



NEW ILGA OCEANIA CONVENORS

The event that 'broke the internet' last month was the appointment of two First Nations people as ILGA Oceania co-convenors, Vanessa Lee-AhMat (Australia) & Fia'ailetoa Ken Moala (Samoa). Deservedly so, as this was not only a return to an all-indigenous convenor template adopted in ILGA Oceania's 2016-2018 period, but Vanessa Lee-AhMat had the historic distinction of being ILGA Oceania's first Indigenous Australian convenor in ILGA's 42-year old history. Since their appointments in July 2020, Ken and Vanessa have hit the ground running with the ILGA Oceania team. This newsletter provides detail on what is happening in the Pacific and, as we catch up on the yarns, they will become shorter or not.

Check Out What the Media Said!



Upon accepting their positions of ILGA Oceania co-convenors, Vanessa Lee-AhMat and Fia'ailetoa Ken Moala would like to thank the outgoing co-convenors Mani Mitchell and Bess Hepworth for their generosity of time and energy to ILGA Oceania. *It takes every one of us to make the change – in solidarity we stand.*

OCEANIA UPDATE

Like most organisations, ILGA Oceania has been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. We have been forced to make some changes in the schedule for our regional conference. This has included developing an on-line conference this year, which will be prior to our AGM. **We will have confirmation of the dates and registration for the on-line conference and the AGM in the next two weeks.** It is anticipated that there will also be a face-to-face conference at the end of next year (2021) in New Caledonia. **Ooh La La!**

IMPORTANT NOTE

Due to the tight schedule of an on-line conference, anyone who wants to put an issue on the agenda of the 4th ILGA Oceania Regional Conference, especially if it is a proposal for a constitutional change at the AGM [Saturday, 24 October 2020], needs to submit the proposal on the official proposal form:-

DEADLINE: Thursday, 24 September 2020

ONLINE PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORM:

[Click Here!](#)

If it is a constitutional change proposal, it is important to note that there are already some proposals to change the constitution / standing orders which have been put forward by the ILGA Oceania board that could affect your submission, so make sure you review these existing ILGA Oceania board proposals before you submit your contribution:

ILGA OCEANIA BOARD PROPOSALS:

[Click Here!](#)

[For Updates Visit Our Website!](#)



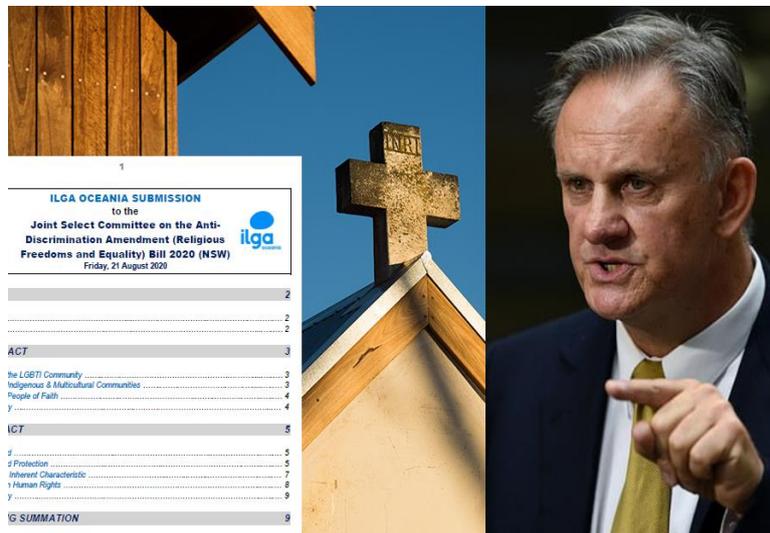
[For Updates Visit ILGA World's Website!](#)

NEWS FROM OCEANIA - PACIFIC NATIONS

AUSTRALIA

Religious Discrimination Bill

Last week (Friday, 21 August 2020) ILGA Oceania made a submission to the NSW Parliament Joint Select Committee, concerning the proposal from Mark Latham ["One Nation" politician in the New South Wales Legislative Council (Upper House) and former Australian Labor Party leader] to add 'religious belief' rights into the NSW anti-discrimination legislation [*Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 (NSW)*]. From a part indigenous / part legal perspective, ILGA Oceania put together a submission to oppose this bill.



[Check Out the Submission!](#)

TONGA

The “Tonga Leiti s Association” (TLA), the only LGBTIQ organisation in Kingdom of Tonga, has been an ILGA Oceania member organisation ever since its formation in 2006.

Due to Covid-19, this organisation’s ordinary core activities have been either postponed or cancelled, e.g. the Nuku’alofa “Drop In” Centre, the Niue outreach program, their school sports anti-bullying/gender inclusiveness campaign, and even the Miss Galaxy Queen Pageant, the core source of revenue for the TLA. At the same time, TLA is shifting its activities towards new responsibilities involving community care such as “Tonga Health Promotion” support programs, food and water and Covid-19 prevention information provision, healthy lifestyle programs like the Zumba Competition, youth and senior harm reduction workshops and even a “Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Environment” endorsed essential service provision program.

Funding has been obtained from the Global Fund, for HIV Awareness Programs in Tonga’s remote Islands, which has cushioned the blow from the loss of income which has threatened the funding the staff’s salary and internal activities costs. However, TLA’s current funding avenues from governmental projects have now gone to priorities set by the government in their own official pandemic response, which often dictates how TLA works.

Cruella Kingnukuturn, the current TLA Vice President, with the organisation for 10 years, has reported that a prolonged pandemic could see LGBT issues in our country lose its popularity, which will eventually affect the TLA’s regular LGBTI-issue focused services. Cruella’s advice to all LGBTI communities is *“We need more voices from the Pacific to raise concern, especially regarding the Covid-19 restrictions where borders were closed. This limitation has affected most members of the LGBT community, but also impacted vulnerable financial sources, e.g. funds.”* Cruella urged donors *“to still have faith in what we are doing as it requires long term planning to pave the way for a healthy future”*.

FIJI

“Youth Champs 4 Mental Health”, founded in 2008, is a youth-led organisation focusing on education and awareness around mental health and suicide prevention in Fiji and the Pacific. Ordinarily, this organisation facilitates counselling, community awareness, education and research programs, with the aim of establishing resilient communities through the development of accessible and inclusive youth-friendly services that are helping young people struggling with mental health difficulties and suicide. “Youth Champs” also works closely with government departments to organise national events, establish referral pathways with stakeholders and advocate for youth development.

Covid-19 has had some social the advantages, like more time spent with families and an increased awareness of the importance of time management. These have compensated for the loss of culture and family activities like communal fishing, farming etc. However, “Youth Champs” are often now presented with cases of abuse, anxiety and depression from people in quarantine and can only now, due to isolation precautions, provide support and resources remotely. The LGBTIQ sex worker community has particularly been left out of the community normal mainstream support, such as food rations, and has suffered from a loss in job security, limited family support and often a lack of safe accommodation. “Youth Champs” are currently rolling out assistance in the form of food, utilities, medical, sanitary supplies for the LGBTIQ communities, however, the increase in demand for their support is putting pressure on the organisation.

Organisationally-speaking, the pandemic lockdown has had a dramatic impact by restricting extensive face-to-face work and reducing resources. All community sessions and awareness programs have been cancelled. This has forced “Youth Champs” to utilise flexible ways of providing care to its members. Zoom or Skype meetings were utilised extensively to compensate for the lack of travel, and they have been exploring additional media platforms in their awareness and education role. Most of Now, most of the support and counselling is facilitated social media platforms, and phone calls or text messaging. Lionel Rogers, “Youth Champs” president reported that they “Had very minimal resources prior to the pandemic. When we had our COVID-19 cases the struggle started and we needed funds more than ever.” All fundraising has ceased, which means his organisation now struggles to cover its assistance work.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Kapul champions (Men of Diverse sexualities), established in 2012 and an ILGA member since 2018 is part of a PNG “Key Population Advocacy” Consortium with other PNG LGBTI organisations, e.g. Igat Hope (PLHIV), MSM/TG & Friends Frangipani (sex workers). Established in 2018, advocating for issues affecting the networks of vulnerable communities, this consortium is known for developing unique ways to undertake its support and advocacy programs.

Before COVID-19 hit PNG, this organisation had a few programs which were to be addressed in 2020, including an introduction of a Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) project, provincial trips to monitor advocacy programs, plans for community forums, but all are now put on hold. Now this consortium has been obtaining government donors for Covid-19 awareness programs, through the Global Fund, World Vision (PR) and a partnership with with UNAIDS and the Institute of Medical Research (IMR) conducted a Rapid Assessment of the Needs of People Living with HIV.

The impact on the LGBTIQ community of the pandemic has been marked. Communication barriers and logistical constraints are preventing most of PNG LGBTI communities from receiving information and resources. The closure of all the public transport means LGBTI people are struggling to get to clinics, including HIV positive people who need to get their ART drugs, and are experiencing depression from isolation. Sex workers need to continue to work with restrictions and, as a result, are being scapegoated and ostracised.

The consortium has faced its own problems with a lack of consistent communication with their communities, transportation issues, a lack of masks, sanitisers and promotional materials. Everyone has been following all

the basic Covid-19 social distancing and sanitary rules and even limiting staff member office time. Covid-19 has seen an end to symposiums, which have now become virtual gatherings of no more than 10 people. The consortium is now in preparations for a potential Covid-19 second wave.

This consortium has had to adapt to the new norm of living with coronavirus. Things are not the same around the world and in PNG, which has seen a shift in funding and resources, necessitating a focus shift in activities. Limitation on international and domestic travel, has necessitated a rearrangement of work plans. Whilst the PNG government may unwisely deemphasise support for HIV and TB initiatives in the light of the main focus of the coronavirus, the consortium has pledged to continue to advocate for the PNG government to support the provision of ART drugs, safe-sex commodities, testing kits, STI drugs and basic services.

NEW ZEALAND

The Federation of Gay Games (FGG) recently announced that Auckland has been shortlisted to become the host of the 2026 Gay Games, along with seven other cities, with the final decision to be made in February 2022.



[Read More!](#)

COOK ISLANDS

Pressure is being put on the Cook Island government to repeal its 1969 enacted law criminalising homosexuality, after it completely reversed its previous course to decriminalise homosexuality, in favour of one supporting the current law with a plan to expand the criminal sanction to include lesbians.



[Read More!](#)

Note from the Communication's team:

That's all for this week.

If you have any advocacy, other news flashes, event advertisements, humour, or stories from you or your LGBTQI+SBBG member organisations, just send us an email and we will happily share through our ILGA Oceania communications for free.

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