

Artistic Support Material

Case Study – The LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club Fostering Safe Communities

'I like to dance, it's great exercise and you don't have to have a partner to go along, and the dance leaders are great. I live with a mild cognitive impairment and coming along to Dance Club has helped my health improve. It's important to get people moving and socialising with each other, especially as they get older. I'm always spruiking it to my networks and encouraging people to come along with me. I just love it.' – Robyn Soxsmith, regular attendee throughout 2021

In 2021, Arts Capital partnered with Meridian (formerly Aids Action Council) and All The Queens Men (ATQM) to deliver 7 successful LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club in person events in Canberra at the Ainslie Arts Centre with support from Seniors Grant Program 2020-2021.

The LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club was programmed as a monthly social dance event for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender people over 55 conceived by ATQM. Dance Club is an enjoyable, informal social event specifically for and accessible to LGBTIQ+ elders, fostering social inclusion, new connections and engagement in healthy physical activity.

Completed activities for the program included:

- 7 in-person events in March, April, May June, July, August, and December (with no events able to go ahead during pandemic related lockdown and risk to attendees in September, October or November as planned)
- 4 online events throughout September and October hosted by ATQM and attended by Canberra Dance Club patrons as well as participants from Victoria, NSW and Queensland
- Monthly meetings with project partners ATQM and Meridian, both in person and online
- Ongoing consultation with Meridian to identify needs among LGBTIQ+ elders to improve events month to month
- Employment of project producer for 10 hours a month to manage the series of events
- Employment of event host and dance captain for each event March - August
- Hosting of All the Queens Men in Canberra to run December event and meet the community
- Media and publicity (ABC National, Canberra Times and Canberra Weekly)

Outcomes

LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club addresses ageism, homophobia, lesbophobia and transphobia by supporting the recreational, artistic and social rights of LGBTIQ+ elders, through creative actions. Central to the project is creating a regular space for LGBTIQ+ elders that is safe and inclusive.

The creative action of dancing encourages and fosters socialising, friendship and a chance for LGBTIQ+ elders to have fun in a safe space. The project helps build and strengthen communities of LGBTIQ+ elders and promotes their visibility. The LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club facilitates the physical, cognitive and emotional benefits that come from regular creative and physical practice.

Key outcomes of this project include:

- Creation of a safe space for LGBTIQ+ Elders (over 55) to express their true, authentic identity
- Opportunity for LGBTIQ+ Elders to meet and connect with other LGBTIQ+ Elders, fostering peer support and social connection
- Development of a committed and regular community of attendees with new attendees every month
- Getting older people moving by providing a fun and healthy physical activity
- Fostering of intergenerational and intersectional connections and respect between elders and allies, friends and family who are also welcome to attend the events
- Promotion of respect for the diversity of the elder population, particularly LGBTIQ+ elders in the broader community
- Connecting elders to community services provided by Meridian and development of respectful relationships and trust between service providers and elders
- Deepened working relationships between all partnership organisations with intent to continue progressing these partnerships in ongoing and meaningful ways and a shared commitment to continue to deliver LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club events in 2022
- Capacity building for A+G to develop community engagement processes
- Collaboration with resident organisation Ausdance ACT by including Dance Club in their 2021 Dance Week program,

Every event attracted a minimum of 30 attendees, half of whom were regular attendees every month and half of whom were new attendees. The regular attendees grew to 2/3 of attendees, demonstrating their enthusiasm for the activity and an increase on previous attendance of one-off LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club presentations.

- We empowered attendees by inviting them to share and lead dance activities, and volunteer to help in the set up and pack up of events, building a community of elders who feel ownership and a deep connection to the program
- A+G partner Meridian was contacted by attendees outside of the event for more information of health services that attendees could access
- With our partner ATQM we were able to deliver on-line Dance Clubs to maintain community connection during periods of lockdown
- A+G and partners have identified opportunities for further community outreach through the Elders Dance Club program.

These key partnerships program with ATQM and Meridian has helped to solidify Arts Capital's reputation as a safe space for diverse and elderly community members to feel

valued and cared for in the Canberra community, surrounding regional neighbours and the broader community of elderly users of Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres spaces. The program has helped build a case for the Elders Dance Club activities nationally as an example of a successful partnership model and case study for successful local delivery of program.