



Annual Report 2017/2018

Rainbow Wellington AGM 17 April 2018

Rainbow Wellington has now had two years since the disruptions of 2016, and has with a committed board settled into a solid programme of social events, lobbying, publicity, commentary, financial support and engagement. In particular we have had greater involvement with social media than ever before – our Facebook page has become a hive of activity – and we’ve had renewed contacts with other Rainbow groups in our community.

This report outlines some of the main activities of Rainbow Wellington over the past year. Financial matters are covered in a separate statement of accounts.

Social Events

At the last AGM there was discussion about the future of our regular monthly drinks because numbers had been falling. However recent attendance at our regular monthly drinks has been good, and we’ve added some new venues (The Fat Angel and Bad Grannies) as well as retained our regulars (S&M, The Fringe Bar). Thanks to Board member Gavin Young for organizing these.

Our regular dinners are still proving popular: there was a Midwinter dinner on 1 July at Cin Cin, a Pizza Banquet at Mediterranean Food Warehouse in Newtown, 9 September 2017; and Christmas dinner 9 Dec at the Big Elephant Restaurant. A survey of our membership supported the social venues we’ve been using.

We have also started a series of less formally organized events such as luncheon at Malcolm’s country estate in Greytown in February and attendance at “Pardon me Alan Turing” at Bats Theatre in March.

Community Events

A great success of last year was the Election Forum at St Andrews on 22 August, attended by 80 people, with a great diversity of ages and interests. All parties standing candidates in the Wellington area were invited to attend, with only the Maori Party and NZ First not managing to send a representative.

The 2018 Wellington Pride Festival provided an opportunity for us to network further within our community and stimulate important discussions. Notable were the successful Education Forum at St Andrews on the Terrace (27 Feb) which brought together a large number of young people, teachers, parents and community organisers to talk about LGBTQI+ issues in Schools.

Board member Jem Traylen led a discussion on 'A Fresh Start of Human Rights' at St Andrews on 7 March, dovetailing with an event organized by the Human Rights Commission that same night. This year is the important 10 year anniversary of the report "To be who I am" which called for inclusion of trans people in the Human Rights Act – something which is still to happen. Jem has also been very active in organizing events for the Trans Day of Visibility (31 March) and Trans Day of Remembrance (20 November).

A queer youth networking event "Queer Pillows" was run by Rainbow Wellington member Yuval Zalk jointly with Uni-Q Massey on 16 August, to bring young LGBTQI+ people together for discussion and support.

Publicity

The community events we organize are an important opportunity for us to publicise ourselves and our work. In addition we had our regular stall at the Out in the Park festival (24 February), and RW members took part in the Wellington International Pride Parade (10 March). Board member Lauren Wilkerson designed a new pamphlet about Rainbow Wellington for distribution at events.

Our regular newsletter is the main way that we communicate with our members, and Board member and newsletter editor Jim Waters has done a fine job of keeping us all informed. We are interested always in ways to improve our communications, and in any new types of content we might include in the newsletter.

Our website continues to be the way many people find us – including the media who come to us for comment and community organisations coming to us for help and information.

The biggest growth in our online presence has been in Social Media however, with Board members Lauren Wilkerson and Jem Traylen along with volunteer Yuval Zalk regularly posting comments and links to articles on our Facebook page, and monitoring the discussions among people posting on the page.

Political Lobbying

We have continued Rainbow Wellington's longstanding role in political lobbying over the past year. Our Election Forum was an important part of continuing that dimension to our activities, but there have been many other activities too.

We have authored submissions on bills before Parliament, and have twice appeared at Select Committees in the past year.

On 7 December 2017 Tony Nightingale and Richard Arnold appeared at the Justice Select Committee to speak to Rainbow Wellington's submission on the Bill to expunge historical offences for gay men. We were pleased to see this Bill recently pass its final reading and pass into law – but are disappointed that it does not include compensation for those affected, that it requires an application to be made, and that it does not allow recognition that other offences not covered by the bill may have been committed due to the social stigma associated with homosexuality.

On 4 April 2018 Jem Traylen appeared before the Governance and Administration Select Committee on the Births, Deaths, Marriages, and Relationships Registration Bill regarding provision to allow transgender people to alter the gender recorded on their birth records.

At the end of the first 100 days of the new Labour Government the Board wrote to the Prime Minister outlining our major hopes, goals and concerns as an LGBTQI+ community organization. We've been advised that our letter has been passed on to ministers with relevant portfolios.

We continue to lobby MPs from other parties inside and outside the governing coalition, and Jem Traylen has been arranging meetings with party representatives to discuss our goals.

Other Networking

In September 2017 members of the Board were invited, along with other members of the Rainbow Community in Wellington, to attend a networking event at the United States Deputy Chief of Mission's residence. This invitation generated some strong discussion within the Board about whether we should accept the invitation, given the state of the United States policies towards transgender people in the military. Three board members did attend, but we made clear to the Deputy Chief of Mission our disappointment at the Trump administration's policies (especially referring to the transgender military ban).

Board member Lauren Wilkerson has until recently organized the LGBTQI+ corporate network inside the financial company Mercer (where she was working). On 28 February she hosted a corporate networking event at Mercer's premises, as an opportunity to launch further discussions among corporate and government sector organisations.

The Board has met with representatives from InsideOUT, Outer Spaces, the NZ AIDS Foundation, Rainbow Auckland and ILGA Oceania as we seek to expand and renew our network of contacts in the local community.

We are regularly approached for comment by the media, with Jem Traylen and Richard Arnold having both appeared in radio and television interviews and quoted in the print and online media. Our input has been sought on issues such as the non-inclusion of gender identity questions in the census, and on transgender issues such as ongoing discrimination and the length of waiting times for medical assistance.

It is vital that we retain our visibility in the media, and that we be seen as a source of informed and relevant commentary.

Funding and Sponsorship

As a registered charity we are able to accept donations and disburse funds for causes relevant to our community. We have not in recent years raised much funding beyond our regular individual and corporate membership fees and some donations. Nevertheless this has enabled us to make a number of grants over the past year. In particular we have made grants to the following people/organisations:

- Artist Sian Torrington for Queer and Trans * Drawing Classes (10 places), 2x\$850 = \$1700 (Oct 2017-Mar 2018);
- Dare You Theatre Company to assist the performance of the play “Pardon Me Alan Turing”, \$400, (Fringe Festival, BATS Theatre, Feb 2018) – Funds were made available to assist with promotion and travel and accommodation for the actors and crew coming from Auckland;
- The Drag Kings, \$850 for their production of “Royal Flush” (Fringe Bar, March 2018) - including the \$350 purchase of 10 tickets for people who might not be able to afford to attend;
- ILGA membership payment on behalf of Inside OUT (years 2017 and 2018) (2x150 Euro = 2x\$256=\$512);
- The Pride Youth Ball 2018 at the Wellington Pride Festival - \$500;
- Out Wellington - \$500 for general expenses associated with the 2018 Pride Festival;
- Out Wellington - \$500 to pay for Out in the Park stalls for community organisations.

Membership

Our membership remains steady (50 individuals, 2 business and 4 corporate, compared to 54, 3 and 7 last year). There is scope for growth in all of these categories, and in particular we continue to have too few women and younger people as financial members.

Board Membership

The Board in the past year was made up of Richard Arnold (Chair), Tony Nightingale (Secretary), John Lulich (Treasurer), Gavin Young (Events), Jem Traylen (Communications and Transgender issues), Jim Waters (Newsletter) and Lauren Wilkerson (Communications and Corporate Networking).

Lauren Wilkerson moved to Melbourne in March 2018, and Richard Arnold will be stepping down at the AGM as he prepares to go overseas for an 8 month sabbatical leave.

Patron, Vice-Patron and Honorary President

During 2017 these offices were as agreed at the 2017 AGM:

- Patron: Mayor Justin Lester
- Vice-Patrons: Chris Bishop MP, Kevin Haunui, Rev Susan Jones, Jan Logie MP, Grant Robertson MP, Fran Wilde DNZM QSO
- Honorary President: Rawa Karetai

Looking forward

In our letter to the Prime Minister we identified seven key goals that we have as an organization. While they are not exhaustive, they represent key motivating ideas for the work of Rainbow Wellington in the future, and are a useful list to discuss with our potential allies, with MPs, local government and others.

- **Ending discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community**
Although we have a set of laws that many around the world can only dream of, discrimination remains a reality for many members of our community. We especially seek support for young people as they first come out, and transgender people as they transform their lives. We want to see greater efforts to prevent bullying – particularly in schools and workplaces – and recognition of the risks to mental health our community members face.
- **We seek urgent action to improve the lives of Transgender people**
It's been 10 years since an inquiry by the Human Rights Commission found that "the lives of trans people in New Zealand are marked by discrimination, severe barriers to equitable health services and limited legal and public recognition of who they are" but very little action has been taken since then to improve their lives. The current surgical waiting list – perhaps the world's longest in public healthcare – is a national shame and must be addressed in Budget 2018. The recent appointment of a qualified surgeon also provides a unique opportunity for your government to develop a national centre of excellence in transgender and intersex healthcare.
- **We support restorative moves to right past wrongs**
We made a submission on the draft bill to expunge historical convictions, recognising its limited scope in not addressing convictions for offences resulting from harassment and entrapment (sex in public places, alcohol licensing, public order offences) even if those offences are still illegal today.
- **We support the campaign Ending HIV by the NZ AIDS Foundation**
HIV disproportionately affects our community, with new infections on the rise (244 in 2016) - of which two thirds (164) were men who have sex with men. We are delighted with the funding of Pre-exposure Prophylaxis, but more work needs to be done on continuing the spread the message of how to stay safe.

- **We are concerned for the unrecognised needs of ageing LGBTIQ+ people**
We seek provision of appropriate services to LGBTIQ+ as they age - with the particular risk that people may be forced back into the closet in aged care facilities and rest homes.
- **We support adoption by same-sex partners**
The law relating to the care of children should be modernized to ensure that the widest possible pool of suitable adults, including same-sex couples, is available to provide care (being foster care, short-term guardianship and other forms of custody) to children in need.
- **We seek inclusion of our community in official statistics**
We are very disappointed that despite many years of lobbying by our community we are still being excluded from the census and very little effort is being made to include us in other official statistics.

At the end of the 2017/2018 year Rainbow Wellington is in a good position to continue its role as an active, engaged organization in our local community. We have opportunities to grow in size, to grow in diversity, to strengthen our networks, and to bring other organisations together in our common cause. Rainbow Wellington is ideally placed to coordinate roundtable discussions among the organisations in our community, and help us all work more effectively together.

Best wishes to all our members for the coming year, and thanks for your continuing support

The Rainbow Wellington Board
17 April 2018