

lesbian
gay
bisexual
transgender
non-binary
intersex
queer
asexual



call connect reach out

► PURPOSE

We serve lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people, their families, allies and communities.

► MISSION

To provide peer-driven support services for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQA+) people, their families, allies and communities.

► VALUES / PRINCIPLES

WE ARE

/ INFORMED.

We listen, we reflect and we are well informed.

/ ACTIVE.

We contribute to our community and the world around us (we lean in and reach out)

/ ACCOUNTABLE.

We keep our promises to our members, to our LGBTIQA+ communities, to funders and to ourselves.

/ CONNECTED.

We connect, engage and mobilise communities, stakeholders and partners (we mobilise people power to empower our community).

/ RESPONSIVE.

We respond to the diversity of community need.

/ RESPECTFUL.

We are empathetic and meet people where they're at.

/ SWITCHBOARD STAFF MEMBERS

- › **CEO:** Joe Ball
- › **Director of Services:** Meaghan Holden
- › **Telephone and Web (Teleweb) Counselling Manager:** Libby Jamieson
- › **Counselling Supervisor:** Tracey Peterson-Esposito
- › **Out & About Program Manager:** Ada Castle
- › **Out & About Outreach Coordinator:** Meredith Butler
- › **QTIPoC Project Manager:** Caroline Ridler
- › **Suicide Prevention Manager:** Anna Bernasochi
- › **Executive Assistant:** George Munro
- › **Finance and Administration Officer:** David Hand
- › **Team Leader:** Anna McFee
- › **Team Leader:** Kelly Parry

Contents



Switchboard Victoria
is a proud partner of QLife

1800 184 527
qlife.org.au

Special thanks to:

Photography:

Dean Arcuri: @deanarcuri
Breana Dunbar: @breanadunbar

We would also like to thank the team of people that offer their time to help us write, edit and design the 2018-19 Annual Report: *Sarah Marlowe, Joe Ball, Jacq Moon, Blake Leschen, Christine Haag, Amelia Arnold and Ada Castle.*



Acknowledgment of Country

Switchboard is based on the lands of the Kulin nations, always and forever the home of the Wurundjeri, Boonwurrung, Wathaurong, Taungurong and Djadjawurung peoples.

We acknowledge that our work takes place on lands that are under colonial occupation and that Kulin Nation sovereignty was never ceded here. We hope to pay our respects to Kulin Nation elders, past and present and wish to extend this respect to any and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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SWITCHBOARD GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES THE SUPPORT OF:

- > Department of Health
- > Department of Health and Human Services
- > Department of Premier and Cabinet
- > North West Primary Health Network
- > GLOBE
- > Pride Foundation Australia
- > Lesbians Inc
- > Vic Bears
- > NOUS

And the kind donations from many over the year.

If you would like to donate to Switchboard, please visit switchboard.org.au

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Switchboard (Victoria) inc
A.B.N. 81 367 786 099



/ SWITCHBOARD LIFE MEMBERS

- › David Sampson (1991 founding member)
- › Heather Morgan (1991 founding member)
- › Carol Oxley
- › Chris Wilkinson
- › Brian Murray
- › Michelle O'Sullivan
- › Libby Jamieson
- › Paul Cosgrave
- › Chris Mier
- › Julie Dyer
- › Brian Murray
- › Bruce Beet
- › Peter O'Grady
- › Nate Reid
- › Margaret Cannington (inducted in 2018)
- › Bec Harris (inducted in 2018)

The Switchboard journey

Switchboard Victoria Inc is a community based not-for-profit organisation that provides a peer based, volunteer run support service for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQ+) community and their allies, friends and families.

Originally called *Gay and Lesbian Switchboard*, the organisation was established in 1991 as a volunteer telephone counselling and referral service with seed funding from the ALSO foundation. Twenty-eight years on, Switchboard remains volunteer driven and runs a range of services and projects.

The vision of our founder David Sampson was to create a service, like the then *London Gay Switchboard*, for gays and lesbians who had not yet come out to themselves or others, or who were socially isolated.

In 1991, a community meeting was held to establish a core group of people to set up the service. The founders insisted lesbians be at the forefront, and not just as "token members", and Heather Morgan came forward. Heather had worked for general telephone counselling service *Crisis Line* and became the new service's core trainer.

Our founders identified the value of a peer-based counselling service, delivered by LGBTIQ+ volunteers who shared and could affirm the experiences of our callers. They committed to delivering a fully

inclusive service, open to all callers without discrimination on the basis of sex, gender, gender expression, ethnicity, age, ability, religion, health, financial or social status, geographic location or isolation, sexual orientation or political belief.

In 2013-14 Switchboard joined our phone service with services in other states to form Australia's first national LGBTIQ+ telephone and webchat counselling service, now known as *QLife*.

By that time it was clear that the name *Gay and Lesbian Switchboard* reflected neither the callers' nor our volunteers' diversity in relation to sexuality and gender. So in 2014, our members agreed to drop "Gay and Lesbian" and call the service *Switchboard Victoria*.

In 2014 we also significantly expanded our services to provide a volunteer-based home visiting service, now called *Out And About*, to reduce social isolation and improve community connectedness for older LGBTI Victorians.

In 2017 we established our QTIPoC program: QTIPoC stands for Queer, Trans

and Intersex People of Colour, and the program aimed to further understanding within and beyond Switchboard on issues that affect accessibility and inclusion of QTIPoC.

In 2017-18 we joined Queerspace/drummond street services, ThorneHarbour Health and Transgender Victoria in launching *w/respect*, Australia's first LGBTIQ+ integrated services response to LGBTIQ+ family violence.

In 2019-19 Switchboard formally established our suicide prevention service, in February 2019 engaging our Suicide Prevention Manager.

In December 2018 core funding for our *Out and About* program was slashed by two thirds. We ran a broad-based and ultimately successful campaign to save this valuable service, and in April 2019 the service was fully re-funded. Since then we have been funded to expand the service to socially isolated LGBTI elders aged over 60, and to partner with and build the capacity of mainstream service providers.



Welcome from the Chair

This has been a year of major growth and development for Switchboard. The Board's key focus was on ensuring our dedicated staff team and volunteers have the skills, resources and guidance they need to do their challenging, much-needed work for our communities.

Switchboard has experienced significant growth in the past three years under CEO Joe Ball. In response, last year we proposed a change in our governance structure to Switchboard members, with new Rules of Association that replaced our Management Committee (well suited to a smaller organisation) with a governance Board. We have made great strides in good governance in our first year as a Board, as outlined by our Secretary Christine Haag on page 14.

Part of Switchboard's recent growth has included extending our activities in the complex areas of family violence support and suicide prevention. This, along with the ongoing increase in calls from people experiencing significant distress, including mental health issues and suicidal thoughts or violence from intimate ex/partners or family has informed major developments in Switchboard's approach to clinical governance.

These include enhanced policies and procedures and growth in our staff team, including team leaders who now directly support volunteers in our phone room and an experienced Director of Services with responsibilities including program developments, monitoring, evaluation and quality improvement.

A key Board responsibility is ensuring that systems and resources are in place to ensure delivery of and reporting on funded activities, including Switchboard's sustainability. *Financial governance* is critical, and our Treasurer Blake Leschen outlines developments in this area on page 16. The greater size and complexity of our budget and financial systems meant

the Board also saw the need to employ a Finance Officer, who now works closely with Joe and Blake and the Business and Finance Committee to ensure accurate and transparent budget planning, spending and reporting.

As a peer-driven LGBTIQA+ community organisation, engagement with our diverse communities helps ensure that our services meet community needs, and that the most isolated members of our communities get to hear about Switchboard and benefit from our services. This is the focus of the Board's dynamic *Community Engagement Committee*, as outlined by its Chair Amelia Arnold on page 10. Another change that came with our new Rules

"Switchboard's services are available to all, but we recognize that part of what makes Switchboard special is our accessibility to people who are isolated, marginalised, perhaps not "out" in many areas of their lives or not well connected with LGBTIQA+ communities."



IMAGE: Switchboard Chair Sarah Marlowe with Mama Alto and Joe Ball at the Pride Centre fundraiser, 2019.

2018-19 Board Members

/ SARAH MARLOWE

Chair and Member of Governance Committee

/ DEBORAH MAY

Deputy Chair and member of Community Engagement Committee

/ CHRISTINE HAAG

Secretary and Chair of Governance Committee

/ BLAKE LESCHEN

Treasurer and Chair of Business and Finance Committee

► GENERAL MEMBERS

/ AMELIA ARNOLD

General Member and Chair of Community Engagement Committee

/ EMMA DARDICK

Chair and Member of Governance Committee

/ BRIDGET GARGAN

General Member and Member of Community Engagement Committee and Business and Finance Committee

/ MONIQUE HAMEED

General Member and Member of QTIPOC Advisory Group

/ MARY KOUTZAMANIS

General Member and Member of Governance Committee

/ LISA SARMAS

General Member, Member of QTIPOC Advisory Group and Governance Committee

/ NAT TAYLOR

General Member and Member of Community Engagement Committee

/ KENNY YU

General Member and Member of Governance Committee

"Governing Switchboard is a huge responsibility. We stand on the shoulders of decades of resourceful, committed people who created and sustained this special organisation, where our LGBTIQ+ communities come together to look after our own."

of Association was that all members of our LGBTIQ+ communities can now apply to become members of Switchboard Victoria – an opportunity we hope will enable many more people to join us and support our work.

Switchboard's services are available to all, but we recognize that part of what makes Switchboard special is our accessibility to people who are isolated, marginalised, perhaps not "out" in many areas of their lives or not well connected with LGBTIQ+ communities. Our *Out and About* program addresses this issue for older people and/or people with significant disabilities, as does our teleweb service. The work of the *Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour* (QTIPOC) program, outlined on page 15, led the Board to identify QTIPOC communities as a priority across all our work. This in turn informed a Board consultation with community members involved in the QTIPOC program's advisory group and steering committee, and in turn development of a second phase of

the QTIPOC program, with the Board committing to funding a senior staff position to support our ongoing capacity-building in this area and working towards develop targeted programs.

Governing Switchboard is a huge responsibility. We stand on the shoulders of decades of resourceful, committed people who created and sustained this special organisation, where our LGBTIQ+ communities come together to look after our own. My thanks to all of the members of our volunteer Board and its committees, to our dedicated staff and most especially to our extraordinary volunteers - from those who have been with us for more than a decade, to those who have just finished their volunteer training. Thank you for all you do every day to break down isolation, connect people across our diverse communities, and support their safety and wellbeing.

Sarah Marlowe
Board Chair



Year in review from the CEO

“It was a rebellion, it was an uprising, it was a civil rights disobedience – it wasn't no damn riot.”

– STORMÉ DELARVERIE ON THE HISTORY OF STONEWALL

2019 marks 50 years since the Stonewall rebellion in New York that began the global LGBTIQ+ rights movement. Stormé DeLarverie is increasingly recognized as the person who returned the punch of a police officer during a raid on the Stonewall Inn, sparking the rebellion. Stormé was a queer person of colour who worked at the time as a drag performer, female to male, and who continued until their death in 2014 fighting for LGBTIQ+ rights. Stormé is said to have once identified as lesbian, but at the time told people they didn't mind “if you used madam or sir”. In later life Stormé used the pronoun 'he', but on entering residential care due to failing health was recorded as 'she', and again at death.

“We do know that Stormé lived a life of intersecting identities shaped by poverty, race, sexuality and gender, and that in their final years entered a rigid aged care system that struggles to this day to understand the complexities of gender.”

We cannot know how Stormé identified or wished to be recorded in their final years. We do know that Stormé lived a life of intersecting identities shaped by poverty,

race, sexuality and gender, and that in their final years entered a rigid aged care system that struggles to this day to understand the complexities of gender. Stormé's story is a reminder of how far we've come, and of why we need LGBTIQ+ services affirming our lived reality right to the end of our lives. Read our 'Saving Out And About' story (pg 19) to see how close we came to losing a cornerstone community service with this very aim.

To mark 50 years since Stonewall I attended the laying of a literal community cornerstone in Fitzroy Street St Kilda, for the Victorian Pride Centre. This year we began planning our move to the Pride Centre, with all the exciting opportunities offered by sharing an iconic purpose-built centre with other LGBTIQ+ organisations including ThorneHarbour Health, the Australian GLBTI Multicultural Council, Minus 18 and Melbourne Queer Film Festival.

This year we also strengthened our work in family violence (p 20) and suicide prevention (p 21) work, building on decades of foundational work as a grassroots community service that meets our callers, web-chatters and beneficiaries where they are at, listens to their needs and works with them to support their connectedness, wellbeing and empowerment from a non-clinical, peer-to-peer framework.

This year Switchboard further strengthened our role supporting LGBTIQ+ people in distress due to the ongoing political attacks by some sections of the media, politicians and wider community. Demand for our services escalated during the 2017 postal survey, and we ramped up to meet this demand. That demand has not abated, and every time these “debates” spike –



IMAGE: Thorne-Harbour Midsumma event - Midsumma Hypothetical.
Left to right: Dean Arcuri, Joe Ball, Zoe Coombs-Marr



IMAGE: Switchboard volunteers and staff at Midsumma Carnival, 2019.

most recently on trans, nonbinary and gender diverse people, including children – we see a corresponding surge in demand for our services. Deep thanks to our volunteers who always willingly respond, and are there for our communities.

“We have to be visible. We should not be ashamed of who we are. We have to show the world that we’re numerous. There are many of us out there.”

– Sylvia Rivera, Stonewall activist

This year we also stepped up our behind-the-scenes and public advocacy, sharing what we hear on the phones, on webchat and from our elders about the terrible damage these attacks wreak on our communities’ mental health. Through this, we strengthened our relationships with journalists, community allies and politicians at all levels, and positioned Switchboard as a key voice for some of the most vulnerable people in our diverse LGBTIQ+ communities.

My thanks for the invaluable support of our incredibly dynamic and engaged Board. Deep thanks to our hardworking Chair Sarah Marlowe, and to Deborah May (Deputy Chair), Christine Haag (Secretary), Blake Leschen (Treasurer) and Amelia Arnold (Community Engagement Committee Chair) and every Board member. Thank you for your strategic planning and thinking, your skilled work in

strengthening our governance and financial systems, your policy and grant-writing, your community engagement and representing Switchboard, your help to save Out and About, and your skills, thoughtfulness and commitment in supporting Switchboard in so many ways.

Thanks to our wonderful staff. I see the culture of kindness we foster every day in our checking in with each other, encouraging self-care and offering to help out. The heaviness of our work in difficult

“And most of all, thanks to out volunteers: the heart of Switchboard. As I always say in training, very few people will ever know exactly what you do, the care you give...”

issues – family violence, mental illness, suicide, elder abuse, social isolation and discrimination in all its forms – is lightened by cups of tea, kind words, spontaneous cabaret, a dry joke and when needed, chocolate from the phone room. Thank you Ada, Libby, Anna B, Caroline, George, Meredith, Tracy, Kelly, Anna M, David and Meaghan for your generosity, passion and integrity.

And most of all, thanks to our volunteers: the heart of Switchboard. As I always say in training, very few people will ever know exactly what you do, the care you give. But I know. And so do the staff, and the Board, and the elder you visit or the person whose call you answered. And you know. The work that you do when to no one is watching is what defines Switchboard. You are Switchboard. Thank for every minute you spend with us, and see you soon.

Joe Ball
Switchboard Vic CEO



IMAGE: Switchboard CEO Joe Ball speaking at RMIT’s IDAHOBIT event, 2019.

Connecting our Communities

2018-19 ACHIEVEMENTS

Our existing programs

/ PHONE AND WEB COUNSELLING AND REFERRAL SERVICE

Switchboard is the Victorian partner in the national telephone and web counselling, information and referral service QLife. This free peer based service is for LGBTIQ+ identifying people and those who have questions or concerns about LGBTIQ+ issues. This includes families, friends, teachers and coworkers of LGBTIQ+ people. This service is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health.

/ OUT & ABOUT COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Switchboard runs Out & About, a social home visiting service for LGBTIQ+ Victorians at risk of social isolation. This free service is coordinated in partnership with the National Community Visitors Scheme and is funded through the Commonwealth Department of Health.

/ QTIPoC PROJECT

Switchboard runs a QTIPoC project aiming to build greater equity for Queer, Trans and Intersex Peoples and/or People of Colour and People of Faith.

/ W / RESPECT

Switchboard is a partner in the newly developed Victoria wide LGBTIQ+ family violence and intimate partner violence prevention service. This service, launched on September 3 2018, is called w/respect. This service is managed in partnership with Drummond Street Services, Thorne Harbour Health, Transgender Victoria and Switchboard. Switchboard's primary service delivery role in the consortia is to manage the after-hours telephone support line.

/ SUICIDE PREVENTION

Switchboard is running its own postvention plan following the tragic suicide of our beloved staff member Ingrid Zhang. Going forward Switchboard will be developing suicide prevention resources for the broader LGBTIQ+ community.



Our Board has three Committees, one of which – our Community Engagement Committee – also includes non-Board members. The Community Engagement Committee provides an avenue for the Board to learn from LGBTIQ+ community members how we can better reach out to diverse communities within Victoria, and engage our members in this work.

This year we focused on developing creative, innovative new ways to reach LGBTIQ+ people who may not currently engage with our programs, or know about Switchboard. With the appointment of Mama Alto and Michelle Sheppard to the Committee, we have gone from strength to strength translating key Switchboard's strategic priorities into tangible plans for action in the coming year. We were also proud to support queer refugee and asylum seekers at RISE (Refugees, Survivors and Ex-Detainees) events and to walk alongside First Nations communities at NAIDOC Pride and insideOUT.

It has been an honour chairing the Community Engagement Committee in our first year as a governance board with a focus on our strategic plan, and I am endlessly grateful to Bridget Gargan, Deborah May, Nat Taylor, Mama Alto, Michelle Sheppard, Sara Timms, Ayman Barbaresco and our events volunteers and staff for their commitment and enthusiasm.

Amelia Arnold

Chair of the Board's Community Engagement Committee



IMAGE: Switchboard stall at Midsumma Festival 2019.

\$26,107

DONATIONS



56

VOLUNTEERS TRAINED

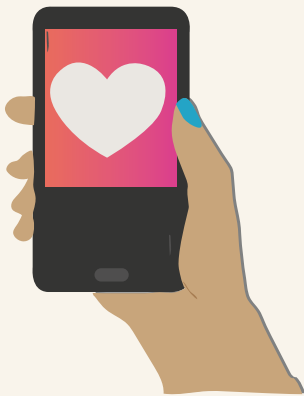
3792

PEOPLE LIKE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



43,121

VIEWS OF THE WEBSITE



865

HOURS SPENT TALKING ON THE PHONE



45

VOLUNTEER TRAINING PROGRAMS TO LGBTIQA+ VICTORIANS SINCE 2015

21,244

CONTACTS MADE THROUGH QLIFE (NATIONAL)

5134

CONTACTS MADE IN VICTORIA



Over the last year we've trained and supported Out & About volunteers in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Our volunteers continue to go above and beyond in their commitment to building friendships and support of the program

750

COMMUNITY VISITS IN ONE YEAR





COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Speak up, I can't hear you

A SPECIAL SWITCHBOARD MIDSUMMA EVENT

This year Switchboard entered the Midsumma Festival with a splash, presenting a major panel event 'Speak Up! I Can't Hear You' in Federation Square's fabulous Deakin Edge space.

Speak Up! explored the role of queer story-telling in Australia following marriage equality, especially those stories and voices that were not well represented by the glossy images and dominant voices of the mainstream *Vote Yes* campaign.

Switchboard is a place for stories and story-telling: over a cup of tea with an elder we are visiting, in a quick touching base call from someone isolated due to significant disabilities, in a long call from a young person experiencing bullying or homelessness, or from a middle-aged person living rurally, exploring what it might be like to come out and live true to themselves at last. Switchboard is defined by our accessibility, including to people outside or on the margins of visible, self-identified LGBTIQ+ communities.

The Speak Up! event sought to dig deeper into the stories we tell – as individuals, and as communities – about who we are, and understand how they shape us. We were particularly interested to explore the intersections of our multiple identities,

and the intersections of queer/LGBTIQ+ identities with those of race, culture, class, gender and more.

The panel was hosted and the discussion skillfully guided by jazz singer, cabaret artiste, gender transcendent diva and Switchboard volunteer **Mama Alto**, and featured:

- › **Dr Lou Bennett AM** – Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung musician, actor and academic researching Aboriginal languages and their retrieval
- › **Christos Tsiolkas** – award-winning essayist, playwright, screenwriter and author of five novels including *Loaded*, *Barracuda* and *The Slap*, and
- › **Carolyn D'Cruz** – senior lecturer and program convener for Gender Sexuality and Diversity Studies at La Trobe University and author of *Identity politics in deconstruction: Calculating with the incalculable* and is co-editor of the anthology, *After homosexual: The legacies of gay liberation*.

Speak Up! was proudly supported by Nour Group and the Victorian Government. A special thank you to our Deputy Board Chair Deborah May for her significant role in making the event possible, and deepest thanks to our host and panel for generously sharing their stories and reflections, and donating their time. All of that meant that all proceeds from the event went directly to supporting Switchboard and our work for our communities.

DR LOU BENNETT AM

"For me queer story telling is about who I am, and who I am is Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung. I don't necessarily take those terms 'queer' or 'lesbian' or even 'feminist'. They are a part of me, though those terms have always in a sense been imposed on me, or give to me externally. But the identity and what I take out of it comes from me. And that, from me as an Aboriginal woman. Even 'Aboriginal' is an imposed label. I'm not Aboriginal, I'm Yorta Yorta, I am Dja Dja



IMAGE: Left to Right: Dr Lou Bennett AM, Christos Tsiolkas, Carolyn D'Cruz and Mama Alto

“I’m Yorta Yorta, I am Dja Dja Wurrung. And that encompasses everything about me. And that informs my storytelling”

– Dr Lou Bennett AM

Wurrung. And that encompasses everything about me. And that is what informs my story-telling.

“We need to be able to remove ourselves from labels, to look within ourselves and find what it is we truly are. We need to strip away especially those imposed labels. For me as a Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung woman, the imposition of labels and identities on me has happened ever since I left the hospital with my mother – whether its been derogatory terms, whether it’s been about my skin colour, or my race, or my sexuality, or my religion, or my belief systems. So for me [its about being] able sit with you here tonight and say that I’m not denouncing any other collective or any other label. But what I am doing is I’m inserting my identity, by saying I am Yorta Yorta Dja Dja Wurrung.”

CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS

“People say, ‘Why did you start writing?’. I think it was the only way I could make sense of the world. I don’t mean this dramatically [but] when I started writing when I was very very young I thought, in this very naive way, that if I didn’t tell these stories, I wasn’t going to survive. I felt that in order to make sense of myself and the world, I had to tell the stories.

“I felt that in order to make sense of myself and the world, I had to tell the stories “

– Christos Tsiolkas

“And I had to find out as I was going – how do you tell those stories? How do you write from places that are really difficult and shadowy, and because of my personal experience, shameful? That’s that element of being a queer writer, but I’m also a child of migrants and someone that grew up with two languages. I’ve often thought there was a relationship between growing up in a migrant working-class world, and then through my writing becoming part of the middle class – with shifting boundaries. My sexuality sometimes felt that way too.



IMAGE: Dr Lou Bennet AM

“What’s hard is that I started writing to save my life and to hear my own voice, and try to understand the things that are complicated. And there are other voices that I think need to be heard. I can’t write them, but I can be part of a world that creates spaces for that to happen.”

CAROLYN D’CRUZ

“Stories are the first time that we make sense of the world, but it’s also the place where we can we tap into fantasy and imagination and where anything can happen. Stories are better when they come with sound effects and embellishments, but it’s about trying to find your place I guess.

“And the queer part of that it is that you don’t always follow that straight and narrow path that Little Red Riding Hood was advised to do so. We like to take the bent roads to things, and look at the roads less traveled. Which is why I think that any

kind of minority literature to do with your sexuality, race or class is coming from perhaps the margins, and not the main roads.”

MAMA ALTO

“Story telling in the broader sense of the word is a vital part of self-expression. It forms a kind of collective knowing for humanity, where we discover ourselves and express and connect. And that is especially useful or especially noticeable for people who have been marginalised or oppressed in different ways.”

Note: Our speaker’s quotes from the event have been very lightly edited only for clarity in written form.



IMAGE: Switchboard Vice Chair, Deborah May

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY
nous





GOVERNANCE REPORT

In Safe hands

ACHIEVEMENTS IN GOOD GOVERNANCE

Switchboard's ability to provide our much-needed services depends on funding by federal and state governments, and other bodies such as Primary Health Networks, along with donations and in-kind support from LGBTIQ+ community organizations together with generous donations from individuals in our communities and allies. Our capable and dedicated CEO and staff team work hard to support our extraordinary volunteers, who generously give their time, skills and commitment at every level of our organisation to make it all happen.

GOOD GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Switchboard must be careful and accountable, in order to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to us to do our work. To maintain our eligibility and trustworthiness for funding, Switchboard Victoria must comply with our service agreements, external regulations, reporting requirements and standards of good practice, as well as our own Rules of Association and the law. Our policies and practices have to stand up to scrutiny from our members, our staff, the public, government departments and agencies. Two of the more important external bodies we are accountable to are the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission and Consumer Affairs Victoria.

We can only meet our obligations when we have good governance. Everyone at Switchboard participates in sustaining good governance. However, the responsibility for monitoring and developing good governance is the responsibility of our Board and its Governance Committee.

GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENTS AND AN ACTIVE COMMITTEE

Our first year as a governance Board has seen many improvements in how we do business and communicate with each other. The volume of the Board's work and our efficiency is increasing, supported by in-service training in governance practice delivered by Our Community. The Board's committees have new Terms of Reference and have been active in financial management, good governance, community engagement and supporting the work of the CEO.

Switchboard has made significant strides in good governance this year. The work of development in governance sits at committee level, with our active Governance Committee members giving many hours of their time and expertise to develop policies and recommendations for the Board's consideration.

OVERSIGHT OF SWITCHBOARD'S OPERATIONS, RISK MANAGEMENT AND POLICIES

The Governance Committee assisted with development of a new framework to guide the Board's oversight of Switchboard's organisational operations; this document is undergoing periodic review in line with the roll-out of development plans from our Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Based on this framework, the CEO gives a monthly report to the Board, including reports from the staff who manage Switchboard's programs. Our Chair and CEO have developed a strong working partnership, enhancing co-operation between the Board and Switchboard staff within a governance approach.

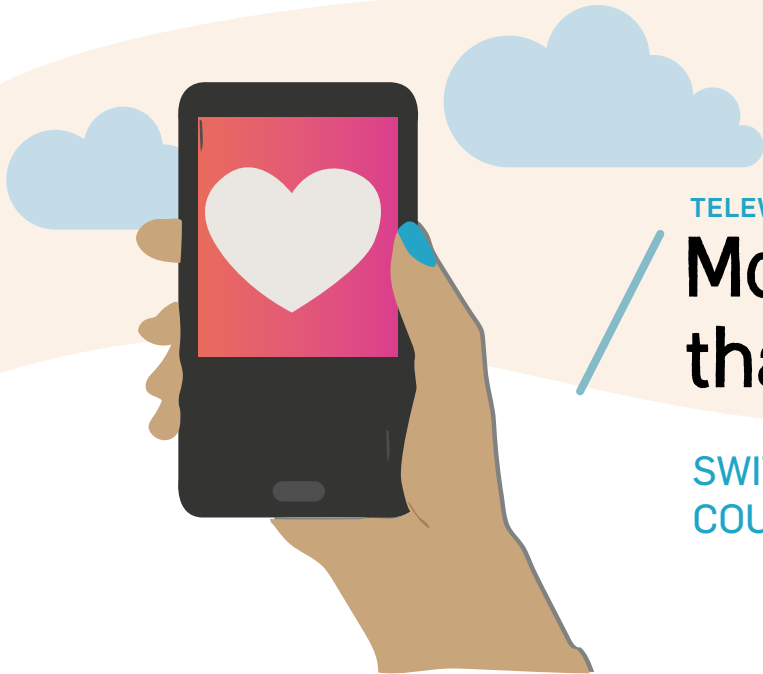
The Board's work in managing risk for Switchboard is ongoing, within a newly-agreed risk management framework developed by the Governance Committee. A review of insurance coverage has led to increased clarity and additional insurances. Other new policies have included a Conflict of Interest policy for Board members and we have committed resources to a project to develop an updated and expanded handbook of policies and procedures. Significant resources have gone into ensuring good policy and practices in the area of human resources, health and safety practices.

ENSURING WE HAVE A SUSTAINABLE HOME

Switchboard leases our current premises and has been given notice to vacate by our lessor, the City of Melbourne. Happily our lease has been extended from December 2019, for review in early 2020. The City of Melbourne is very much aware of our need to remain until, hopefully, we take up residence in the Victorian Pride Centre later in 2020. Continuity of tenure is vital to our capacity to provide services and our long-term viability. We are in negotiations with the Pride Centre and continue to be grateful to Jude Munro, Chair of the Pride Centre Board, for her assistance regarding our current and future tenancies, to secure our future. Good governance is all about sustainability.

Christine Haag
Board Secretary





TELEWEB PROGRAM

More needed than ever

SWITCHBOARD'S PEER PHONE COUNSELLING AND WEBCHAT SERVICES

28 YEARS SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES

Twenty eight years ago, Switchboard was established with a commitment to providing volunteer-delivered telephone support and referral to LGBTIQ+ people in Victoria. That means we have been providing 28 years of uninterrupted service and support to our LGBTIQ+ communities. Today this original phone line has become part of the broader teleweb services that Switchboard offers, including the volunteer-delivered QLife phone and webchat services, and a separate after hours w/respect phone service for people experiencing family or intimate partner violence,

OUR QLIFE PARTNERSHIP

Since 2014 Switchboard has been delivering services as the Victorian partner in the QLife national service, working alongside our interstate partners the LGBTI Health Alliance, Twenty10 (NSW), Diverse Voices (Queensland) and Living Proud (WA) to answer phone calls and webchats from LGBTIQ+ people and their families all across Australia, from 3pm to midnight, every day of the year.

VOLUNTEER INDUCTION TRAINING

From the establishment of our telephone service in 1991 up to June 2019, Switchboard has delivered no less than 45 volunteer training programs to LGBTIQ+ Victorians wanting to volunteer in our teleweb services, including two courses in 2018-19.

During this year we also undertook a significant review of our teleweb volunteer training, to ensure that our ten-day program continues to:

- › empower volunteers to do their peer support and referral work with confidence
- › ensure volunteers have a thorough understanding of their role, how to access the comprehensive supports we provide to ensure their own wellbeing and that Switchboard's services are of a consistent high quality
- › comprehensively address the complex issues that arise during telephone calls and web chats
- › address the diverse needs of our diverse communities.

The training course is 78 hours in total and includes a two day Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST). ASIST is the internationally-recognised gold standard training for suicide

intervention and has been an invaluable addition to our volunteer training program. Beyond ASIST, the training covers:

- › Switchboard framework and practice
- › Intersectionality
- › What is peer support?
- › Sex work and sex workers
- › Supporting our LGBTI elders
- › Coming out/Inviting in
- › Transgender, gender diverse and non-binary people
- › Relationships
- › Being allies to bi and ace (asexual) people
- › Talking about sex
- › Consent workshop
- › People living with HIV: Positive living Centre
- › Recognising and responding to family violence
- › Safety planning for people experiencing family violence and suicidality
- › Boundaries of your role
- › Frequent callers and abusive callers
- › Policies and procedures
- › Self care as a volunteer.

ENHANCED VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

This year we significantly increased the support available to our teleweb volunteers. Our existing system of peer-led volunteer support and regular group supervision from our skilled Volunteer Supervisor (now renamed as the Teleweb Program Manager) has been enhanced by support from our new Team Leaders – new staff whose responsibilities include immediate support and debriefing to volunteers on shift. This enhances the quality of the volunteer experience, enables ongoing learning and strengthens our service quality and clinical governance, including in relation to the high and increasing number of calls involving mental health concerns, suicidality and family violence.

Our teleweb volunteers consistently report enjoying not only the opportunity to contribute to their communities by helping

What's it like to volunteer on the phones at Switchboard?

I was initially drawn to volunteer with *Switchboard* as I thought volunteering as a peer supporter would be a great way to support the LGBTIQ+ community with a real and tangible impact. Since then, I have found volunteering such a challenging and rewarding experience and I have learnt so much about our beautiful and diverse community in a much more direct way than many people ever get the chance to – an opportunity I am so grateful for. One of my most memorable calls was one where the caller just wanted to talk about a recent breakup they were still grieving over. They weren't particularly distressed or needing any specific advice, but for me, it really highlighted the role of peer supporters; just giving people space to talk about what's going on in their life and offering an attentive and empathetic ear.

Riley, Switchboard QLife volunteer

deliver our services, but also that group supervision and regular professional development inspire both personal and professional growth. Our professional development sessions are open to all Switchboard volunteers, and this year included:

- › Anti Racist and De-colonial Practices in Mental Health
- › Dementia Awareness Training
- › Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST)
- › Intersex Inclusion by Toni Briffa, Intersex Human Rights Australia.

MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AT

The collective experience of 28 years providing phone-based support to LGBTIQ+ communities remains at the heart of Switchboard's services and informs much of our other work. Through the phone and webchat services, we meet LGBTIQ+ people, their families, friend and communities "where they are at", and strive always to listen and be there for our callers and web-chatters, helping them feel more connected through us to our diverse LGBTIQ+ communities.

FEEDBACK FROM CALLERS AND WEB-CHATTERS USING THE TELEWEB SERVICE

Switchboard's callers and web-chatters are invited to give anonymous feedback after contact with the service.

"I really enjoyed the experience. It was relieving in a way where I can actually connect to a person of the LGBTI community. It boosted my confidence, answered a lot of questions and they were super friendly and nice. I felt safe saying whatever."

"Going to bed now but man you were nice. Maybe it's because I'm usually feeling a lot shittier whenever I come to QLife but wow your politeness just blows me away. Every single time."

"It was very supportive, and such a relief to be able to talk easily about LGBT issues on a platform that's meant for that, instead of having to explain."

"The operator's deep insight into the coming out experience made me feel less alone. I realise that if they have done it, why can't I! These people are a loving and supportive staff and I really value the work and effort they put into it :)"

"It was friendly and helpful, made me feel like I was getting advice from a knowledgeable and caring community member, didn't have the "lecture" feeling counselling sometimes has."

"It was extremely useful to not have to explain my gender, sexuality and relationship before explaining my circumstance."

1,954 contacts were recorded in March 2019 across the national QLife service. This is the second highest number recorded, with the highest number of recorded contacts being 1,958 in September 2017 (attributed to the negative impact the Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey had on LGBTI communities).

The growth between the beginning of the project (2014) and the period is **297.03%**.

TOP 5 MOST RECORDED ISSUES FOR VICTORIA

Note: does not include "other", "regular callers", "hang up" & "general conversation" categories.

1. Family relationships
2. Loneliness and Isolation
3. Exploring sexual identity
4. Mental health issue
5. Relationship Issues

A total of **4.72%** of respondents identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.



Pride and Connection at every age:

THE OUT & ABOUT PROGRAM

This year marks five years of operations for Out & About (OaA), which began as an LGBTI provider of the Commonwealth funded Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) and is now a leading statewide peer visiting service for older LGBTI people. Our mission is to reduce social isolation and loneliness, by creating community connections and encouraging intergenerational friendships, and through building the capacity of mainstream organisations to support elders in our communities.

THE COMMUNITY VISITOR SCHEME

This year the number of people supported through our CVS-funded program grew by one third on previous years. For the second year running, we provided an end-of-year luncheon at the fabulous Hotel Windsor for visit recipients and their volunteer visitors, who traveled from Cobram, Geelong, Wonthaggi and across Melbourne to attend. For many program recipients, this was their first gathering with other LGBTI seniors,

and a wonderful time was had by all. We are grateful to *Lesbians Incorporated* and the *Vic Bears* for their support of this event.

BROADENING OUR REACH

In June we were thrilled to be successful in obtaining a major RACV grant to scale up and expand our OaA work. This funding enables greater access to OaA, through broadening the relatively restrictive eligibility criteria for entry into our CVS-funded program. This has allowed us to open up 30 additional OaA places to all socially isolated older LGBTI Victorians aged over 60.

PARTNERING WITH MORE MAINSTREAM SERVICES

We were also excited this year to obtain *Victorian Department of Health and Human Services* funding to share our learnings from Switchboard and OaA's work with LGBTI elders through partnerships mainstream services. This pilot project is a diversity extension of DHHS's Strengthening Seniors Inclusion Pilot

Program, and will see OaA staff working with mainstream aged care services to build their knowledge and skills working inclusively to support older LGBTI people.

OUR ELDERS RIGHT TO A QUALITY OF LIFE

After a tumultuous half-year fighting for our re-funding (see next page), OaA is now going from strength to strength. Switchboard staff and volunteers are proud to support our elders when it comes to addressing discrimination and elder abuse, finding community connections and relief from social isolation, and providing access to aged care services. For as one of our OaA volunteers recently said about the older person she visits, "She deserves a quality of life - right to the very end of her life." As we all do. We need pride and connection at every age.

CASE STUDY

Clynton, a lovely gentleman in his 70s, tells many wonderful stories from his earlier life working as a butler and a flight attendant. In 2017 Out and About staff matched Clynton with his volunteer Haydn, who has visited Clynton at least fortnightly ever since - about 50 visits so far! The pair love to catch up for a coffee, or to see a film or play. Memorably, they attended the 2017 and 2018 *Coming Back Out Balls*. These wonderful events at the Melbourne Town Hall are organised by All the Queen's Men and Val's LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care to celebrate LGBTI seniors. Clynton came this year in drag with assistance from Haydn and his friend Justin, a previous OaA volunteer.

Haydn and Clynton both gain a lot from their friendship, introducing each other to wider circles of friends and networks over the years. Their friendship featured recently in a short ABC Life documentary on intergenerational friendships in the LGBTI community, and will soon be featured by the RACV publications. Haydn and Clynton are both highly valued members of our OaA community, and a wonderful example of the intergenerational connections that OaA aims to foster.

IMAGE: Clynton at the Coming Back Out Ball. Featured in the Guardian Australia, October 2018.





IMAGE: Switchboard staff, Board members and Out and About Volunteers with Honorable Minister for Senior Australians and Aged Care, Ken Wyatt.

SAVING OUT AND ABOUT: THE STORY OF A GREAT COMMUNITY WIN

Just days before Out and About highly-anticipated Windsor Hotel luncheon last year, we heard that our service (then entirely funded by the CVS program) had lost two thirds of its funding. We were devastated and OaA's future seemed grim. We decided to do everything we could to keep the program going, and fight for the decision to be reversed. Seeing our elders and volunteers enjoying their lunch together just a few days later strengthened our resolve.

We heard that several longstanding CVS-funded programs were in the same situation, after a directive that CVS funding should be spread more widely and new providers given a go. Drastically reduced funding meant that few programs would be tenable, and on 24 December Minister Ken Wyatt announced a review into the grants process to ensure it had been properly implemented.

OaA Program Manager Ada Castle reached out to other LGBTI CVS providers, discovering that several faced similar challenges, including losing funded places to mainstream providers. It became clear we needed to send a very strong message about the importance of LGBTI organisations delivering programs in our own communities.

OaA Outreach Officer Meredith Butler produced a briefing paper that became the backbone of our campaign, arguing that LGBTI references in the National Aged Care Standards provide strong evidence for our program, and linking re-funding OaA with the government's own agenda around diversity and inclusion in aged care. Many people became our champions, while others told us to give the funding up as lost. The wonderful Toni Paynter became the voice of clients and volunteers in the

campaign. "Keep at it like a terrier," Toni told CEO Joe Ball, and that's what we did.

We first announced the cut at our January Midsumma event, asking people to write, email and tweet Minister Wyatt. Our friends at Drummond Street, Thorne Harbour Health, Transgender Victoria, the National LGBTI Health Alliance and Rainbow Families Victoria gave us wonderful support, and pressure began to mount. By late January, we started getting media traction, beginning with Switchboard friend /ally Dean Arcuri at Joy 94.9 and *Queering the Air* at 3CR. We went national in the Guardian and the national queer media, and were on international web site Gay Star News. All the while Meredith and Ada worked tirelessly to ensure no client / visit recipient was negatively during this time.

We kept the pressure up as January ticked into February, all the while seeking a meeting with Minister Wyatt. Then we heard who had received our lost funds: an interstate mainstream provider, who planned to "visit" recipients via Skype calls from non-LGBTI staff. Over half our recipients have complex needs living with mental illness, disability, dementia, survived stroke and more. This model was so far from what our recipients needed, that we decided to ask the provider if they would broker the services back to Switchboard. The mainstream provider was keen, but made an offer that would see them keeping two thirds of the funding as administrative fees, among other requirements. We decided to walk away.

With the March federal election looming, Switchboard approached the ALP. Then we had two game-changing media wins: a story in the leading seniors newspaper, and on *Radio National Drive*. Patricia Karvelas interviewed Joe and Toni, who shared:

"I live on my own and like a lot of trans people, am petrified of the general population because they refuse to try and understand us, we nearly all have had a lot

of trauma getting to the point that we are at, it is a huge effort to finally come out, I came out in my sixties. You pick up on the fact that you are not accepted by most people. I wouldn't feel comfortable going to a mainstream service. There is so many things they could do that would trigger your past traumas and they would not even realise it.

"You only feel comfortable when you know the visitor has an appreciation, a very deep appreciation of what you have gone through. The visitors (In Out & About) are queer themselves, so while they are usually younger, they have still had the same kind of experiences, they know where you have come from. "

On 4 March, shadow Aged Care Minister Julie Collins promised Toni, Joe and a room full of OaA volunteers and Switchboard Board members and staff that the ALP would refund our service if elected. We were elated at the announcement and Julie Collins engagement with our community, but didn't stop there. An ALP win looked likely, but we knew we needed to win on both sides of the political aisle – thank goodness we did as the ALP didn't win the 2019 national election!

Soon after, Minister Wyatt accepted our invitation to meet. On 22 March our Chair Sarah Marlowe stood with Joe outside our office, anxiously awaiting the Minister's arrival, while Toni and another gathering of our staff, Board and volunteers waited nervously inside. We were so relieved when the Minister announced the full re-funding of our service, and thrilled with his empathy for our concerns – connecting it to his own experiences of marginalisation as an Aboriginal person – as well as his willingness to speak frankly about the regrettable decision to defund us.

Our thanks to the Minister and to Julie Collins for their support, and our deepest gratitude to everyone who helped us achieve this wonderful community win.



Stepping up for LGBTIQA+ people

AFFECTED BY FAMILY VIOLENCE

w|respect

w|respect is a specialist LGBTIQ family violence service funded by the Victorian Government since 2017 to support people in LGBTIQ communities and their families affected by family violence, and to build the capacity of mainstream services.

w|respect is a partnership of four LGBTIQ organisations who bring specialisations in community support that are critical to the service: *Queerspace* (supported by drummond street services), *Thorne Harbour Health* (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), *Transgender Victoria* and *Switchboard*.

This year Switchboard worked with our w|respect partners to promote the service, including to potential referrers in the mainstream system, focused on building our own capacity to respond to family violence across our services, and engaged with mainstream providers to increase their understanding of LGBTIQ family violence. From July 2019, Switchboard began providing the after hours phone service of w|respect.

Any LGBTIQ person or their family or friends who are affected by family violence can contact w|respect directly on 1800 LGBTIQ during business hours, Monday to Friday. After hours counselling is available on Wednesday from 5pm to 11pm, and on Saturday and Sunday from 10am to 10pm. Services working with LGBTIQ communities, their families or friends who are affected by family violence can refer people for intake and referral on phone 1800 LGBTIQ.

More information is available at www.withrespect.org.au

For decades we have been there for LGBTIQA+ people wanting someone to talk to about their most intimate relationships. We have listened on the phone while people shared their struggles: as parents and as children, as partners and as lovers, as elders and as chosen family. And many have shared with us that too often, these relationships are marred by emotional, financial and physical violence – just as they are across all communities. Likewise in visiting with our elders we have heard about (and respond when needed) various types of abuse, including elder abuse both historical and present.

Unfortunately, for many years there have been too few safe referral and support options, with no specialist LGBTIQ+ family violence services, nor meaningful LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the mainstream family violence sector.

In 2016 the Victorian Royal Commission into Family violence released findings including that:

- › LGBTIQ people are not only more likely to experience family violence but less likely to recognise, report and receive appropriate support in response.
- › LGBTIQ people are less likely to seek support due to a lack of appropriate crisis accommodation, few perpetrator referral options, distrust of police and other services, and legal and practical discrimination
- › The mainstream family violence sector must consult with the LGBTIQ community to extend or modify existing frameworks to target the LGBTIQ population.

Since 2017 Switchboard has had a renewed focus on tackling family violence experienced by LGBTIQA+ people. This was enormously strengthened this year with the appointment of Teleweb and Family Violence Programs Manager Libby Jamieson, who brings a wealth of experience, greatly strengthening our practice in relation to family violence across all programs, including through our teleweb volunteer training. Libby and CEO Joe Ball have also shared our knowledge with mainstream providers this year, speaking on LGBTIQA+ family violence and inclusion in various forums including the Domestic Violence Victoria Specialist Family Violence Services Rainbow Tick Community of Practice

Working together to save lives

OUR SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Switchboard's work has always encompassed supporting members of our communities experiencing mental distress including thoughts of suicide. We stepped up this work in February this year with the establishment of our Suicide Prevention Program. The program is building on work begun after the devastating loss of Ingrid Zhang, Switchboard's beloved Volunteer Coordinator and long-term volunteer, who died by suicide in 2018.

The Suicide Prevention Program is multi-layered, and includes research, training, community and partnership activities to:

- › support healing and reduce risk of further suicides after Ingrid's loss
- › research what it means to provide evidence-based support to LGBTIQ+ communities in the wake of suicide loss
- › increase our staff and volunteers' skills in preventing suicide through evidence-based skills training
- › research the conditions that contribute to distress amongst LGBTIQ+ communities and can lead to suicide
- › improve mainstream approaches to suicide prevention and support, to better meet our communities' needs.

Suicide prevention is complex work, we are grateful for the active support of leading academics in suicide prevention and "postvention" – a term for activities that promote healing and prevent risk after a person's death by suicide.

RECOVERY, HEALING AND SUPPORT

A critical part of program is our ongoing work to support recovery and healing of the Switchboard community after Ingrid's death – our "postvention" response. Postvention work also recognises that those bereaved by a person's loss due to

suicide – their friends, family members, community members and co-workers, for example – may experience trauma, depression, complicated grief, substance misuse and increased risk of suicide long after the loss of a loved one, and puts supports in place in response.

At Switchboard, our postvention activities have included providing counselling for affected members of our community, creating formal and informal space for reflection on Ingrid's loss, and an emerging partnership with bereavement support group provider *Support After Suicide*.

SUICIDE POSTVENTION AND PREVENTION RESEARCH

Alongside this work, we are actively researching what it means to provide evidence-based postvention responses within LGBTIQ+ community organizations, community groups or specialist programs in mainstream organizations, in response to a death by suicide of an LGBTIQ+ person.

Research will involve conducting interviews with people associated with Switchboard and the broader LGBTIQ+ community who have been affected by Ingrid's loss, and findings documented and incorporated into our postvention work. Our research is also shedding light on the complex social, material and economic conditions that contribute to mental distress for individuals in LGBTIQ+ communities and can lead to suicide.

IMPROVING OUR SKILLS IN SUICIDE PREVENTION

A central aspect of our Suicide Prevention Program is the roll-out of two-day ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) to Switchboard staff and volunteers, and the training of three staff and a long-standing, committed Switchboard volunteer to become certified ASIST trainers.

ASIST is an internationally-recognised, evidence-based model for suicide prevention developed by LivingWorks. The training teaches participants how to engage with a person experiencing suicidal thoughts, or to intervene with someone who has taken steps toward suicide, and provides them with tools to ensure the person is connected with necessary, appropriate and acceptable supports. ASIST is now a required part of our induction training for teleweb volunteers and all staff, and is also available to our Out And About volunteers.

HELPING CREATE SUICIDE-SAFER COMMUNITIES

Switchboard has also been working closely with LivingWorks to help develop an ASIST training model more suitable for LGBTIQ+ communities. This partnership and our broader awareness-raising work through the program is helping LGBTIQ+ people start potentially life-saving conversations about suicide, and putting suicide safety in the hands of our community.

Switchboard's program is part of the *National Suicide Prevention Trial*, supported by the *North Western Melbourne Primary Health Network*, whose area of focus is LGBTIQ+ people as a priority population. This work is also supported by the Pride Foundation and GLOBE Community Grants.

Queer, trans and intersex people of colour (QTIPoC) and Switchboard practice and governance:

A JOURNEY AND A COMMITMENT

SWITCHBOARD'S QTIPoC PROJECT

Our Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour (QTIPoC) Project was established in 2017 with funding through the Victorian Department of Multicultural Affairs, with the very broad aim of supporting greater equity for LGBTIQ+ people from multicultural and multi-faith communities and people of colour within and beyond Switchboard's programs.

THIS YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS

Working closely with our CEO and program managers, QTIPoC Project Coordinator Caroline Ridler – with support from a skilled Project Advisory Group and Steering Committee – this year reviewed and strengthened our policies and processes in relation to recruitment and support of staff and volunteers, and ensured training for our staff and volunteers in intersectional and self-reflective approaches to our work. A particular highlight was a training by Maddee Clark, Yugambeh writer, editor, and curator, on Anti-racist and De-colonial Practices in Mental Health, attended by staff, volunteers and several Board members.

Caroline also presented at the LGBTIQ Women's Health Conference (July 2018) and at the Australian GLBT Multicultural Council's National Conference (September 2018), and produced the *When Love Wins* podcast by and about the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people of colour during and after the 2017 Australian Marriage Law postal survey. The podcast will be launched in November 2019 to correspond with the two-year anniversary of the Yes vote.

A JOURNEY AND A COMMITMENT

Caroline's work and this training contributed greatly to Switchboard's thinking and commitment to intersectional, anti-racist and decolonising approaches to our work, and to QTIPoC communities as a priority population in future program development. This commitment requires ongoing processes of training, reflection

and review, as we seek to better understand and implement these values and practices across our work, our program priorities and our governance.

INTERSECTIONALITY

This term was first used in the 1980s by academic and civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw. It is the idea that we all have many different interconnected identities, including around gender, sexuality, race, ability, class and faith. When discrimination is experienced through multiple identities, oppression is compounded, often resulting in isolation from multiple communities with and potential impacts on health and wellbeing. The implications for Switchboard's work are many, not least that our volunteers are trained to understand the ways in which as LGBTIQ+ "peer" workers they may or may

not share our callers' and beneficiaries' struggles and their strengths.

ANTI-RACISM

This concept goes beyond "equity" or "inclusion", recognising that in a society deeply structured and permeated by racism, it is more meaningful to be anti-racist than to claim being (like a certain US president) "not racist". Anti-racism is a commitment to work against racism wherever you encounter it, including within yourself. An oft-cited definition is: *"of anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably."* — NAC International Perspectives: Women and Global Solidarity.



IMAGE: Amapo Leota Lu and Caroline at AGMC conference 2018



IMAGE: QTIPoC Race and Community Care event 2018

The Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre has produced a resource for non-profits wishing to work in anti-racist ways, and says about anti-racism that *some people "may perceive the prefix "anti" as focusing on the negative, or likely to create opposition or conflict. For some, the prefix may conjure up images of public protests and violent clashes. While anti-racism does call for and include public protest and vocal opposition, it comprises much more than this as well, including learning, listening, creating community collaboratively in a broad range of ways and places: role-modelling, refusal to participate/perpetuate, and so on. Anti-racism is strong, and it is compassionate."* The work at Switchboard to onboard an anti-racism framework is complex, and includes training and support for reflection and courageous conversations: an ongoing and multilayered process.

DECOLONISATION

There are many ways that organisations can support and practice decolonisation, described by Badimaya/Yamatji academic Carol Dowling as a way for non-Indigenous Australians to genuinely acknowledge the trauma inflicted upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through colonialism. "Decolonisation is about repairing damage. We can't do it alone," Dowling said at a WA Decolonising Settler Cities symposium in 2017. *"Non-Indigenous people have to do it with us, because when they learn about this colonial history, they learn not to ever repeat it. And it gets into their consciousness, it gets into their veins, and that's when we can start to have a proper relationship from then on."*

The implications for Switchboard practice are many: from the content of our training for our non-Indigenous volunteers which helps them to respond with cultural awareness to the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who access our teleweb services, to our outreach strategies, partnerships, policies and practices.

This year the Board committed to undertaking Switchboard's first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), as part of our Strategic Plan 2018-2023. The timeframe will be set by the 2019-20 Board. The RAP process was developed by Reconciliation Australia (RA), and provides a framework, as RA says, for organisations to support national reconciliation and achieve their own vision for a more just, equitable and productive organisation.

QTIPoC COMMUNITIES: AN ONGOING SWITCHBOARD PRIORITY

Another watershed this year was a clear commitment by the Board to funding a senior QTIPoC Programs Manager role at 0.8 EFT, to further the work achieved by our initial QTIPoC Project, and to help to plan and implement strategies to embed QTIPoC communities as a priority population across all parts of our strategic plan.

The first step was a consultation by the Board with the passionate, skilled and experienced members of our QTIPoC Project Advisory Group and Steering Committee, to explore what this could look like, and to shape a position description and focus for the new role. Our thanks to Caroline Ridler, Rashmi

Kumar, Fahad Jawaid, Lorena Solin, Ishwar Singh, Monique Hameed (Board member), Lisa Sarmas (Board member), Dawn Dangkomen and Bexx Djentuh-Davis for generously sharing their expertise and ideas.

LOOKING FORWARD

At the time of writing, we are recruiting to fill the new QTIPoC Programs Manager position. The new role combines development and delivery of peer-led support programs for targeted QTIPoC communities, including providing advice and building organisational capacity to ensure our programs and activities effectively address the mental health and wellbeing of QTIPoC communities who need and use Switchboard services, in line with our strategic priorities.

We are also delighted that Monique, Rashmi and Ishwar have nominated for the incoming Switchboard Board, bringing their lived and professional experience to support this work at Board level. They join long-standing Board member Kenny Yu and incoming Deputy Chair Tony Lee to make a total of five of our 12 Board members being people of colour. We look forward to their leadership and diverse perspectives in this and all of the next Board's work.



Treasurer's report

The 2019 financial year represented a significant amount of growth for Switchboard whilst still maintaining a net surplus of \$50,445. The recruitment of several new staff to bolster the organization's service delivery resulted in the total spend on salaries and wages increase by 86% to \$413,692. This rise in staff costs was mostly matched by a 39% increase in Government grant money, totaling \$700,834 for the year.

In this, my first year as Switchboard Treasurer, I worked closely with the Board and CEO to strengthen the organisation's financial systems to ensure greater efficiency, better management and ensure accountability to our funders and regulatory bodies. We also transitioned to a new and improved accounting and payroll system, introduced monthly financial reporting to the Board and recruited a part-time Finance

and Administration Officer to replace the external contracted bookkeeper.

We anticipate Switchboard's growth to continue into the 2020 financial year. Forecasting of the Organisation's financial position and performance over the next 12 months has been completed and a net surplus of approximately \$150,000 is expected.

I have thoroughly enjoyed the first year of my term as Treasurer of Switchboard. My focus has been and will continue to be the effective and efficient management of the organisation's finances to enable the ongoing delivery of invaluable counselling and support services to our community.

Blake Leschen
Treasurer



/ Financials

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
INCOME		
Grant Funding Income	700,834	503,342
Department of Health and Human Services (State)	243,056	39,296
Department of Social Service (Federal)	171,574	204,373
QLife funding	158,394	162,500
Multicultural grants	10,000	40,173
Other grants	62,910	
Suicide Prevention Partnership	53,082	
Broadtree grant		25,000
Postal survey grant		30,000
Globe grant	1,818	2,000
Other Income	66,383	75,458
Donations	54,747	66,993
Interest received	1,999	2,560
Training course fees	9,637	5,905
TOTAL INCOME	767,217	578,800

/ Financials

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2019 (CONTINUED)

EXPENDITURE	2019	2018
	\$	\$
Administrative and Operational Expenses	214,715	118,843
Advertising	29,809	20,173
Audit fees	2,550	1,250
Bookkeeping fees	13,971	16,150
Counsellor incentives	26,548	4,033
Computer expenses	15,536	4,158
Counsellor support	19,941	18,254
Donations	2,301	
Functions and events	15,115	10,064
Fundraising expenses		600
Insurance	3,078	849
Interest paid		921
Gifts and entertainment	225	543
Loss on disposal of assets		2,257
Meeting expenses	4,899	1,077
Memberships/subscriptions	438	670
Office supplies		6,611
Postage	4,983	825
Projects	30,236	5,250
Seminars		1,928
Rent	13,049	10,306
Sundry	10,719	2,833
Telephone	5,252	3,815
Travel	16,065	6,276
Amortisation and Depreciation	12,727	1,554
Staff Related Expenses	489,330	266,349
Salaries and wages	413,692	222,373
Superannuation	38,092	20,626
Annual leave	18,897	15,903
Long service leave	5,729	3,006
Time in lieu leave		(4,019)
Professional development	12,920	8,460
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	716,772	386,746
Net surplus/(deficit) attributable to the Association	50,445	192,054

This income statement is extracted from the audited Special Purpose Financial Statements that are to be lodged with the ACNC.

/ Financials

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	703,091	587,930
Prepayments	10,579	11,636
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	713,670	599,566
NON CURRENT ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment"	-	5,066
TOTAL NON-CURRENT ASSETS	-	5,066
TOTAL ASSETS	713,670	604,632
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Trade and other creditors	64,019	15,501
Amounts received in advance	170,503	185,053
Provisions	41,872	22,976
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	276,394	223,530
NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Provisions	9,536	3,807
TOTAL NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES	9,536	3,807
TOTAL LIABILITIES	285,930	227,337
NET ASSETS	427,740	377,295
EQUITY		
Accumulated funds	427,740	377,295
TOTAL EQUITY	427,740	377,295

TOWARDS A VISION SHARED



SWITCHBOARD (VICTORIA) INCORPORATED
A.B.N. 81 367 786 099
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial report of Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated (the Association), which comprises the balance sheet as at 30 June 2019, and the income statement, statement of changes in equity and cash flow statement for the year ended on that date, a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory notes and the statement by the members of the Board.

In my opinion, the financial report of the Association is in accordance with *the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*, including:

- i. giving a true and fair view of the Association's financial position as at 30 June 2019 and of its performance for the year ended; and
- ii. complying with Australian Accounting Standards as per Note 1, *the Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. I am independent of the Association in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to my audit of the financial report in Australia. I have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting and Restriction on Distribution

I draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared to assist Switchboard (Victoria) Incorporated to meet the requirements of the *Australian Charities and Not for Profits Commission Act 2012* and *the Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. My opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Financial Report

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with the financial reporting requirements of the applicable legislation and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of a financial report that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Association's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Entity or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Association's financial reporting process.



Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the registered entity's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the responsible entities.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the responsible entities use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the registered entity's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the registered entity to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal controls that I identify during my audit.

Auditor: Frederik Ryk Ludolf Eksteen **ASIC Registration Number:** 421448

Address: Collins & Co, 127 Paisley Street, FOOTSCRAY VIC 3011

Signature:

Date: 30 August 2019



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