



3 November 2014

President's report

The period since the last AGM, on 1 September 2013, has seen a significant shift in the functioning of OII Australia, with a number of significant achievements, and a range of new partnerships and joint actions.

Demands for consultation, speaking engagements and other activities exceed our capacity to deliver, but even simple reimbursements of time and travel expenses are rarely available. This creates significant opportunity and direct costs – but it's often the case, particularly following announcement of the High Court decision in the NSW Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages v Norrie case, that we need to engage to provide good quality messages. Communication and awareness raising are core goals as an organisation.

Given our limited resources, the board decided to focus our energy on core health issues, in particular the Senate committee report, Involuntary or coerced sterilisation of intersex people in Australia, to promote awareness and encourage implementation. We have also sought to pursue longer term funding goals to deal with our capacity issues.

External activities

Policy development and advocacy work included:

- The [publication of a ground-breaking Senate committee report](#) on *Involuntary and coerced sterilisation of intersex people in Australia*; we again had a key role. We've endeavoured to secure the implementation of this report; a government response is still awaited.
- We have witnessed the first ever [cross-party speeches in the Senate](#) on intersex health and well-being, which took place on 25 March 2014. This was secured through dialogue with the Senate's Community Affairs References Committee.
- Multiple [submissions on health and human rights matters to government and other institutions](#), including on genetic selection, sterilisation, marriage equality, education and more. Our final submission to the Senate sterilisation inquiry was made at the end of August 2013 and published in September 2013.
- Face to face discussions with co-chairs of the Australasian Paediatric Endocrine Group (APEG).
- On a political level, we have met with Senators in the Community Affairs References Committee, the Deputy Leader of the Labor Party and the Shadow Health Minister. At a State level, discussions have taken place with parliamentarians in ACT, NSW and Victoria, and city officials in NSW and Victoria. We have also been fortunate to meet with the US Ambassador, raising issues around travel to the US.
- Discussions have also taken place with State anti-discrimination bodies in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania, and the attorney general of ACT.
- Direct and wide-ranging discussions with Tim Wilson, the Human Rights Commissioner, Megan Mitchell the Children's Commissioner, and others at the Australian Human Rights Commission. We have also engaged with the Commonwealth government, the ABS, and State health departments in NSW and Victoria.

Awareness raising work included:

- Many awareness raising [events](#) and media around Australia, including a joint presentation to the University of Melbourne Medical Students by Tony Briffa, Garry Warne and other staff of the Royal Children's Hospital.
- Training for police forces and community organisations.
- [Publication](#) of articles by Morgan Carpenter in ABC's The Drum and the Star Observer; a joint article with European activists also appeared in Spiegel International.
- Audio and video interviews of Tony Briffa and Morgan Carpenter.
- Intersex Awareness Day articles kindly published by the Star Observer.
- Participation in the 2014 Newtown Festival on 9 November, ahead of other fairs in 2015.

Peer-support activities included:

- Support to telephone and internet-based intersex persons and parents.

National and State partnerships and collaborations included:

- LGBT/LGBTI partnerships include continued work with the National Health Alliance, new work with ACON, Val's Cafe, and presentations to a national conference on LGBTI Domestic and Family Violence, QLife telephone counselling service, a NSW LGBTI Interagency, NSW Police Force and many others. This work also included group participation in the [Mardi Gras parade](#) alongside the AISSGA, and an improvement in relationships with many Sydney trans communities in large part due to the work of Candice Cody.
- Action around the NSW Registrar of Births Deaths and Marriages v Norrie case saw engagement with the NSW Registrar, their counsel, and also engagement on an *amicus curiae* submission.
- With ACON we published [print and digital resources](#), designed for allies, parents and service providers. We retain full rights over this material.
- With [Pride in Diversity](#), we publishing a first [employers' guide to intersex](#); the guide has been well received nationally and internationally, and we believe the guide has international significance. We share rights to this material.
- The integration of accurate information on intersex people and our issues into new materials published by the [Safe Schools Coalition Australia](#), the [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#), and many others.
- We have grown our engagement with disability organisations. The firm support of organisations like [People with Disability Australia](#) assisted in our engagement with the Senate Community Affairs References Committee in the inquiry on sterilisation, and we have recently reciprocated in supporting submissions to the UN Committee Against Torture.
- A major presentation at a mental health conference on intersectionalities and structural violence. This included presentations on disability, mental health and race.

International work:

International work helps to promote solidarity and collaboration within the intersex movement, and it also has a role in promoting international awareness of developments in Australia - including promotion of the implementation of the 2013 Senate committee report.

- Participation in the third [international intersex forum](#) in Malta, which saw the international community issue a detailed joint statement on the broadest range of issues yet. The period has seen rapidly increasing international co-operation within the intersex movement, and OII Australia has played a role in that process.
- Due to the AGM timing, the period since the last AGM has also seen our participation in the fourth international intersex forum, in Mexico City, and our election to the position of "alternate intersex secretariat" within ILGA. MULABI, "Espacio Latinoamericano de Sexualidades Y Derechos", is the lead "intersex secretariat in ILGA; both positions were elected unopposed.
- The period has also seen increased co-operation between intersex and LGBT/LGBTI organisations. We have participated in actions around two meetings of the UN Human Rights Council, and a consultation of the Council of Europe. Tony participated in LGBTI discussions

in Istanbul on action with the UN. Morgan was also invited to speak to a Scottish conference on LGBTI human rights in the Commonwealth prior to the Commonwealth Games.

- Participation in human rights discussions with and including UN agencies. This includes collaborative work with other organisations on reform of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD).
- Preparation and delivery of statements on intersex human rights to the UN Human Rights Council, and participation in progress towards a UN Human Rights Council resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- Our overseas work during this financial year was wholly funded by ARC International, ILGA, and the Scottish Equality Network; each are LGBTI human rights NGOs.

Capacity-building work included:

- The exploration of funding opportunities in key States, the Commonwealth, and from international philanthropic sources.
- Project funding was secured for the first time, with delivery of two projects, a third under way, and two more shortly to commence at the end of the financial year.
- Successful and unsuccessful funding applications. Applications were made to funders including the Victoria Department of Health, the City of Sydney, and an international philanthropist. We didn't secure the Victorian grant, but information on the other submissions is still awaited.
- Available board members met for a strategy discussion day in September 2014. It's interesting to note that all board members have still never met each other face-to-face.

Communications and community development work:

We have sought to improve dialogue with members through the creation of a members' mailing list containing all members. Communication can be further improved, and ideas are welcome on how this should be done.

One means of doing so is to create more opportunities for face-to-face meetings. In the coming week, we will start our first regular monthly meetings in Sydney, in partnership with the AISSGA, Twenty10, and the City of Sydney. Over time, we hope that this will develop further in other cities.

Internal activities

Internally, we seek to move from a wholly volunteer-based organisation towards one that has staff and an advisory board. This has brought some tensions, not least due to a high workload, different capacities amongst board members, and some skill deficits. Managing and distributing workloads has been challenging at times. We have particular bottlenecks around drafting formal submissions and funding applications, and peer support, as well as awareness raising articles and presentations. Nevertheless, we've made substantial progress in a difficult climate.

We have welcomed new members, and a new board appointed at our first AGM with 3 founding directors and 3 new directors. We've seen the retirement of our founding president, and our tributes to her included a nomination leading to her being [shortlisted](#) for the Australian Human Rights Commission's Community Individual Award. One new board member stepped down during the year.

Morgan, Tony and Gina have effectively worked part time for OII Australia on an unpaid basis; Gina until her retirement, and Tony since election, both on 1 September 2013. This is a significant burden at times, and one that imposes costs on those involved. I'd like to thank Tony and Gina, and other board members, for all of their time and contributions.

We have strengthened our internal governance with improved documentation and timely externally audited accounts which will be brought to the AGM for review. An initial focus on

compliance issues in Spring 2013 helped us to later secure Deductible Gift Recipient Status as a Public Benevolent Institution in February 2014.

In terms of transparency, we have published online a [list of board members](#) for the first time. We have also published an annual report for the first time (our [2013 Annual Information Statement](#)). All officers of the company have had equal access to a secure shared folder on Dropbox since September 2013, for the duration of their tenure; this contains all financial and other compliance data, and access codes to all accounts held in the name of the organisation.

We have undertaken funded project work for the first time, and we have completed 3 of our first 4 service delivery contracts, with some labour costs paid as part of those projects. Project work means that, for the first time, we've raised enough funds to pay our running costs. We now also have a record of financial donations to the company.

Our website and social media resources continue to perform well. We have over 600 articles published on our website. We've become a major international "go to" destination for information on intersex, with links appearing in US and other international media, and from Australian governments' departments, universities and other institutions and organisations. To maintain our resources, we back up our site daily, and we use a free cloud hosting service which helps to ensure high levels of availability. All members are invited to contribute material in accordance with our [policy](#) for published material.

Closing statement: looking forward

While we lack the extraordinary legislative achievements of the previous year, this period has seen solid achievements, and continued functioning above capacity. It is unlikely that we will be able to maintain the same level of activity in the coming year.

Strategy and focus areas will be a matter for the incoming board, but within the identified capacity constraints there are clear opportunities and issues apparent:

- We have opportunities to progress implementation of the Senate report through national and international advocacy work.
- Peer support activities ideally need to be formalised, with proper record keeping to support handover and distribution within the board team. Over time, it may be helpful to identify opportunities to fund professional peer support work, likely through partnership arrangements.
- Community development work and participation in public events is anticipated to grow the intersex community, and they may also lead towards possible gains in organisational capacity.