

Dear Members and Friends,

As I looked around our fantastic AGM this year, I thought what a long way AGA has come. We had a great crowd, the sun was shining, the vibe was laid back, open and welcoming. Older members were getting to know new members, kids and adults were playing and the wonderful Heya singing. I won't lie, it's been really hard slog at times for the team here at AGA but somehow we have made it in better shape than we could have dreamed of 12 months ago. This is truly worth celebrating!

I also know that sometimes this time of year can be hard for people. Please read Majka's piece about self-care at this time of year. I warmly invite everyone to come along to our AGA Christmas Lunch on Christmas Day. Izzy will be ensuring there is a great feast and great company on hand. Our office will be closed from 22 Dec to 9 Jan 2017, but if you want to contact Izzy about Christmas, please email her on admin@genderrights.org.au.

Wishing everyone a safe and happy holiday season. See you next year for an action packed year!

Tania Phillips - Executive Director

helps me a lot. On other days, I do jigsaw puzzles and read. Sometimes it can be hard in the moment to think of something you can do for self-care. One thing I've tried this year is to write down on a post-it or scrap of paper something I could do for self-care when I think of it, then putting the notes in a snap lock bag or a jar, and then when I need to self-care I can pull out an idea.

Even if our self-care practices are great, the holiday period can still be tough. Every one of us can get overwhelmed by the feelings this time of the year can bring up. It's important to know that you don't need to be alone with those feelings. AGA will be hosting a Christmas lunch on Christmas Day from 11:00am-3:00pm, which is a great time to catch up with others and share a meal. There are also other services, like QLife (ph 1800 184 527) and Lifeline (ph 13 11 14), you can call if you feel like things are getting too much or you just want to chat about what's going on for you.

Remember, it's not selfish to take time for yourself, it's essential.

Majka McLean-Engstrom – Community Engagement Coordinator

AGA HAPPENINGS



December 2016

Celebrations

The end of the year is often seen as a time to celebrate; whether that be celebrating times such as Christmas or Hanukkah or simply the wrapping up of another year. This week, I have been celebrating the Swedish festival of Lucia, which signifies hope and light. As I've reflected on my year and where I want to go, I couldn't help but think of how much AGA has developed in the 12 months I've been here. I think we should all be proud of our community and the ways that we have come together to support one another in what has, at times, been a challenging year.

This time of the year is often sold to us, by media and social conventions, to be a time when we are happily gathering with family and friends to celebrate, but for some of us this isn't the way it works. The holiday season can be a tough time for people in our community, for lots of reasons, and it is important to recognise that.

What is important is that you take time to take care of yourself, in whatever way that might look like. I've recently taken to going down to the river for a swim or a short walk, as being outside

AGA will be closed from the 22nd of December – 9th January. If you need assistance during these times, contact:

QLife: 1800 184 527 or <https://qlife.org.au/> 3:00pm – 12:00am daily

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or <https://www.lifeline.org.au/> 24 hours a day



Contact Us

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From the Chair of the Board

Thank you to everyone who came to the AGA AGM this year. I realise that the fabulous music by Heya was a much bigger draw card than my report to members – but it was great to see so many people at the AGM. A successful AGM caps off a really good year for AGA and the diversity of people who came to the AGM reflects the diversity of people who have been attending AGA events throughout the year.

As you can see in the Annual Report attached to this newsletter 2016 has been a year of stability and strength for AGA. We head into 2017 with secure funding and a great team of staff. It is going to be an exciting year for AGA and we have an ambitious Strategic Plan for 2017 and beyond (also attached).

2017 will not be without challenges and finding new premises that suit our needs and our budget will be a key task in the first 6 months. There is also still plenty of work to do in law reform, discrimination and breaking down barriers to accessing services. AGA will also continue to offer a great calendar of events.

I am really please that most of the Board members from 2016 will be continuing (me, Emily, Stuart, Jill and Bridie) into 2017 and we have been joined by three new board members (Sam, Sel, Sally and Kim) who will each bring unique strengths to the board. I would also like to thank Simone who stepped down from the Board for all her great work. I look forward to working with the Board, Tania, our staff, volunteers and members to make 2017 a great year for AGA and our community. **Jake Blight – Chair, AGA Board**

From the Training & Policy Desk

The first couple of weeks were spent getting up to speed with various legal and policy positions held by AGA, governments and other relevant stakeholders. That work continues, but a baseline has now been set. Also, there has been a bit of getting to know who's who. Work has started on a new policy framework and some new policies (about policy development, language, and providing external advice) are in draft form, or being drafted. Work has also begun on the development of a best practice training module to cover the basics of gender diversity and intersex status. Together with Tania, I have attended meetings with representatives of the Community Services Directorate, Victorian AIDS Council and the LGBTIQ Health Alliance. In the near future I will be establishing relevant network connections for the continued development of policy and the provision of policy advice. I've attended a number of AGA events where I have met members and I look forward to meeting more members in the near future. **Robby Evans – Policy, Education and Training Manager**

What's On at AGA

Over the last month, I have been helping Majka to run our events calendar. I am delighted to be back at AGA, to see us in such a strong position and having so much fun together as a community. This joy was really illustrated at our Annual General Meeting that was held in the last weekend of November. The proceedings were held in our backyard and followed by a delicious dinner together and many backyard games (thanks headspace!). Welcome to our new Board Members and welcome back to those returning.

We have had a very busy and successful time with events over the last few weeks. Two youth groups events have been enjoyable and well attended. About a dozen of us had dinner together on the 18th of November, we had some good chats and played a healthy dose of Scategories! On the 2nd of December, we had a tie dying workshop which turned out surprisingly well! Everyone who attended took home a new t-shirt in their favourite colours. I've worn mine at least 5 times since . Special thanks to Peter Hyndal who helped us to run a empowering Transgender Day of Remembrance on the 20th of November. We had some lovely rice paper rolls and deconstructed pavlova at the Families Dinner on the 7th of December. Christopher from Relationships Australia joined us and facilitated discussion with the parents group. Thanks to Chris and the team at RA!

I'll be running lunch on Christmas Day - so I look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible.

Izzy Mudford – Community Engagement Assistant

Coming Up at AGA

Date	Event
Sun 25th Dec, 11:00am-3:00pm	Christmas Lunch. Join friends to celebrate Christmas at AGA House. Bring along a sense of holiday spirit! Everyone invited!
Wed 11 Jan, 6:00pm-8:00pm	Families' Dinner. Meet up with other parents of intersex, transgender and gender diverse kids. Kids welcome. Dinner provided.
Thurs 12 th Jan, 2:00pm-4:00pm	Human Rights and Health. Join us for a cuppa with the Human Rights Commission and have a chat about your rights when accessing health care. This is an open event.
Fri 20 th Jan, 6:00pm-8:00pm	Youth Group Hunger Games movie night. Dinner provided. Open to those aged 12-25.
Sat Jan 28 th , 6:00pm-9:00pm	Community Dinner. Catch up with friends and share a meal at AGA House. Dinner provided
Wed Feb 1 st , 6:00pm-8:00pm	Families' Dinner. Meet up with other parents of intersex, transgender and gender diverse kids. Kids welcome. Dinner provided.
Thurs Feb 2 nd , 3:00pm-6:00pm	Open Day. Come and find out how AGA can support you and/or your organization.
Sat Feb 4 th , 6:30pm-10:30pm	NewCTN. Share dressing tips and ideas about gender. BYO dinner.

AGA in the Wider Community

Safe Schools Coalition ACT:

AGA is part of the Safe Schools Coalition in the ACT. As some people would know there has been a lot of pressure put on the program at a Federal government level. Due to this the ACT Government has stepped in to provide alternative funding to this very important program. SHFPACT (the Safe Schools Lead agency) has been holding consultations and meetings with key partners about how the program will proceed in the ACT under the new arrangements. We will keep you informed of future developments but rest assured it will keep providing vital assistance to teachers, schools and LGBTI students.

From Tim: On Monday the 12th of December, I attended the Safe Schools Coalition ACT stakeholder consultation. It was an insightful and rewarding session, primarily due to the input from a diverse range of key stakeholder including school teachers and administrators, community organisations and parent groups. I left confident that the SSCACT will flourish in the coming year and help make our schools a safer place for intersex, transgender and gender diverse young people.

Gold Creek School Visit:

On the 9th of December, Majka and Tim attended a Year 9 development day held for students at Gold Creek School. Majka ran a workshop explaining the differences between sex, gender and sexuality and got students thinking about the ways that binaries work and impact how we treat other people.

ACT Community Services Directorate:

AGA recently gave a presentation to the RED (Respect, Equality, Diversity) officers of the Community Service Directorate which was warmly received. We are hoping to do more training with the Directorate next year.

5th National Mental Health Plan:

AGA has attended two consultations regarding the new 5th Annual Mental Health Plan currently in development with State & Territory governments. We were disappointed to see that the interests of intersex, transgender and gender diverse people were not reflected in the plan at all. Consequently, the LGBTI Health Alliance organised a special web consultation for LGBTI organisations to provide input. We are hoping this input will make it into the final plan!

World AIDS Day

Some AGA staff and volunteers recently attended a beautiful evening for World AIDS Day that was hosted by the AIDS Action Council at Aspen Island on the lake where the Carillion resides. It was a wonderful evening that culminated with the Carillion being lit up in red to commemorate the day.