



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

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Network News

Winter/Spring 2024

Rhythm 'n Tea in the Park



The Network is excited to invite you to a special Mental Health Month event that promises to be both uplifting and relaxing.

Date: Wednesday October 23 2024

Time: from 9:15am to 12:30pm

Location: Salthouse Community Centre, Haig Park,
Braddon

This event will bring the community together to support mental wellbeing through the power of music and connection.

More information on page 5

Offering you a voice

From the Chair

The The Mental Health Services (TheMHS) Conference scheduled for 27 to 29 August was held in Canberra with the theme “Finding Common Ground” .

Some of our members received scholarships to attend this event.

I gave an address on the first day of the conference (Consumer Forum), speaking about the Network.

The launch of “The Network Effect”—a showcase of digital stories from some of our members about what participation with the Network has meant for them was launched on 27 June. Petra and other staff members are to be congratulated on their work on this. The videos have now been released on the Network’s website (<https://actmhc.org.au/the-network-effect/>) and YouTube (see <https://www.youtube.com/@actmhc>).

As the ACT Elections will be held in October this year, we are engaging more with our members of parliament. So far, we have had several events with the Minister of Mental Health, Emma Davidson MLA, Shadow Minister for Mental Health, Ed Cocks MLA, and Shadow Minister for Health, Leanne Castley MLA. An invitation has been sent to the Minister for Health Rachel Stephen-Smith, and we are waiting for a response from her office.

I would encourage members to contact their MLAs and candidates for the election to not only discover their policies on mental health, but to remind them of the community’s need for effective mental health services. Responses that I have received from each of the major parties, with some additional information about special access services can be found on pages 10 to 12.

Please let me know if you have any questions about the above matters.

Paul Thompson

Board Chair



Save the date: 2024 Annual General Meeting

Advance notice to members that our Annual General Meeting for 2024 will be held on

Tuesday 19 November 2024 from 11am. Venue to be confirmed.

Formal notice including papers will be mailed out to all members in late October/early November.

We look forward to seeing you there!

The Network Effect series launch

The Network Effect series launch was held on Thursday, June 27.

The Network Effect showcases digital stories from some of our members about what participation with the Network has meant for them. Each video features a member and their personal story.

All four stories can be viewed at:

<https://actmhc.org.au/the-network-effect/>

These digital resources will be used to promote our training, consumer representation and systemic advocacy in training, events and online.

The event was introduced with a video by the Minister for Mental Health, Emma Davidson MLA.

Other notable attendees were the friends and families of some storytellers, ACT Health personnel and representatives from community organisations and services.

After viewing stories from Chris, Maree, Paul and Terri, there was a morning tea provide with catering provided by Tree83.





MENTAL HEALTH MONTH ACT

Mental Health Month is once again upon us.

Mental Health Month is an annual event dedicated to increasing community awareness and understanding of mental health. It aims to reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health conditions and promote positive mental health and wellbeing. Running from October 1 to 31, Mental Health Month ACT's 2024 theme is 'Connected Canberra,' while the global theme is 'It's Time to Prioritise Mental Health in the Workplace.' This month-long event also includes World Mental Health Day on October 10.

You can read about Mental Health Month in the ACT and see what events are being held on the Mental Health Month webpage (<https://mhccact.org.au/mentalhealthmonth/>)

Awards

Notice of Award, Scholarship and Grant applications being open for 2024 was only announced at the start of October and closed on October 10.

Due to the incredible short notice in between the opening and closing dates for nominations, we regrettably weren't able to let members who do not have email know about these opportunities in time.

The Network has repeatedly raised ongoing concerns about the organisation of Mental Health Month 2024.



Mental Health Month Expo

There will be no community Expo for Mental Health Month this year.

Mental Health Australia organised a Mental Health Sector Expo to be held at Parliament House on Wednesday 9 October. This expo was co-hosted with Parliamentary Friends groups

This expo will bring together mental health organisations and peak consumer bodies from across Australia and gives and opportunity showcase these organisations to federal parliamentarians, feature sector achievements, and promote the availability of mental health supports and services in local electorates.

Val along with Network Chair Paul and Treasurer Assunta (both pictured), represented the Network at this event.



Rhythm 'n Tea in the Park

The Network will be holding a special Mental Health Month event that promises to be both uplifting and relaxing.



Date: Wednesday October 23 2024

Time: from 9:15am to 12:30pm

Location: Salthouse Community Centre, Haig Park, Braddon

This event will bring the community together to support mental well-being through the power of music and connection. Here's what you can look forward to:

- **Drumming Circle:** Join us for a rhythmic journey where no prior experience is needed. Just bring your enthusiasm and let the beats guide you.

There will be 2 drumming circles at 9:30am and 10:45am. Participants are limited to 20 per circle. We encourage you to register into your preferred time, so you don't miss out. Places may be available if you come on the day, however, cannot be guaranteed.

- **Wellbeing Pori-Tea:** Enjoy a long and delightful morning tea with a selection of coffee, teas, fresh fruits and pastries while connecting with fellow participants. You do not have to book into a drumming circle to come to the Pori-Tea. All are welcome to come and go as you please throughout the event.



All catering provided and will include for vegan, gluten-free & vegetarian options and alternative milks.

This is a wonderful opportunity to reduce stress, boost your mood and build a sense of community.

For more information and to register, scan the QR Code to visit the [Rhythm 'n Tea event page](https://actmhc.org.au/rhythm-n-tea-in-the-park/) (https://actmhc.org.au/rhythm-n-tea-in-the-park/) or call 02 6230 5796 or email to actmhc@actmhc.org.au



This Mental Health Month event is brought to you with the assistance of

**MENTAL
HEALTH
MONTH
ACT**

and



Safe Space Counselling
CANBERRA



Liam Adams received the Network's first Small Business Grant in 2023, which provides seed funding to help consumers start or continue their own businesses.

Liam, a young man with autism and intellectual disability, runs a business called "Everyone Needs a Liam." His business aims to make people feel good about themselves and highlight the value of people with disabilities. The name came from friends who admired Liam's kind actions and words, often saying, "Everyone Needs a Liam!"

Initially, Liam sold a small batch of his novels at local markets. With the grant and mentoring from Mel Greenhalgh of Collective Wisdom Coaching and Consulting, he was able to print more books and expand his product range to include items like lapel pins, mouse mats, notebooks, mugs, and affirmation cards.

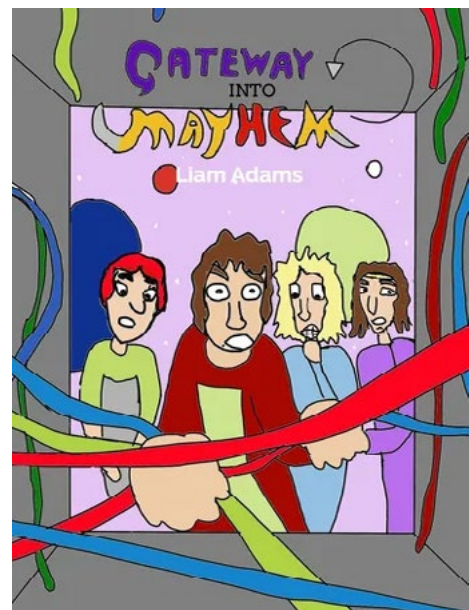
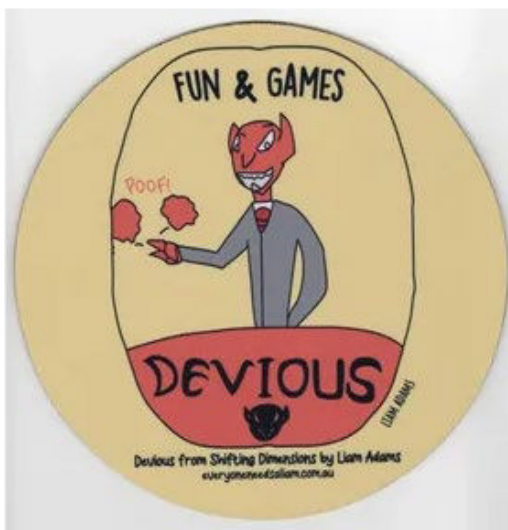
Liam runs his stalls mainly in Canberra, including the Old Bus Depot Markets and Handmade markets, other locations such as the Adelaide Fringe Festival (where he also gave presentations and won another grant for an AusLan Interpreter), and major pop culture events like Oz ComicCon and SupaNova. Recently, he had a stall at OzComicCon Canberra in late August, impressing the community with his achievements.

He also sells his products through retail outlets like the Book Cow in Kingston, ACT, and Grace's Gallery and Gifts in Glenelg, Adelaide.



Liam running his stall at the Handmade markets

You can learn more about Liam and his products on the Everyone Needs a Liam website (<https://everyoneneedsaliam.com.au/>) or his Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/everyoneneedsaliam/>).



Drop-In Closure

After careful consideration, we regret to advise that a decision was made to close Drop-In due to low attendance and limited resources. We understand that these opportunities to engage with others have been a valuable part of our community for many years, and this decision was not made lightly.

However, we want to assure you that we will continue to host the Mental Health Justice Clinic on the first Thursday of every month both in-person and online. In addition, we are working on plans to hold another event each month to provide support, education and connection. For regular attendees at Drop-In who wonder what is happening with Jo, she is still staying with us, but has moved over into the Peer Education role.

We appreciate your understanding and support during this time. If you have any questions or suggestions, please feel free to reach out.

Members Area access trial

For consumers who need a space to do their self-advocacy business, you can make an appointment to use our computers and phones. This arrangement will be provided on a trial basis and reviewed in December 2024.

The Members Area is available for consumers to access by appointment on Wednesdays from 10am to 12pm at our office in the city, except on public holidays and office closure periods. Bookings can be made by contacting the Network at least two (2) days before.

Use of the Members Area is for consumers needs such as:

- self-advocacy: accessing and lodging forms online and preparing documentation for any legal matters etc.;
- education: submitting enrolment applications, conducting research, developing assignments etc.; and
- employment/job-seeking: searching for employment, writing and submitting applications etc.

It is important to note that Network staff may not be able to help you with complicated requests when you come in, but we will try to refer you to an organisation that can.

To make a booking, contact us by:

- Phone us on (02) 6230 5796 or
- Email to actmhcnc@actmhcnc.org.au
- Fill in the contact form on the Contact Us page (<https://actmhcnc.org.au/contact/>)

This is to make sure that workers can be present in the office to welcome you. When making a booking, please tell us about any equipment you may need, such as headphones etc. No entry will be granted if a booking hasn't been made and accepted.

On rare occasions we may not be able to keep a booking that has been made due to unforeseen circumstances. If you have made a booking and something changes, we will let you know as soon as possible.



CRP Masterclass: Safe Story telling

At our bi monthly CRP Forums, Consumer Reps are provided with a Masterclass, which is short training or information segment to refresh and upskill. At the Forums since our last newsletter, Masterclasses were held on 'Key Statements' – identifying responses that people would like to have a consumer representatives' voice on and Safely sharing recovery stories.

The recent Masterclass: Safely sharing recovery stories, covered topics such as 'what is a recovery story?', 'the risks and benefits of sharing your story', 'why do we share them publicly?', 'tips for crafting our story', 'how do we prepare for public speaking?', 'responses for tricky questions', 'debriefing and self-reflection'.

One participant provided her thoughts and opinions on this Masterclass, which is included below.

Safely sharing recovery stories workshop that was held on 7 May 2024 facilitated by Consumers of Mental Health WA

The recent workshop provided a very helpful prompt and pathway for participants to embark on their own mental health recovery story project. Our facilitator created a relaxed and inclusive atmosphere in which the value of safe story telling was highlighted and the process clearly explained. We learnt that the purpose of sharing our stories of illness and recovery needs to guide both the content and direction of the narratives we create. This means that stories need to be beneficial for the story-holder – in terms of shaping one's positive identity and sense of agency – as well as for the audience. Story-telling aims to 'undo' the loneliness of mental distress and instil hope for the future. It has great value for the community as we continue to dismantle the stigma that surrounds these very common human experiences.

A useful insight from the workshop was the idea of multiple or 'living' personal stories, reflecting either the depth of content and/or the ongoing development of the meaning of recovery experiences in individual lives. The importance of debriefing after story-telling with peers and professionals was also emphasised. Sharing our stories is powerful, vulnerable and demanding; we need to take care of ourselves in the process.



New National Mental Health Consumer Alliance to represent consumers

The National Mental Health Consumer Alliance (known as the Alliance) is delighted to have been granted \$3.7 million to advocate for consumers in national mental health policy.

The Alliance, which was established informally in 2019 and recently incorporated as a national body, is made up of the state and territory mental health consumer peaks across Australia (the Network is the ACT representative). The Alliance is now consulting with other representative bodies to ensure that their work will be inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; multicultural, refugee and migrant communities; and rural and remote mental health consumers.

Our Program Manager, Jen Nixon, played an integral role in getting the Alliance formally funded. As many members may know, Jen went on leave from the Network to assist the Alliance in establishing their organisational structure.

We look forward to participating with the Alliance and reporting back to members in future publications.

My Rights, My Decisions makes significant strides



The My Rights, My Decisions (MRMD) program has seen remarkable progress in its development and delivery. Since late March, several workshops have been conducted to trial the new learning structure and identify areas for improvement. Special thanks go to Ben Matthews for co-facilitating the initial workshops.

Key updates include a revised feedback form, the addition of case study scenarios, and an extension of workshop duration to three hours. These enhancements stemmed from the pilot course and feedback from the Education Reference Group.

To increase accessibility, a 'Train the Trainer' workshop was held on July 31 for community sector mental health workers. This initiative aims to equip them with the knowledge to deliver MRMD information and support to consumers. Participants received comprehensive MRMD resources upon completion.

Additionally, we extended the program's reach to General Practitioners, in collaboration with Capital Health Network. Resources for GPs are also available on the MRMD website.

Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT

In response to the ACT Legislative Assembly's Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT, the Network prepared and completed a submission that detailed multiple areas of concern and provided recommendations for public interventions to mitigate identified issues.

The wide range of issues discussed are included in this submission under the following themes:

- Welcoming Psychosocial Supports
- Crisis Supports
- Forensic Mental Health Services
- Housing and Increasing Cost of Living
- Use of Information Technology post
- COVID-19 pandemic and
- Lived Experience Workforce

Representatives from the Network, Dalane Drexler, Jen Nixon, Paul Thompson and Matthew Martin, appeared as witnesses at the Inquiry into Loneliness and Social Isolation in the ACT - Public Hearings. To watch the Network in action go to the following link: <https://broadcast.parliament.act.gov.au/vod/player/76fd5777b0179836ccdc787f44ef8719?i=3d362672221349ccbce4ce6f5e789d03-21>. You can watch the whole proceeding or fast forward to where the Network appears at the 2:46:00 timestamp.

ACT Election: Party positions on mental health

A message from Network Chair, Paul Thompson, about the ACT Election currently underway.

Dear members

As a peak body funded by the ACT government I am conscious that the leadership of the Network need to maintain political impartiality.

However, we also have a responsibility to ensure that members have sufficient information relevant to mental health services to make an informed vote at the upcoming ACT election to be officially held on Sat 19 October. In fact, pre-polling has already commenced.

In recent months an investigation was carried out by Network staff to identify the barriers to mental health consumers accessing appropriate services. It is unfortunate that due to staff illness that the full findings cannot be circulated before the election. It is my understanding that the main barriers to these services were found to include cost and availability of services and waiting lists. Access Mental Health was also criticised for not being as helpful as consumers wished.

Last week I emailed the Health Minister for the Labor Party's policies on Mental Health, as well as the ACT Greens and Liberal Party for their platforms for this election.

The following were the responses received so far.

Regards

Paul Thompson

Board Chair



ACT Labor's mental health policy announcement from a couple of weeks ago can be found here: <https://www.actlabor.org.au/our-party/labor-media-releases/more-mental-health-support-for-young-canberrans/>

We will have more to say about our health policy in the next week or so, including releasing a comprehensive health policy statement prior to election day.

Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA

Member for Kurrajong

ph: 02 6205 2661

Liberal Party:

See https://freshopportunity.org/book/Policy_Fact_Sheet_A4_Mental_Health.pdf

Ed Cocks MLA

Shadow Minister for Mental Health

Continues on page 11

ACT Election: Party positions on mental health



Thank you for reaching out regarding the ACT Green's mental health policy. We have quite a substantive mental health initiative that we've been campaigning on this election. I've attached the policy document, which goes into the detail of our platform, for your consideration.

The Greens have committed to:

- Establishing four mental health 'Safe Havens' in Dickson, Molonglo, Gungahlin and Tuggeranong to form a network across all town centres, joining Belconnen Safe Haven and the future Garran Safe Haven.
- Establishing a perinatal mental health drop in centre, co-located with a new perinatal mental health inpatient unit.
- Permanently fund WOKE and Stepping Stones
- Establishing a dedicated drop in mental health centre for young people.
- Delivering an integrated inpatient unit and a day program for eating disorders.
- Establishing a safe place for PACER to take people who need temporary support away from home, but don't need hospital care.
- Establishing a Distress Brief Intervention (DBI) trial that will help support people experiencing emotional distress, such as grief or loss, so they get support before reaching a crisis point.

In addition to this, we also want to see the development of an ACT Wide Mental Health Plan. Such a plan will elevate the role of social determinants and the need for holistic care, and will assist in developing an integrated whole-of-government response that works towards addressing all aspects of mental health.

A full outline of the ACT Greens Mental Health Policy for the 2024 Election can be accessed by:

[Click here to read](#)

or

Copy and paste the following URL into your web browser:

<https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/2024%20Initiative%20-%20Free%20%26%20Accessible%20Mental%20Healthcare.pdf>

Regardless of the outcome of this election, the Network will continue to work with government to continue improving mental health and related services for people living with mental illness to achieve better recovery outcomes.

ACT Election: Accessibility services



Low Sensory Voting Centre

for neurodiverse voters

Canberra Museum and Gallery

Cnr. London Cct and Civic Square, Canberra

The Low Sensory Centre is a specialised Early Voting Centre for neurodiverse voters who may require a quieter, calmer environment to cast their vote.

This Centre will have less voting booths, more space inbetween, natural and adjustable lighting and separate rooms to wait and vote.

Trained staff will be happy to help with reasonable adjustments and provide assistance to ensure your voting experience allows you to have your say in your way.

Contact Elections ACT on 6205 0033 for more information.

Opening Times

10:30am-6:30pm

Tuesday 8 October
Wednesday 9 October
Thursday 10 October
Friday 11 October
Monday 14 October
Tuesday 15 October
Wednesday 16 October
Thursday 17 October

9:00am-5:00pm

Saturday 12 October

10:30am-8:00pm Friday
18 October

8:00am-6:00pm

Saturday 19 October

FREE southside community bus service

Community Services 1 will be using their community bus to help people get to pre-polling booths from Monday 7 October. This service is FREE for southsiders who meet one or more of the following eligible criteria:

- older with mobility or confidence problems
- living in nursing homes or retirement facilities
- permanently or temporarily disabled
- unable to use regular bus services because of health problems
- socially isolated parents with young children who lack transport options
- from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who lack support networks and have limited transport options.

If you live on the south side of Canberra and require assistance getting to a polling station, please call Emmal Dryden, Community Development Officer on 02 6126 4740



**COMMUNITY
SERVICES #1**
enable • enhance • enrich

Other upcoming events

WHAT'S COMING UP?

End of year gathering

The Network will be holding an end of year barbecue lunch gathering for our members and guests on Wednesday 11 December 2024 from 11am.

At the time of publication we are looking to hold it at the Salhouse Community Centre at Haig Park in Braddon.

As we get closer to December, we will provide the final details, but you can put this into your diaries now.



ARTISTS SOCIETY OF CANBERRA SPRING EXHIBITION 2024

Saturday 19 – Sunday 27 October

SPONSORS PREVIEW: Saturday 19 October, 5.15pm – 6pm

OFFICIAL OPENING: Saturday 19 October, 6pm

EXHIBITION HOURS

Saturday 19 October: 10am – 3pm

Sunday 20 October to Sunday 27 October: 10am – 4pm

Monday 21 October: CLOSED

Fitters Workshop, Wentworth Avenue, Kingston
Next to Old Bus Depot Markets

www.asoc.au



OUR MAJOR SPONSORS INCLUDE



Bryan K who is a member of the Network will be participating in this exhibition with his artworks and gave us permission to include this in this edition of Network News for your information and interest.

If you have an interest in the visual arts and would like to see Bryan's work, drop in to this exhibition and say hello.

About the Network

The ACT Mental Health Consumer Network is an organisation that is run by consumers for consumers. Our aim is to bring about a higher standard of health care in the mental health sector, through representation, lobbying and active involvement in new developments in the mental health sector.

Our organisation is extremely committed to the rights of mental health consumers.

We promote a respectful and accepting system that involves Consumers, Carers and Professionals listening and respecting one another in an active healthy relationship. We also promote the development of support structures for all these groups.

All people who identify as being a mental health consumer are welcome to join the Network. An application form can be found on the following pages or by filling out and submitting via our website.



Opening hours

Monday to Friday 9am-3pm
(excluding public holidays)



Level 2 Room 11 Griffin Centre
20 Genge Street, Canberra City
GPO Box 836 Canberra ACT 2601



02 6230 5796
actmhcncn@actmhcncn.org.au



actmhcncn.org.au
facebook.com/actmhcncn/
youtube.com/@actmhcncn

Members Area Access

The Members Area is a space within our office where we hold our various forums, consultations and other events for consumers.

Informal events for consumers to learn about services and programs in the ACT, learn new skills and meet other likeminded people are usually held on Thursdays when planned. Consumers can also make an appointment to use computers and phones for their self-advocacy needs on Wednesdays from 10am to 12pm, except on public holidays and office closure periods.



Self-advocacy needs include accessing and lodging online forms or preparing documentation, education and employment/job-seeking purposes.

Bookings can be made by contacting the

Network using the details above or via our website at least two (2) days before and is confirmed. This is to make sure that workers can be present in the office to welcome you.



When making a booking, please tell us about any equipment you may need, such as headphones etc. No entry will be granted if a booking hasn't been made and accepted.

On rare occasions we may not be able to keep a booking that has been made due to unforeseen circumstances. If you have made a booking and something changes, we will let you know as soon as possible.

The Members Area is available for community groups to hold centrally-based groups and meetings. Contact us to make a booking.



ACT
Mental Health
Consumer Network

APPLICATION FOR INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

NB: Individual membership is free.

MEMBERSHIP TYPES AND CRITERIA

Primary Membership

- Has lived experience of mental illness
- Lives and/or accesses services in the ACT

Associate

- May have lived experience of mental illness but does not live and/or accesses services in the ACT
- Is a carer or support person of someone with mental illness
- Supports the aims of the Network
(Associate memberships need to be renewed annually)

I AM APPLYING FOR:

Primary Membership

Associate Membership

CONTACT DETAILS *Your name and *at least one contact address/email* is required

Title:	<input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Mrs <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Miss <input type="checkbox"/> Mx <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Preferred Pronouns	<input type="checkbox"/> He/Him <input type="checkbox"/> She/Her <input type="checkbox"/> They/Them <input type="checkbox"/> Other.....
First Name:	
Surname:	
Address:	
Postal Address: (if different)	
Email:	
Home Phone:	
Mobile Phone:	
Other contact:	

COMMUNICATION PREFERENCES:			
What is the BEST way for us to contact you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Email	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Post
	<input type="checkbox"/> Text	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Phone	
Do you want to receive Newsletters and other information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes by email	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes by post	
How should we send information about General Meetings?	<input type="checkbox"/> Home Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Postal Address	<input type="checkbox"/> Email
<i>Please note we are required by law to provide all members with notice and other documentation about General Meetings.</i>			

DEMOGRAPHICS	
Year of birth:	
Aboriginal:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Torres Strait Islander:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Language other than English:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> No, English only
Gender:	<input type="checkbox"/> Woman <input type="checkbox"/> Man <input type="checkbox"/> Transgender <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Binary <input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Please contact me about... (Primary Members Only)
<input type="checkbox"/> Free training events <input type="checkbox"/> Discussions, forums and projects <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer opportunities (with reimbursement of costs) <input type="checkbox"/> Helping with events

Thank you for taking the time to complete and return this information