information kits and website.

### ***OPTION FOUR - \$175,000***

This option would fund our low cost counselling service so that it is not reliant on large amounts of volunteer time from a psychologist. It would also fund one full time paid position to help support and co-ordinate volunteers. Our training, support groups, peer support services and social inclusion activities would only operate if we were able to retain volunteers.

***Detailed budgets for each of the above options are attached to this submission.***

## **Background: A Gender Agenda**

A Gender Agenda is an incorporated health promotion charity and was established in 2004 to provide a range of services to the sex and gender diverse community in the ACT. The sex and gender diverse community includes transsexuals, transgender people, intersex people, cross-dressers and other gender variant or gender non-conforming people.

Currently we provide training, peer support, individual counselling, social inclusion events, information, referral and advocacy services. Over the last three years we have experienced an exponential growth in both the number and type of requests for assistance. Demand for our services continues to grow exponentially.

We have never received any operational funding and are completely reliant on volunteers for the provision of all our core services. Over the last 12 months, the delivery of these core services has been reliant on the contribution of just over 5000 volunteer hours. This equates to 1.5 full time positions. As noted in our 2011-2012 budget submission, we have been aware for some time that this is not a sustainable way to run our service. We are currently losing good volunteers because the workload demands are so high. Since January 2011 we have occupied our own premises. The rent for this “community space” has been donated to us by a private donor – but only until December 2012. Retaining this space is essential for the ongoing delivery of services.

We have worked closely with existing service providers and have developed very strong relationships with a number of existing organisations in the ACT.

Key partnerships within the community sector

- ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)
- ACT Health Care Consumers
- ACT Network of Counsellors
- Canberra Men’s Centre
- Canberra Transgender Network
- Connections ACT
- Mental Illness Education ACT
- Mental Health Foundation
- Relationships Australia
- Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
- Tertiary Counsellors Network

We have also worked closely with over 30 additional organisations

ACT Government Agencies who have sought information, training or other support in relation to sex and gender diversity issues.

- ACT Department of Education
- ACT Human Rights Commission
- ACT Sport and Recreation
- ACT Women’s Health Unit
- Australian Federal Police
- Canberra Hospital
- Corrections Services

## 1. Number of sex and gender diverse people in the ACT

Population data on transgender, intersex or other sex and gender diverse people is not currently collected – either within the ACT or on a national level.

Medical and psychiatric prevalence rates for transsexuality, which are currently accepted to be somewhere around 1:2000, only capture a very small proportion of the community we work with. A prevalence rate of 1:2000 translates to a total population group of approximately 180 people in the ACT. We have already had direct individual contact with more than this number of people.

References for prevalence which appear more realistic to us are that 4% of the population is intersex<sup>1</sup>, and “approximately 8% of the population experience... ‘gender identity conflict’ issues at some stage in their lifetime”<sup>2</sup>.

The number of people affected by issues of gender identity is significantly higher than this. Sex and gender diverse people have partners, parents and children as well as workplaces, schools and service providers, who are all affected by these issues.

## 2. Key issues affecting sex and gender diverse people in the ACT

In May 2011, the ACT Human Rights Commissioner launched A Gender Agenda’s report “Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences”. This report, based on a survey of 83 respondents, is the first ever ACT based report on the trans community. The findings of our report are in line with those of the earlier Australian based “Tranznation report”<sup>3</sup> as well as a vast body of international research. Key issues affecting sex and gender diverse people include:

- **High rates of unemployment**

Despite higher educational qualifications, the unemployment rate for trans people in the ACT is 6 times higher than the general population<sup>4</sup>

- **Disproportionately low income levels**

Despite higher educational qualifications<sup>5</sup>, 35% of trans people in Australia earn less than \$20,000<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor Peter Koopman cited in “Intersex –a challenge to conventional binary gender – construction, de-construction or re-construction?” Ann Stewart, University of QLD, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> *Transgender Lifestyles and HIV-AIDS Risk (1994)*, Roberta Perkins, School of Sociology University of NSW, p19.

<sup>3</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand* Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> *Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences*, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Page 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences*, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Page 8, Chart 3

<sup>6</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand* Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007. Page 19 Table 4.

- **High rates of homelessness**  
10% of trans people are homeless or at risk of being homeless. Only 20% of trans people own, or are in the process of owning, their own home<sup>7</sup>.
- **High rates of discrimination**  
90% of trans people experience discrimination<sup>8</sup>, and 37% of trans people experience discrimination on at least a weekly basis<sup>9</sup>. 65% of trans people consciously modify their behaviour due to their fear of stigma and discrimination<sup>10</sup>. 80% of the ACT population believe transsexuality is the attribute most likely to result in unfavourable treatment<sup>11</sup>.
- **High rates of violence**  
40% of all transgender people have been assaulted (including sexual assault), and 16% of transgender people experience partner violence<sup>12</sup>.
- **High incidence of depression and suicide**  
20% of trans people report current feelings of suicidal ideation<sup>13</sup>, with younger transgender people at an elevated risk of suicide and self-harm<sup>14</sup>.
- **Low rates of social inclusion and participation**  
Only 5% of trans people in the ACT are satisfied with the frequency of their social interactions<sup>15</sup>. Compared to the general population, trans people in the ACT are less than half as likely to be in an intimate relationship, and more than twice as likely to live alone<sup>16</sup>. 77% of trans people in the ACT “never” participate in recreational sporting activities<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Transgender Lifestyles and HIV-AIDS Risk (1994), Roberta Perkins, School of Sociology University of NSW, p23.*

<sup>8</sup> *Beyond Blue, Fact Sheet 40: Depression and Anxiety in gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and Intersex People (GLBTI), Page 3.*

<sup>9</sup> *Transgender Lifestyles and HIV-AIDS Risk (1994), Roberta Perkins, School of Sociology University of NSW*

<sup>10</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007.*

<sup>11</sup> *Survey conducted by ACT Human Rights Commission, 2009.*

<sup>12</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007.*

<sup>13</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007.*

<sup>14</sup> *Suicide and self-harm among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender communities, Suicide Prevention Australia, August 2009*

<sup>15</sup> *Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Page 22.*

<sup>16</sup> *Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Page 9.*

<sup>17</sup> *Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Page 22, Table 2*

### 3. Rationale for providing operational funding to A Gender Agenda.

#### 3.1. *Commitments from 2004 Social Plan not yet delivered*

The 2004 Social Plan “capture(d) the government’s... belief that we must value and invest in our people as the ACT’s most precious asset, ensure that every citizen has a decent standard of living; and safeguard the freedoms necessary to allow all to live a life of dignity and value.”<sup>18</sup>

Evidence clearly shows that sex and gender diverse people do not currently experience a decent standard of living and are prevented, by a range of barriers, from living lives of dignity and value. The capacity for sex and gender diverse people to “reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of our community”<sup>19</sup> continues to be severely limited.

The 2004 Social Plan also made a commitment to remove legislative discrimination against transgender and intersex people<sup>20</sup>. 8 years have passed since that undertaking was made, and this issue has still not been addressed.

#### 3.2. *Demonstrated and growing need for services*

There is a strong evidence base that documents the high level of need within the sex and gender diverse community.

Evidence also indicates that the number of sex and gender diverse people is increasing. Prevalence of gender diversity within younger population groups is significantly higher than it has been previously<sup>21</sup>. Existing organisations who work with young people are already struggling to meet the needs of sex and gender diverse people who, for the first time, are attempting to access their services. Over the coming years, this demand will start to affect a far greater number of mainstream service providers.

There is growing awareness and discussion in the broader community about issues of sex and gender diversity. We are aware that there is an increasing desire from various ACT Government Agencies to engage positively with these issues

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<sup>18</sup> “Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan, 2004, p3.

<sup>19</sup> Quotation from front cover of “Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> “Building our Community: The Canberra Social Plan, 2004, p34.

<sup>21</sup> Gender Diversity in the ACT: A Survey of Trans Experiences, A Gender Agenda, Canberra, 2011. Pages 5-7.

### *3.3. Needs are not being met by existing services*

Despite their desire to deal appropriately with issues of sex and gender diversity, existing service providers and government agencies acknowledge that they lack the knowledge, skills and experience to deal effectively with these issues. Consequently we have been called upon to meet increasing demands from funded organisations to assist them in their work with members of our community.

For the last three years, demand for our services has far exceeded our capacity to deliver without operational funding. In our 2011-2012 budget submission we were realistic about our lack of capacity to continue to meet the growing demands on our service without the financial resources to employ paid staff. The situation has now become critical for us.

### *3.4. No work has been funded in this area previously*

With the exception of the now completed one-off projects run by us during 2011, there has, quite literally, never been any funding allocated to address any of the needs of the sex and gender diverse community in the ACT.

Operational funding for our service is not a duplication of any existing services provided in the ACT. No other organisation in the ACT is providing the services we offer. There is, quite simply, no other organisation in the ACT that has the knowledge or expertise to provide the services that we have been providing.

The seriousness of issues adversely affecting the lives of sex and gender diverse people and the fact that no funds have previously been allocated to addressing this need, warrants the allocation of funds even in the context of a budget that will be largely focussed on cost saving measures.

The issues affecting the sex and gender diverse community are so great that they cut across almost all government departments – community services, health, aging, justice and community safety, corrections, education and training, sport and recreation. Appropriately meeting the needs of the sex and gender diverse community in Canberra is long overdue, and requires a commitment from government, rather than any individual directorate, in order to appropriately allocate the relatively small financial resources required.



### 3.5. *Examples of the work already undertaken by A Gender Agenda*

#### **Training**

We have developed a highly successful training program aimed at community organisations and government agencies. Participant evaluations indicate an average rating of 9.6 out of 10 for usefulness. The most common feedback from evaluations is that a great need exists for additional training sessions. We are currently receiving new requests for training at a rate that far exceeds our ability to deliver sessions. Our volunteer training team is currently completely booked until November 2012.

In 2011 we began working in partnership with the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) to increase the capacity of single sex service providers to meet the needs of the sex and gender diverse community. The introductory session was attended by 19 people and received exceptionally positive feedback. Although more work needs to be done, our capacity to continue work in this area is severely limited due to a lack of financial resources.

#### **Counselling and Support Groups**

In partnership with the Canberra Men's Centre, we established a low cost counselling service in March 2011. This service is currently reliant on a psychologist who volunteers large amounts of time to the service. The service currently operates on one half day each week. Sessions are routinely fully booked up to four weeks in advance. The psychologist who provides this counselling also runs a number of support groups on a completely voluntary basis. Individuals currently contact our service on a weekly basis seeking information and peer support. In the last twelve months we have provided direct support to approximately 20 individuals at risk of suicide.

This is the only professionally facilitated support group for partners of transfolk I have found in the country. A Gender Agenda has provided me with a safe space and the opportunity to connect with understanding people who have shared life experiences. I felt completely isolated and alone in the world before I found A Gender Agenda. The people here have created an accepting, welcoming environment not replicated anywhere else. I love them. They have been my lifeline.

***Participant evaluation from recent Partners Workshop***

Thank you A Gender Agenda for being here. The support I've got from this place is the only reason I am still in the world.

***Public comment by transwoman at AGA event in September 2011***

This is the first time in 46 years that I have told my whole story, including my gender identity issues, to anyone. I have tried to tell parts to various people in the past, but with little success, and receiving little interest. This is the first time a group of people have wanted to hear my whole story, including my gender confusion. No laughing, no ridicule, no condemnation. Just acceptance and understanding.

*Email from participant at workshop held in September 2011*

### **Social Inclusion and Community Building**

During 2011, we ran a program of social inclusion events. Participation rates across the 44 events we ran exceeded 95%. Most of the events were oversubscribed, and the annual participation targets for the project were all met within the first five months of the project running.

During 2011 we also started holding regular community dinners which now regularly attract around 30 people including the partners and children of sex and gender diverse people.

### **Other Activities**

This is just a sample of the work we have undertaken already. There are also many areas that require attention which we have not had the resources to start to address. Some examples include working with counsellors and other health professionals, developing resource kits for employers of sex and gender diverse individuals (for example information on transitioning in the workplace).

## **3.6. Justification for funding a new service**

The exceptionally high levels of marginalisation, stigma and discrimination experienced by sex and gender diverse people creates a very real and well documented fear of accessing services<sup>22</sup>. A stand-alone service with its own confidential premises is currently the only way to effectively engage with individuals who feel alone and isolated and require high degrees of confidentiality when accessing services related to their gender identity.

In Sydney, the need for a dedicated Gender Centre has been recognised since 1982. The successful operation of this centre has shown that a dedicated service delivery model is the most effective way to work with highly marginalised communities of sex and gender diverse people.

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<sup>22</sup> *Tranznation – a report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, Melbourne, 2007.*

We currently occupy premises that have been donated until December 2012. Our capacity to engage effectively with the sex and gender diverse community is dependent upon continuing to have stand-alone premises. There is no doubt that “having a space” has helped to actively build a sense of community that is real and tangible – something that has simply never existed in the ACT before. For a highly marginalised group such as the sex and gender diverse community, many of whom feel anxiety each time they appear in public, the symbolism of their identity being represented in bricks and mortar is a very significant step – it speaks our existence into our own minds – and also into the minds of the broader community.

When support group meetings were held in a meeting room at the AIDS Action Council, they attracted less than 5 people. Since these meetings have been held at our community space, attendance averages between 15 and 20 people.

### *3.7. Why A Gender Agenda is best placed to receive this funding*

A Gender Agenda has relied on the incredible contributions of time and energy from a large number of volunteers for the last three years. This was never a sustainable model for service delivery, and we are simply not able to continue our work on this basis.

During this time, we have demonstrated and documented the severity of need within the sex and gender diverse community in the ACT.

We have also demonstrated our capacity to deliver high quality programs over a wide range of areas including development and delivery of training, provision of peer support and counselling, promotion of social inclusion and the development and implementation of highly effective strategies for increasing social engagement and awareness.

We continue to be the only organisation in the ACT who has ever been able to successfully engage with the sex and gender diverse community. We are respected and trusted not only by this community, but also by government agencies and mainstream organisations within the ACT community sector.

The philosophy which guides all our work is one of capacity building – building the capacity of sex and gender diverse people, and also building the capacity of existing service providers and government agencies.

The aim of our service is not to replicate the services already provided by other organisations – but to work with existing providers to assist them to better meet the needs of the sex and gender diverse community.

Operational funding for our service is not a duplication of any existing services provided in the ACT. No other organisation in the ACT is providing the services we offer. There is, quite simply, no other organisation in the ACT that has the knowledge or expertise to provide the services that we have been providing.

### *3.8. Why funding is required as part of the 2012-2013 budget*

If operational funding is not obtained, we will lose our community space in December 2012.

A Gender Agenda is at a critical point right now. The extremely hard work of so many volunteers is no longer meeting demand and without operational funding for paid staff to take up some of this workload we are simply not able to continue operating.

# A Gender Agenda

## OPTION ONE - Operational Budget

### Salaries

Co-ordinator (Grade 8 Full Time)	65,500
Admin Officer (Grade 3 Full Time)	47,000
Training (Grade 5 Full Time) <i>(Development and provision of training, assistance to others in developing policies)</i>	55,000
Counselling and Support (Grade 5 Full Time) <i>(individual, group, coordinating peer support mechanisms, inclusion activities)</i>	55,000
Communications and Publicity (Grade 5 0.6 FTE) <i>(website, email lists, publicity of events and projects)</i>	33,000
Information/Resources (Grade 5 Full Time) <i>(Library, developing, producing and maintaining resources)</i>	55,000

**310,500**

### On Costs

Super	27,945
LSL and Annual Leave	29,070
Workers Compensation	12,420

**69,435**

### Specialist Knowledge Consultants

Psychologist (1 day per week)	49,920
Legal (half a day each week)	20,800
Medical (half a day each fortnight)	20,800
External Supervision (1 hour session with staff each 3 weeks)	10,400

**101,920**

### Project Related Costs

Resource Production	10,000
Library and Resource Purchases	10,000
Training Materials	10,000
Inclusion Activities	10,000
Website and Publicity	10,000

**50,000**

### Administration/Operational

Audit	7,500
Advertising	2,500
Bank Fees	645
Client Consumables	5,000
Electricity/Water/Gas	6,000
Equipment Purchase/Replacement	5,000
Insurance	11,000
Postage	2,000
Printing & Photocopying	3,500
Rent	27,500
Repairs and Maintenance	2,500
Stationery	3,000
Telephone & Internet Expenses	10,000
Travel and Parking	2,000
Staff Training (including Conference Attendance)	10,000

**98,145**

**TOTAL**

**630,000**

# A Gender Agenda

## OPTION TWO - Operational Budget

### Salaries

Co-ordinator (Grade 8 Full Time)	65,500
Admin Officer (Grade 3 - 0.5 FTE)	23,500
Training (Grade 5 - 0.5 FTE) <i>(Development and provision of training, assistance to others in developing policies)</i>	27,500
Counselling and Support (Grade 5 - 0.5 FTE) <i>(individual, group, coordinating peer support mechanisms, inclusion activities)</i>	27,500
Communications and Publicity (Grade 5 - 0.5 FTE) <i>(website, email lists, publicity of events and projects)</i>	27,500
Information/Resources (Grade 5 - 0.5 FTE) <i>(Library, developing, producing and maintaining resources)</i>	27,500
	<b>199,000</b>

### On Costs

Super	17,910
LSL and Annual Leave	18,630
Workers Compensation	7,960
	<b>44,500</b>

### Specialist Knowledge Consultants

Psychologist (1 day per week)	49,920
External Supervision (1 hour session with staff each 3 weeks)	10,400
	<b>60,320</b>

### Project Related Costs

Resource Production	10,000
Library and Resource Purchases	10,000
Training Materials	10,000
Inclusion Activities	10,000
Website and Publicity	10,000
	<b>50,000</b>

### Administration/Operational

Audit	6,500
Advertising	2,000
Bank Fees	680
Client Consumables	4,500
Electricity/Water/Gas	6,000
Equipment Purchase/Replacement	5,000
Insurance	11,000
Postage	2,000
Printing & Photocopying	3,500
Rent	27,500
Repairs and Maintenance	2,500
Stationery	3,000
Telephone & Internet Expenses	10,000
Travel and Parking	2,000
Staff Training (including Conference Attendance)	10,000
	<b>96,180</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>450,000</b>
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# A Gender Agenda

## OPTION THREE - Operational Budget

### Salaries

Co-ordinator (Grade 8 Full Time)	65,500
Training (Grade 5 - 0.25 FTE) <i>(Development and provision of training, assistance to others in developing policies)</i>	13,750
Counselling and Support (Grade 5 - 0.25 FTE) <i>(activities and events, supporting psychologist)</i>	13,750
	<b>93,000</b>

### On Costs

Super	8,370
LSL and Annual Leave	8,700
Workers Compensation	3,720
	<b>20,790</b>

### Specialist Knowledge Consultants

Psychologist (0.5 day per week)	24,960
External Supervision (1 hour session with staff each 3 weeks)	6,240
	<b>31,200</b>

### Project Related Costs

Resource Production	5,000
Library and Resource Purchases	2,500
Training Materials	2,500
Inclusion Activities	5,000
Website and Publicity	5,000
	<b>20,000</b>

### Administration/Operational

Audit	5,000
Advertising	1,000
Bank Fees	610
Client Consumables	2,900
Electricity/Water/Gas	6,000
Equipment Purchase/Replacement	5,000
Insurance	11,000
Postage	2,000
Printing & Photocopying	3,500
Rent	27,500
Repairs and Maintenance	2,500
Stationery	3,000
Telephone & Internet Expenses	7,500
Travel and Parking	2,000
Staff Training (including Conference Attendance)	5,500
	<b>85,010</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250,000</b>
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# A Gender Agenda

## OPTION FOUR - Operational Budget

### Salaries

Co-ordinator (Grade 8 Full Time)	65,500
	<b>65,500</b>

### On Costs

Super	5,890
LSL and Annual Leave	6,130
Workers Compensation	2,620
	<b>14,640</b>

### Specialist Knowledge Consultants

Psychologist (0.5 day per week)	24,960
	<b>24,960</b>

### Project Related Costs

Resource Production	500
Library and Resource Purchases	500
Training Materials	500
Inclusion Activities	2,000
Website and Publicity	2,000
	<b>5,500</b>

### Administration/Operational

Audit	3,000
Advertising	-
Bank Fees	350
Client Consumables	1,000
Electricity/Water/Gas	3,500
Equipment Purchase/Replacement	1,750
Insurance	11,000
Postage	2,000
Printing & Photocopying	3,500
Rent	27,500
Repairs and Maintenance	1,500
Stationery	2,750
Telephone & Internet Expenses	2,750
Travel and Parking	1,300
Staff Training (including Conference Attendance)	2,500
	<b>64,400</b>

<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>175,000</b>
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