

q charity: A MAJOR LGBTQIA+ MERGER

The Aurora Group and GiveOUT, two LGBTQIA+ community-led funders, have announced they are merging to form Rainbow Giving Australia.

This union brings together the strengths of both organisations, creating a bold national LGBTQIA+ community foundation dedicated to empowering Australian rainbow communities. As a one-stop-shop for rainbow funding, Rainbow Giving Australia will champion the needs of the community and amplify support for grassroots LGBTQIA+ initiatives.

Having served our community since 2004, Q Magazine wanted to know more about this merger. Em Scott, CEO Rainbow Giving Australia, generously agreed to this interview.

RAINBOW GIVING AUSTRALIA

AN AURORA & GIVEOUT FOUNDATION

Given the individual fundraising successes of both organisations, why was this merger deemed necessary and why these specific organisations?

Over the past 25 years, Aurora and GiveOUT paved the way for a stronger sector, investing in the grassroots organisations solving the most pressing problems for our communities. We are both proud of the work we have done, but it was clear that we would have an even greater impact if we worked together. To illustrate: in 2020, the year before we started collaborating formally, we collectively raised and distributed \$226,690 for rainbow communities. This year, after just 4 years of collaborating, we will distribute \$1 million, over 4 times the original amount.

In addition, our communities are in the midst of a global backlash against their rights, often fueled by anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric and a rise in anti-trans disinformation. By merging, we knew we could maximise the impact of our resources at a time when our communities really need us. This decision followed a comprehensive review process that confirmed the merger aligns with the best interests of both organisations and the broader LGBTQIA+ sector.

For GiveOUT and Aurora, merging just made complete sense. We had the same vision (an empowered, sustainable and united LGBTQIA+ community sector), a track record of successful collaboration and complementary strengths and resources that could be combined for greater impact. We think mergers can be a great pathway to greater impact and efficiency in the non-profit sector, and we hope this provides a good-practice example for inspiration.

Is there a lack of disposable cash in the community for donations to niche markets, and how do you perceive Rainbow Giving Australia will buck this trend?

The LGBTQIA+ community sector is chronically underfunded, receiving just 5 cents in every \$100 donated to Australian charities. Having said that and despite cost of living pressures escalating over the past few years, we have seen incredible growth during campaigns like GiveOUT Day. In 2023, we raised \$405,475 for LGBTQIA+ non-profit organisations and initiatives (a 33% increase from 2022) and in 2024 we raised \$500,413 (23% increase). So despite cost of living pressures, it is clear that the public - an estimated 11% of which identify as LGBTQIA+ in Australia - are motivated to support rainbow communities, in whatever way they can.

With these funds, Rainbow Giving Australia will support both large generalised LGBTQIA+

organisations, as well as organisations that work with communities at the intersections (e.g. LGBTQIA+ people with disability). Our funding must be diversified to be sustainable, so we partner with institutional philanthropy, corporates, as well as general public donors.

Please explain the application process and whether it is reasonably easy to access OR convoluted, confusing and frustrating (like so many seem to be)?

Rainbow Giving Australia is currently accepting expressions of interest for our small (Ignite Pride) and large (Amplify Pride) grants program. As an organisation that also goes through the experience of applying for grants, we know how unnecessarily difficult the grant process can be, and seek to make our process community-centred and accessible.

One of the ways we achieve this is by splitting the application process into two stages. Stage 1 involves an expression of interest form (less than 10 minutes) and then we will invite eligible and aligned organisations to complete the full application in Stage 2. We offer 1:1 support to these organisations to co-create the proposals together.

Do you envisage this new 'fundraising force' making a real difference or simply being another quango to facilitate cocktail parties on the back of yachts in Sydney harbour?

I am not aware of these fancy cocktail parties on yachts! But it is certainly valid to ask the question and reflect on whether new initiatives will make the real differences they are striving towards.

The Rainbow Giving Australia team is made up of people who are embedded in LGBTQIA+ communities, and our purpose is to maximise resources for rainbow communities. Everything we do is in service of this purpose and is why we decided to merge: we can serve the community better, together. Our track record of year-on-year growth when it comes to fundraising collaboratively is a testament to our capacity to make a real difference in supporting the LGBTQIA+ sector, and this impact of our work is something we will continue to measure, so that we are transparent about our progress and held accountable to our goals.

Our case studies are also proof of the real difference we are making. For example, we have provided critical start-up funding to Trans Justice Project, the first national, trans-led campaigning organisation in Australia, that is tackling the rise of anti-trans disinformation online. There is now an evidence-based strategy for how to tackle anti-trans disinformation. Trans people, allies, journalists, and medical professionals feel more empowered to tackle disinformation in their communities.

Our work is guided by our values: LGBTQIA+community centered, reliable, courageous, equitable and collaborative. While we are keen to work proactively with the government (neither Aurora or GiveOUT receive government funds), and I'd love to party with you on a yacht any day, facilitating yacht parties is regrettably not something in our strategy.



**Grant applications now open: <https://rainbowgiving.org.au/grants-overview>
Board Director roles now open: <https://rainbowgiving.org.au/get-involved>**