

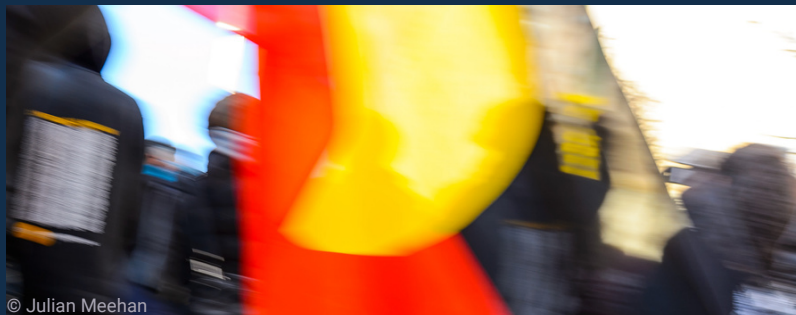


THE COMMONS

Social Change Library

ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

COMMONSLIBRARY.ORG



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Commons pays respects to the traditional owners of the land in which we operate and wherever the Commons Library website is accessed. The Commons Library staff team live and work on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

We recognise the central importance of struggles for Indigenous self-determination and justice within the broad project of creating a progressive future.

*Always was, always will be,
Aboriginal land.*

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VISION

The Commons Library vision is an Australia that has well informed, skilled, collaborative and effective movements for social and ecological justice.

MISSION

The Commons Library exists to make social movements smarter and stronger.

We support the power and effectiveness of progressive social change efforts by collecting campaigning best practice from Australia and around the world.



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The year that started in July 2020 and ended in June 2021: What better timing could there be for the Commons Social Change Library to come into its potential? With the world in turmoil it turned out that an online library free to access from anywhere was the right offering at the right time.

Visitors to the Commons Library skyrocketed in this timeframe. Visitors sought out guides to online meetings, tactical innovations to fit with social distancing, and ideas for a just future beyond the pandemic. They sought inspiration from past stories of success and resistance, from legendary leaders and people just like them.

The Commons team continued to curate resources, constantly looking for ways to make the vast variety of social change skills and knowledge accessible. The staff effort was complemented by a crew of keen volunteers, each bringing their talents and ideas.

We have increasingly heard feedback that the Commons is a vital piece of social movement infrastructure, embedded in the practices of many committed individuals and purpose-led organisations.

People working for social change are smarter and stronger together - especially when there are skilled librarians available to gather and sort through all that collective wisdom.

As the Commons grows and evolves we are defining more and more the role of 'social movement librarians' and demonstrating the difference that role can make. This Annual Report will give you a taste of our work. Of course, you are always welcome to browse the Commons Library virtual bookshelves, or reach out to your friendly librarians for recommendations and advice.

Warm appreciation to the Commons Library staff team, volunteers, consultants, Board, funders, donors, project partners, contributors, everyone who passed on resources, and everyone who visited. Here's to all we can achieve for a better world.



Holly
Hammond



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

*Now, more than ever,
communities need
contemporary and
effective tools to respond
to the great challenges of
the world we live in.*

If we do not continually strengthen civil society so that it can successfully speak and act to protect and improve our democratic institutions, then it will be vulnerable to the constant attacks by profit-hungry corporations and power-hungry politicians in their thrall.

In a global context of pandemic lockdowns and the rise of authoritarian regimes that threaten the ability and freedoms of citizens to raise their voice in the public space, there is such a critical and ongoing need for an high-quality independent library for citizens who share a social conscience and an obligation to work for the common good.

Since before the bushfires of 2019/20, through the pandemic and during #BlackLivesMatter and the Women's March 4 Justice and the rise of local 'Voices of' democracy groups, the Commons Library has been ahead of the game, whipping out the most helpful and relevant resources from the collection and getting them into the hands of people searching for support as they continue their critically important work.

Commons Library resources have been gratefully received by thousands of people and shared enthusiastically with each other. The learning that has arisen from these library resources has made such a positive difference to all who have used them to achieve positive social change in their communities.

We are indebted to our wonderful donors who can see the value in what we do, and the importance of making the collection free to all.

Capacity building in any sector can be over-looked and under-valued, and this is even more true for capacity building that extends across all of civil society. No matter what your favourite charity is, the staff and volunteers can increase their skills and effectiveness by making use of our library resources.

I would like to thank our brilliant Library Director Holly and her marvellous staff Antje and Iain for their consistent high quality work, always with their eyes on expanding the library collection and making the resources easily available to all who need them. Many thanks are also due to Django, Phong, Rebecca and Robyn who form our fantastic board, and, of course, our supportive community of library users. We look forward to another year of success in equipping social change activists in Australia and around the world.



Sue
McKinnon

WHY 'THE COMMONS'?

The name 'the Commons' references the common good, the shared property of all people. The Wikipedia entry on the commons states:

"The commons is the cultural and natural resources accessible to all members of a society, including natural materials such as air, water, and a habitable earth. These resources are held in common, not owned privately. Commons can also be understood as natural resources that groups of people (communities, user groups) manage for individual and collective benefit."

We view the collective intelligence of people as part of the commons so we gather and share the best thinking of people involved in social change to support future action.

Guided by this concept the Commons:

- Is free of cost to use and does not operate for profit
- Is equitable, inclusive and accessible
- Aims to be beneficial to many
- Reflects inputs from many
- Has a culture that celebrates cooperation and collaboration

"The Commons Library is a place to access our collective activist wisdom."



Tim Lo Surdo

Founder, Democracy in Colour

COMMONS STAFF



HOLLY HAMMOND
Director

Holly directs the Commons Library: developing and implementing strategy, overseeing library operations, tracking social movement needs, forging project partnerships and building the financial sustainability of the organisation. She is one of Australia's foremost activist educators. She has 30 years of social change experience, with 15 of those years spent supporting movements to be more effective through training, facilitation and coaching. An important aspect of her work has been developing curriculum and writing, sourcing, editing and distributing articles and educational resources.



ANTJE DUN
Commons Librarian

Antje came up with the user-friendly structure, cataloguing, and appearance of the Commons Library. She maintains the library, adds new content, supervises volunteers, and contributes her information management expertise to special projects. Antje is a qualified librarian with over 20 years of experience working in specialist libraries including the Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne Water, and Volunteering Australia. She is also a graphic designer with a commitment to accessibility.



IAIN MCINTYRE
Commons Librarian

Iain McIntyre brings past social movements stories to present day change makers through regular Commons Facebook posts and articles. He also writes campaign case studies and researches social change related issues. He is a social movement historian, researcher and author. Alongside producing radio documentaries, podcasts and audio tours he has written and edited seven books, including Environmental Blockades and How To Make Trouble and Influence People: Pranks, Protests, Graffiti and Political Mischief Making From Across Australia.

We would also like to thank Claire Turner for bookkeeping, Upeka Kumarasinghe for fundraising support, and Emily De Rango for volunteer program set-up. Glenn Todd from Action Skills provided crucial website maintenance.

WHAT WE DO

1 The 'go-to portal' for social change resources

Like all good libraries, the Commons gathers materials from many different sources in one accessible location. Utilising the skills of information management the Commons has user friendly cataloguing and search capacity, so users can find what they need fast.

2 Respond to 'movement moments'

The Commons Librarians monitor trends and needs in social movements. At times of crisis and opportunity the librarians gather and distribute relevant materials to assist campaigners and community builders to seize the moment.

3 Bespoke advice from knowledgeable librarians

The Commons Librarians respond to queries on a wide range of social change topics. Our quick response resource recommendations enable change makers to get what they need and jump back into their work quickly. Other queries catalyse bigger research projects resulting in new resources.

4 Connect to social movement history

Social movement history can provide insights about strategy, a vast toolbox of potential tactics, and abundant inspiration. The Commons gathers case studies, chronologies, and historical materials with a particular emphasis on Australian stories.

5 Amplify the impact of conferences

Civil society conferences are an important source of knowledge and innovation but without intentional curation their impact can be transitory. The Commons team works to make the insights of conferences available to a larger audience for the long term in the form of recordings, articles and presentation materials.

6 Special projects

The Commons provides customised services to organisations and networks engaged in social change activities. This includes collating resource kits, developing curriculum, designing and cataloguing resource directories, writing case studies, and researching issues.

From July 2020 to June 2021

616000+ PEOPLE

engaged with the social change resources
of the Commons Library

"The Commons Library is
any activist's one stop
shop for resources!"



Phil Evans

Long time grassroots &
Friends of the Earth campaigner



**750+ Resources to
Read, Watch & Listen**



**350+ Contributors
Active in Social Change**



**20+ Collections from
Social Change Partners**

EXPLORE THE COMMONS

The Commons covers a wide range of topics related to social change:

- Campaign Strategy
- Organising
- Digital Campaigning
- Nonviolent Direct Action
- Communications & Media
- Arts & Creativity
- Lobbying & Advocacy
- First Nations Resources
- Coalition Building
- Working in Groups
- Social Movement History
- Research & Archiving

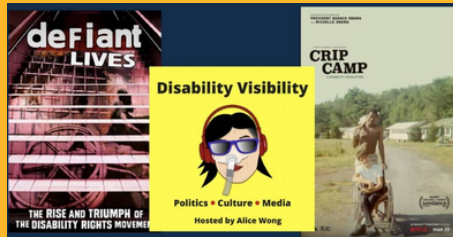
Commons Librarians and volunteers have created curated 'Start here' guides to help people navigate the library easily, get themselves up to speed quickly and guide novice changemakers.

Click on each box to see these guides.



2020 RESOURCES

Every month the Commons sends out a newsletter featuring several social change resources. To give a sense of the 2020/21 year here is one resource from each month.



1 July

Disability Justice Links

This collection of websites was crowdsourced from presenters and participants at the conference, Virtual Progress 2020, and shared with The Commons community.

2 August

Campaigning during the Pandemic

A collection of articles related to campaigning through challenging times such as tactics in a time of physical distancing.

3 September

Resources About Housing Justice and Unwaged Rights Campaigns

More than 20 case studies and stories show how communities have organised in the past, from the Great Depression until recent times.

4 October

Digital Security Guide for Everyone

This guide by Glenn Todd from Action Skills is designed for beginners and non-technical people with the aim of increasing security across our whole community.

5 November

US Election Resources

A collection of links relevant to the 2020 US election for participants in social movements including analysis of results and campaigning lessons.

6 December

How to Deal with Racism at Christmas

A collection of tips and conversation guides compiled in conjunction with the Democracy in Colour Solidarity Network.

2021 RESOURCES

Top 10 Resources of 2020



Did You March 4 Justice?
Ideas for Your Next Steps
from the Commons Library

7 January

Top 10 Resources of 2020

Sharing the most viewed resources of the year which included Online Meeting Guides, Films about social movement struggles, victories and leaders, and a collection of non violence quotes.

8 February

Digital tools to support effective meetings, training and conferences

A collection of tools collated from social media information sharing for designing and managing meetings, online conferences and for increasing participation.

9 March

Did You March 4 Justice? Ideas for Your Next Steps

Resources to support people to learn and take further action after the Women's March 4 Justice for gender justice and equality.

10 April

Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse People in the Workplace

Recommendations from trans people in the not for profit sector and a compilation of resources that organisations can use to make their own suite of trans-inclusive policy.

11 May

Blockades that Changed Australia

Stories that highlight blockades that have played a significant role in Australian history from the 1970s to the present decade including many anti-mining and anti-logging blockades.

12 June

Naming an Advocacy Campaign

Choosing a name for an advocacy campaign, movement or organisation is no easy task. Here is a guide, tips, and thoughts to help you with the process of naming a campaign.

MANY WAYS TO LEARN

The Commons Library is set up to make it easy for you to:

READ

WATCH

LISTEN

The Commons Library has materials in a number of formats including:

- Articles & Tips
- Manuals & Reports
- Training Materials
- Speeches and Presentations
- Interviews
- Case Studies
- Books, Excerpts and Reviews
- Templates
- Topic Overviews
- Podcasts
- Videos

"The Commons Library
has such a variety of
tools no matter how far
along people are on their
activist journey."



Aliya Ahmad

Democracy in Colour

COLLECTIONS

The Commons Social Change Library includes 22 collections contributed by civil society and capacity building partners.

Like any good library the Commons gathers materials from many different sources, making them available in one central accessible place. The collections provide solid building blocks of content which are supplemented by hundreds of individual contributors.

The Commons Library includes pre-existing resource collections which may already have a home on other websites as well as new collections that the Commons Librarians have worked with organisations to build from scratch. The Commons also preserves materials from projects that are no longer active, making the wisdom they have generated available for the long term.

Many collections come from Australian organisations but there are also collections with an international focus and contributors from all around the world.

The following page introduces two of the collections that were added in 2020/21. We welcome further additions.



WOMEN'S ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP AUSTRALIA

Women's Environmental Leadership Australia (WELA) empowers, supports and funds women's leadership for our environment and climate action, to transform Australia's response to these crises.

Participants at WELA retreats shared some of their favourite books and films and the convenors wanted a way to make those recommendations publicly available. Commons Librarian Antje Dun did additional research and put together articles including Books About Women & Leadership, Films About Women & Social Change, and Inspiring Quotes from Women Leaders & Activists. The quotes are one of the most visited posts on the Commons. The collection also includes articles and tips including an 'advice column' Holly Hammond wrote responding to queries from WELA participants.

CHECK OUT WELA'S COLLECTION



AUSTRALIAN PROGRESS CAPACITY BUILDING HUB

Australian Progress' Capacity Building Hub (CBH) supports small nonprofits and grassroots movements to survive the pandemic and thrive beyond it.

The organisations supported by the Hub include advocates for First Nations justice, racial justice, affordable housing, intergenerational equality, disability justice, gender equality, a climate-led recovery and more.

The Hub needed a way to collect and present educational resources to their target audience. The Commons Library assisted by putting together a special collection. The collection brings together materials from many sources on governance to fundraising to digital campaigning that many small organisations will find useful.

CHECK OUT CBH'S COLLECTION



PROJECT PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to making our online public library available to all at no cost, the Commons Social Change Library provides customised services to organisations at accessible rates.

The Commons librarians are available for consultancy and projects including:

- Sourcing and collating resource guides and training materials for staff and volunteers
- Putting together customised study guides for professional development of individual staff members or teams
- Curating book club materials including references, excerpts, and prompts for reflection and discussion
- Collating articles and presentations from forums, conferences and other events
- Archiving campaign material and organisational history
- Advising on information management including resource hubs and shared drives
- Research and writing of case studies
- Research into issues and trends relevant to campaigns and advocacy



In 2020/21 we have contributed our expertise in information management, research and activist education to make the progressive organisations we have partnered with, and the communities they serve, smarter and stronger.

The projects on the following pages give examples of the kinds of partnerships that are possible. We welcome enquiries in a range of areas.

LEADING CHANGE NETWORK RESOURCE CENTER



The Leading Change Network (LCN) grew out of the work of Marshall Ganz, his collaborators, their students, and others. LCN connects thousands of people from around the globe who practice a shared approach to organising.

The network was flourishing but the hundreds of educational materials it had produced had become overwhelming. They knew they needed to make improvements but weren't sure where to start.

That's where the Commons Library came in. Holly Hammond developed a plan to take the Resource Center from review to relaunch. Antje Dun audited LCN's existing resource centre, tracked down additional materials stored on other sites and internal drives and developed a cataloguing system to enable the easy retrieval of materials. Glenn Todd from Action Skills, website developer of the Commons Library site, shared our tech set-up for a logical and accessible resource directory. The Commons has also curated guides to public narrative, organising, and campaign and movement building.

The Resource Center will be launched in late 2021. The Commons will continue to support LCN through staff training and ongoing maintenance.

CHECK OUT LCN'S RESOURCE CENTER



“

The Leading Change Network has always wanted to give organizers and organizations access to community organizing resources in a professional, easy to find way. Thanks to the support of the Commons Social Change Library we are launching a new and improved Resource Center. Their librarian expertise and attention to detail merged with passion and knowledge about organizing led to a high quality output. I'm very happy with this partnership.



Mais Irgsusi
Leading Change Network

THE SUNRISE PROJECT CASE STUDIES

Building movement power requires learning the lessons from recent campaigns - but campaigners tend to be future focused, moving on to the next challenge.

To capture those lessons the Sunrise Project engaged the Commons Library to write case studies of climate justice movement campaigns. Iain McIntyre's skills in research and story telling combined with Holly Hammond's experience in activist education meant we were well placed to take this on.

Each campaign case study starts with background research followed by interviews with key stakeholders. Themes are identified and key lessons brought to the fore. The writing process is iterative, incorporating feedback to ensure a useful summary is produced for use in training sessions.



ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS ONLINE COURSE

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) connects, trains and represents 28,000 medical specialists and trainee specialists from 33 different specialties, across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Holly Hammond developed an online advocacy course for specialist physicians to complete at their own pace.

The course will inform and empower physicians to engage more in advocacy, from the hospital or local level to federal policy outcomes.

The course draws on many of the existing resources related to advocacy in the Commons Library, as well as featuring new content shaped to address the needs of physicians.



FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMONS COMMUNITY

“

I was recently supporting a union colleague who was embarking on a new campaign. I contacted Holly to talk through my colleague's needs and she defined a step by step program with specific resources. This is the kind of bespoke advice that helps us build power and win. The Commons Library is a priceless resource for social movements, campaigns, activists and organisers.



Jake Wishart
National Tertiary Education Union

“

What a tremendous and user-friendly resource The Commons Library is. As the only employee in my organisation that works on advocacy, organising, and campaigning I rely on the library as my instant brains trust. The website is intuitive, the librarians knowledgeable, and the collection is constantly growing. I recommend the library to all my colleagues and our organisation's volunteer advocates.



Sarina Foulstone
Council on the Ageing NSW

“

When we went into lockdown my team needed information to make the necessary changes to online meetings and tactics that worked with physical distancing. The Commons delivered curated resources for that moment, as well as recently to support action about gendered violence. Thanks to the Commons for all the accessible training materials, refreshers on concepts and handy tips.



Eleisha Mullane
Australian Education Union

FEEDBACK FROM THE COMMONS COMMUNITY

“

I use the Commons Library frequently, as do my organiser colleagues at work. I share it with community groups I work with because your curation is always up to date and relevant, user friendly in particular the way you categorise and allow people to search for the kind of media they prefer. It's very complementary to the community organising training we run at The Wilderness Society.



Tria Manley
The Wilderness Society

“

The Commons doesn't just collect existing resources, they provide the support to create new ones. I recently put together a guide on how to name a new campaign but I wanted to know if there was existing research and analysis. I asked the Commons for help and Antje came back with an amazing collection of links. The resulting guide has greater depth and practical examples. Thank you!



Tim Singleton Norton
Pew Charitable Trust

“

I regularly hear from people how valuable The Commons Library is. For me it's the curated summaries on issues/moments/ideas and the way that means you can go broad or deep on whatever the question you're trying to answer is. A recent specific example is using the Diversity & Inclusion topic guide to help my thinking around planning a justice season for the ChangeMakers Organising School.



Isabella Morand
ChangeMakers Organising School

COMMONS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers strengthen the Commons Library which means people engaged in social change are better supported and informed.

Our volunteer program launched in February resulting in seven passionate and talented volunteers contributing to the library to shape the interests and needs of the Library, including:

- Important maintenance work on the Commons website to ensure an accessible user experience.
- Development of resource guides to make it easier for library visitors to find what they need.
- Researching social media trends and developing plans to extend the reach of the Commons Library to new audiences.

Volunteers play an important role connecting people from their communities and networks with the resources of the Commons Library. All volunteers are trained with skills including how to respond to 'movement movements' (such as the bushfires, the Covid-19 pandemic, racial justice and gender justice), approaches to research and how to develop engaging articles.

We look forward to all that becomes possible as the program grows and evolves. We particularly thank Emily De Rango for her help in setting up the volunteer program.

“

I've always used the Commons as an activist and volunteering feels like a great way to give back. I've learnt so much since starting as a volunteer: working on community mapping, writing an article for the website, and working on a social media strategy, not to mention the regular training sessions Holly and the team run for volunteers. I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of the team.



Sophie Hartley

“

I greatly appreciate having found somewhere that I can use my librarian skills to support social change. Whenever I mention the Commons Library to friends who are interested in making the world a better place, they either have already heard of it and find it invaluable, or they are so excited to hear that it exists because they know how much it will assist them in their activism.



Relle Graefe

COMMONS BOARD

The Commons Library is governed by a passionate team of leaders from across civil society.



SUE MCKINNON (Chair)

Sue (BEc, DipEd, GIA (Cert)) has a background in forensic accounting, lecturing in economics, and educating people about the complexities of poverty and the important role of grassroots community organising in making the voices of the oppressed heard through local and international advocacy. She has been treasurer for a number of organisations and is the director of the McKinnon Family Foundation.



ROBYN GULLIVER

Robyn (PhD) is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (Universities of Queensland, Queensland University of Technology and the University of Hong Kong) and author of 'Civil Resistance Against Climate Change'. She has led and served in numerous environmental and community organisations in Australia and New Zealand.



DJANGO MEROPE SYNGE

Django (BA) has worked in advocacy and Australian civil society for over 10 years. He is experienced in managing staff, reviewing and evaluating programs, developing ambitious fundraising programs, and advising organizational leadership on reform and change management. He has a particular focus on using technology to drive organizational innovation.



REBECCA GALDIES

Rebecca (BA, Hons) has a background in union and political organising and campaigning with a particular focus on aged care, higher education and inequality. Rebecca currently works as a division organiser for the National Tertiary Education Union in South Australia and has a passion for bringing together progressively minded people to help drive social change in a collaborative, culturally healthy way.



PHONG TRINH

Phong (MIR) has worked in advocacy for ten years in the youth, international development and refugee sectors. He specialises in digital marketing, communication, graphic design and strategy development. Phong currently works at Australian Progress, building the collective capacity of civil society movements.

COMMONS DONORS

The Commons Library offers its valuable resources freely to anyone with an internet connection. We could not do this without our supporters large and small. To everyone who has given so generously, thank you!

Capacity building in any sector can be over-looked and under-valued, and this is even more true for capacity building that extends across all of civil society. No matter what your favourite charity or cause is, the staff and volunteers can increase their skills and effectiveness by making use of our library resources.

In addition to crowdfunding supporters and monthly givers we appreciate the support of the following funds and larger donors.

- Alf & Meg Steel Fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
- ACME Foundation
- McKinnon Family Foundation
- Rendere Trust
- Community Impact Foundation
- Tendashoot
- Rose Gilder
- Phillip Cornwell
- Robyn Gulliver
- Judy McLennan

The Commons Library is seeking core and project funding to continue and grow our important work. See some of our priorities on the following page, or get in touch to find out other ways you can help.

“

The Commons Library is a living place with the latest and most effective tools for social change. As well as capacity building, the library reduces costs for groups as they don't have to reinvent the wheel. It is so important to support these 'behind the scenes' lower profile initiatives that are the 'glue' of the movement.



Helen Beazley

Philanthropist

2021-2022 PRIORITIES

1 Maintain and grow the Commons Library

The Commons Librarians and volunteer team will continue to monitor trends and needs, identify new content to add, curate guides, and ensure the security and accessibility of the site. We welcome new contributors and collections.

2 Reach out to new audiences

Every day the Commons Library is being discovered by new visitors. We plan to extend our reach on social media, build engagement around the country, and partner with organisations to put Commons resources in the hands of their staff, volunteers and supporters.

3 Research movement frameworks & stories

The Commons Library is increasingly providing specialist research services which benefit project partners and also lead to new additions to the public library. In 2020/21 this includes an emphasis on case studies, frameworks for scaling up social movements, and models of community organising.

4 Expand the volunteer program

The Commons Library will have a new intake of volunteers with a focus on First Nations people, people with disability, people of colour and those with lived experience seeking asylum. Participants will be trained in research, writing, interviews, and event reporting and will attend the Progress 2022 conference to source stories of social change innovation.

5 Improve accessibility & champion inclusion

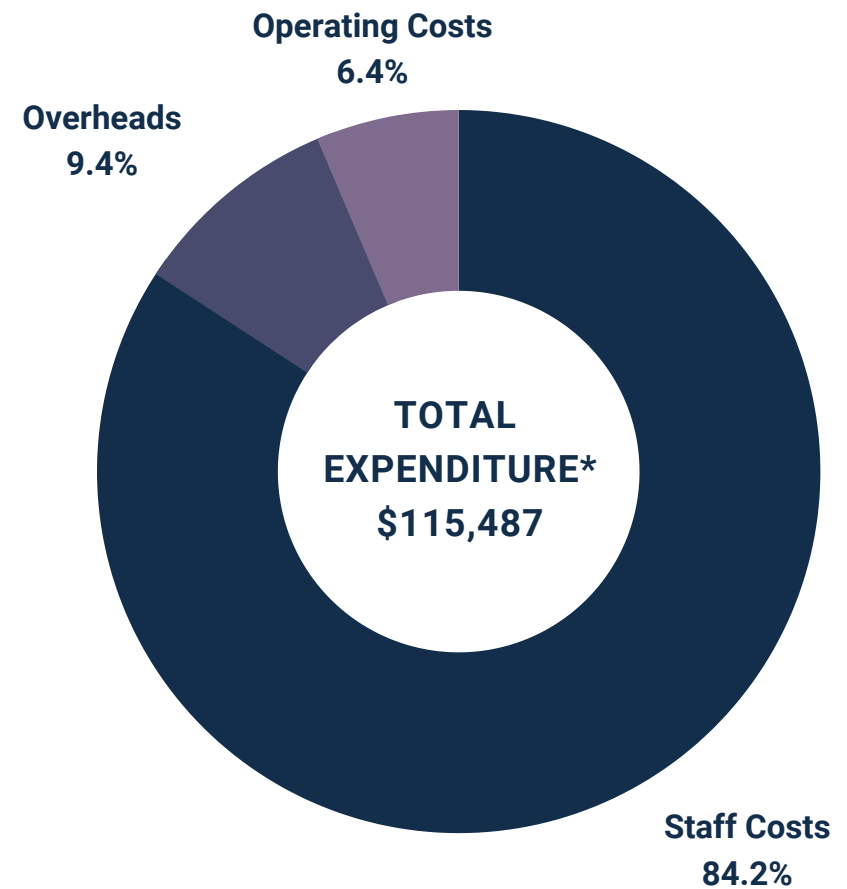
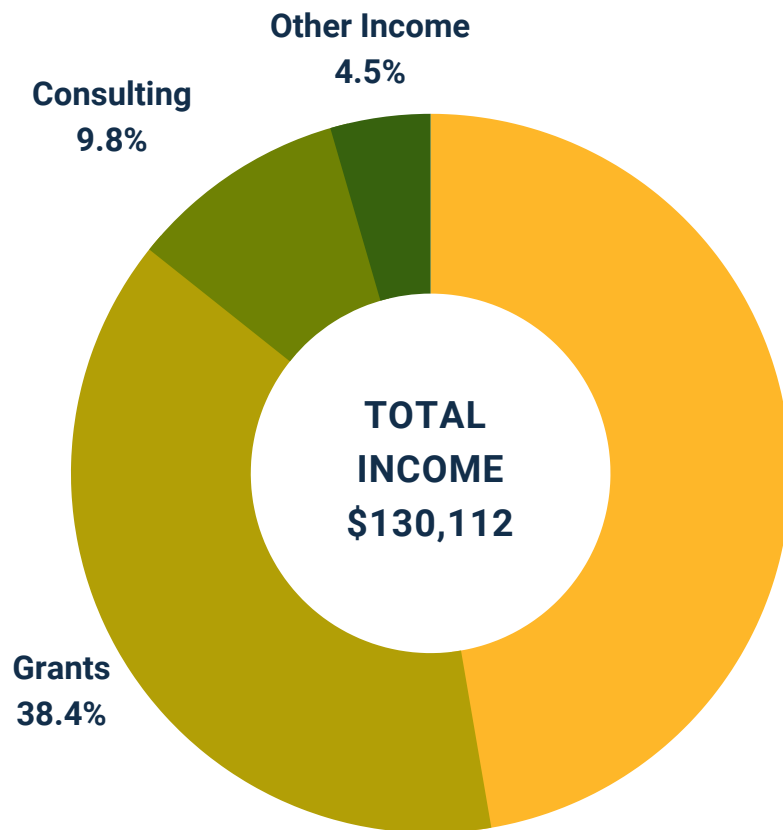
The Commons Library is seeking funding to develop and collate Easy Read resources, case studies of advocacy led by people with disabilities, and guides to accessible events, relevant technology, and consultation processes. The project will include training by Council for Intellectual Disability and input from People With Disabilities Australia.

6 Showcase innovation in social change

The Commons Library will work with our friends Australian Progress to make the stories and lessons of social change available for the long term. We will attend Progress conferences and gather articles, videos and crowd-sourced wisdom. We will also work together to identify powerful case studies from the thousands of advocates in the Progress network.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2020/21 FINANCIAL YEAR



* Non-cash items such as depreciation are not included in this figure.

THE COMMONS

Social Change Library



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