

A large, diverse crowd of people, mostly young adults, is shown from the chest up. They are all looking upwards with expressions of hope and excitement. Many of their hands are raised in the air, some with open palms, others with fingers spread. They are holding various handmade signs on cardboard. Some of the visible text on the signs includes: "CHANGE THE POLITICS NOT THE CLIMATE", "There is NO Planet B!", "CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING WHY AREN'T WE?", "PLEASE LISTEN", "DENIAL IS NOT A POLICY", "WIP PLAN", "MUM DIE", and a sign with a photo of a man. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the crowd's energy.

THE COMMONS

Social Change Library

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

COMMONSLIBRARY.ORG



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Commons pays respect 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.

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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.

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



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

It is significant whenever the spark is lit in someone to fight injustice or make the world better.

It might be the final straw, the sense that they've gone too far this time, that shakes a person out of complacency. It might be the living legacy of family and community members, encouraging a person to follow their lead. It might be an invitation to the right event, at the right time, that propels a person into action.

There may be many catalysts but as soon as you start working for social change you are learning. Learning to see the world in different ways, learning how to work with others, learning the practicalities of forms of action.

When I first became active, as a high school student, there was very little training available and no internet. I am grateful for what I learnt through action with others, and through so many meetings. I treasured the books I came across that spoke to me about different world views and what others had tried before. I was a frequent library visitor, sifting through card catalogues and shelves to find gems.

I imagine what it is like for people awakening into activism today. There's so much information available, the challenge is not to drown in it.

The Commons Library gathers the collective wisdom of people engaged in social change, in one accessible place.

Your librarians are constantly tracking needs, researching topics, responding to visitors, and liaising with contributors to build and evolve the Commons for the benefit of everyone. As our collection grows (heading towards 1000 resources) our curation to make all that information accessible is crucial. In addition to providing the public online library we have also been using our information management, research and educational skills in project work for a number of partner organisations.

There is no social change without learning.

I'm incredibly proud of all the learning the Commons Library makes possible for individuals, organisations and movements.



Holly
Hammond



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The recent Australian federal election saw a huge influx into the public space of people who had never before - and still don't - see themselves as 'activists'. The Commons Library was the place they found books, articles, videos and podcasts to help them get organised. Participating effectively in civil society to make positive change inevitably requires the skills to raise some funds, develop a political strategy, conduct a campaign, work with people in groups, manage volunteers, and more. The Commons Library was on hand with deep and broad collections that offered help to people wherever they were on their journey of civic engagement. It is no vain boast to say that the Library played a role in the extraordinary outcome we saw in 2022.

The election outcome has now created new opportunities for social change, and once again the library is playing an essential role in equipping a whole generation of new change-makers.

There are plenty of big ideas around but we need skilled people at every level and in every place to prosecute these proposals in a disciplined and planned manner to ensure success.

Local place-based organising is enjoying a resurgence, recognising leadership that already exists in communities, so what better tool to have on hand than a digital library, accessible to all?

The last year has not been an easy one across society, yet the Commons Library is still standing: we showed up, we kept going, we delivered support where we could.

We could do more if we had more, so a major focus of the board and staff is continued fundraising in order to expand our ability to reach more Australians every day and equip them with the skills they need to tell expansive stories and offer a sense of agency to those around them.

Investing in infrastructure sounds dull but is essential: good foundations make the incredible possible. The board and staff of the Commons Library are acutely aware that the generosity of our donors makes our important work a reality, and we sincerely thank you all.

Your support enables us to build civil society's capacity to learn and grow its work for the common good by providing access to high quality resources for all people who share a social conscience.

Abundant thanks are due to Holly, our wonderful Library Director, and her amazing staff Antje and Iain. Their commitment to the mission/vision of the library and consistent attention to quality is delivering a growing collection accessible to more people every day. Many thanks are also due to the wonderful behind-the-scenes volunteers who bring their valuable skills and eye for detail to many aspects of library operation. I have a debt of gratitude to Robyn, Django, Phong, and new board member Holly Dawson for their important contribution to the board, and, of course, our supportive and enthusiastic community of library users.



Sue
McKinnon



1 MILLION+
PEOPLE

have engaged with the social change resources
of the Commons Library

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE YEAR

1 Over one million visitors!

The Commons Library averages 1500 visitors per day from around the world. We passed the one million visits mark in February, two months before our third birthday. Commons Library materials are used in many educational courses, provide orientation and training resources for countless organisation, and are being applied to hundreds of campaigns.

2 Mapping models of organising

The Commons Library is partnering with Australian Progress to undertake important research into organising models in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Beth Koch, Anita Tang and Holly Hammond launched the project at the FWD+Organise conference with a workshop featuring three case studies.

3 Reporting from FWD+Organise

The Commons staff and volunteers attended FWD+Organise in December 2021. It was a great opportunity to monitor trends in social change and find out about important innovations. The team liaised with speakers, gathered resources, wrote articles, and provided resource recommendations in the event chat.

4 Launch of the LCN Resource Centre

The Leading Change Network engaged the Commons to review and update their Resource Center. Marshall Ganz, Mais Irquisi, Holly Hammond and members of the LCN international community launched the new Resource Center in early 2022. Well done to Antje Dun for all her excellent work on this project, which includes ongoing support.

5 Resources to support election engagement

The lead up to elections can be a hectic time for people engaged in social change. Many people become activated and there's an opening to get issues on the agenda. The Commons Librarians collated comprehensive resource guides on campaign skills, case studies, and concepts and tensions related to elections.

6 Commons Skills Sessions

The whole Commons project relates to informing and developing the skills of people engaged in social change. We realised that the Commons Librarians have particular skills that we could share by opening up our volunteer training sessions to everyone who is interested. Of course each skill session has follow up resources available in the Commons for perpetuity.

WHAT WE DO

1 The 'go-to portal' for social change

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 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 Work with others on 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.

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:



**1000+ Resources to
Read, Watch & Listen**



**450+ Contributors
Active in Social Change**



**30 Collections from
Social Change Partners**

EXPLORE THE COMMONS

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

- 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 the 'Start Here' guides.



KEY RESOURCES

Learn about some of the resources featured in our monthly newsletters.



1

July

Guide to First Nations Resources

This guide was put together for NAIDOC week. It features campaign case studies; First Nations perspectives on a range of issues; tools and training guides; and tips for non-Indigenous allies seeking to act in solidarity.

2

August

Transformative Justice

This article by Commons volunteer ET Smith introduces some of the key concepts of transformative justice such as community accountability and restorative Justice. It also curates links to a wide array of resources.

3

September

Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan and Four Roles of Activism

Frequently one of our most visited resources. Learn about and understand the ups and downs of social movements from Bill Moyer's Movement Action Plan and the Four Roles of Activism.

4

October

Leadership for community organisers

Max Smith, of the Community Organising Fellowship outlines core practices of leadership for community organisers, with relevance for many other kinds of roles in social change.

5

November

Supporting Transgender and Gender Diverse People in the Workplace

An insightful guide to how social change organisations can create more empowering environments for transgender and gender diverse activists to work and grow in.

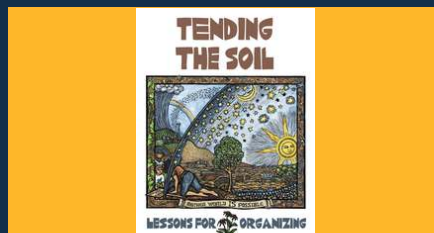
6

December

Cell Phones for Collective Action

Koketso Moeti from amandla.mobi shares how her path into activism has shaped the formation of the South African digital engagement platform focused on mobile. Reported from FWD+Organise 2021.

KEY RESOURCES



7 January

Tending the Soil: Lessons for Organizing

Ricardo Levins Morales, US artist and organiser, shares his wisdom, lessons and artwork from over five decades of organizing.

8 February

Campaign Monitoring and Evaluation: Measuring What Matters

How can we equip ourselves to design effective monitoring and evaluation approaches for campaigns, movement building and organising work?

9 March

Dealing with Far-Right Interventions in Our Movements

Far-right activists and conspiracists are intervening in progressive movements. There are eight ways activists and organisers can respond.

10 April

Elections and Activism: Campaign Skills

This collection provides how-to guides and resources regarding the skills and tactics you'll need to reach your goals in election time.

11 May

Running Effective Campaign Debriefs

Tips for campaigners and facilitators to plan for the post-campaign period and run effective campaign debriefs.

12 June

Make the First 100 Days Count

Resources gathered to make the first 100 days count after an election, hold the new government to account and bring about change.

COLLECTIONS

The Commons Social Change Library includes 30 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.



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.

In 2021/22 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.

Projects included:

- Royal Australasian College of Physicians: development on an online advocacy resource and training sessions
- Leading Change Network: review and design of the LCN Resource Center and ongoing maintenance
- Sunrise Project: development of campaign case studies and input into the climate movement mapping survey

In the year ahead we are partnering with:

- The Global Grassroots Support Network to host a new collection
- The Australian Trade Union Institute to support the development of their new resource hub

The boxes on the right summarise some of the services the Commons librarians are able to provide. We welcome enquiries in a range of areas.

On the following page you'll find testimonials from our happy clients and collaborators.



FEEDBACK FROM PROJECT PARTNERS

“

It's a delight to be working with The Commons on our project: Mapping Community Organising Models. We share a passion for deepening our collective knowledge around community organising. Holly and the team bring valuable experience in collecting, collating, and disseminating practice wisdom to the project that will make it all the more useful for the progressive sector.



Anita Tang
Australian Progress

“

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 have launched 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 Commons Library helped the Community Organising Fellowship review and update our collection of training resources for 2022. Holly Hammond used her knowledge and experience as both a librarian and training facilitator to guide us through what was a very big project. We've received excellent feedback about the comprehensive quality of our resource library this year. Fellows are using the new resources in their campaigning and organising practice every day.



Max Smith
Community Organising Fellowship

FEEDBACK FROM LIBRARY USERS

“

The lead up to the 2022 election was a hectic time for many communities as they grappled with forming community organisations, selecting candidates and running campaigns. A big shoutout and bucket loads of gratitude to The Commons Library for all your work. If it was within my power, I would proclaim you "a national treasure". The library of extensive resources complimented by the relevant and timely updates were incredibly valuable.



Cathy McGowan AO

**Former MP for Indi
& Director of The Community
Independents Project**

“

Working in a not-for-profit I am always working with students on placement and volunteers and it's great to be able to send them to The Commons so that they can quickly get up to speed. They all come back excited about it and it becomes their go-to every time I give them a task. It saves so much time in preparation and we get the work done faster.



Katrina Ironside

**Capacity Building Coordinator,
Community Legal Centres NSW**

“

We all want to see real action on the key issues that matter. The Commons provides the resources for people to take the power into their own hands, to plan strategically in self-determining ways.



Jessica Morrison

**Australian Palestine
Advocacy Network**

FEEDBACK FROM LIBRARY USERS

“

The Commons is an incredible go to for campaign, organising and movement wisdom. Our team refers to it on a regular basis, and shares its resources with the grassroots leaders and groups that we work with. We've often found that just as we are thinking about a particular topic or theme, a series of excellent resources appears on The Commons. This is a sign of how well attuned the librarians are to the movement's needs and energy.



Charlie Wood

**Campaigner & Capacity
Builder, Tipping Point**

“

When I came across the Commons it really blew me away. I had never seen a resource centre that was alive where you can actually find things. There are many different kinds of resource centres - there's the back of the closet where things accumulate, there's the filing cabinet you never go back to... This is the opposite, a living resource centre: growing, adapting and thriving!



Marshall Ganz

**Harvard Professor &
Organising Leader**

“

The Commons Library was an invaluable resource in the early days of Veterinarians for Climate Action. The majority of our community were new to campaigning, advocating and organising. As CEO, I regularly drew on the resources provided by the Commons Library to introduce key concepts to our community. These resources helped guide members through the process of understanding and harnessing their power for positive change.



Alix Foster Vander Elst

CEO, Vets for Climate Action

COMMONS DONORS

Over the last year the Commons Library has consolidated its financial position from a mix of sources:

- core funding
- project funding
- project partnerships
- donations
- monthly subscriptions

Thank you to all our supporters, big and small!

Your commitment to the Commons Library puts crucial resources in the hands of change makers.

“

Supporting the Commons Library is an important investment in a future of more effective organising and social change making, not just for any one cause, but for all causes.



Winnifred Louis
Professor of Social Psychology

2021/22 Philanthropic Supporters

- John T Reid Foundation
- ACME Foundation
- McKinnon Family Foundation
- Rendere Trust
- Community Impact Foundation
- Tendashoot
- Rose Gilder
- Phillip Cornwell
- Robyn Gulliver
- Judy McLennan

Contributors to the Organising Models Mapping Project

- Australian Conservation Foundation
- Amnesty International Australia
- 350.org
- ActionAid
- Foundation for Young Australians

We would also like to acknowledge funders for the 2022/23 financial year including State Trustees Victoria and the Alf & Meg Steel Fund of the Australian Communities Foundation.

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.

COMMONS BOARD



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 Research Fellow at Australian National University and the University of Queensland. She researches the antecedents and consequences of environmental activism. She is the author of 'Civil Resistance Against Climate Change' and 'The Psychology of Effective Activism'. She has led and served in numerous environmental and community organisations in Australia and New Zealand.



DJANGO MEROPÉ SYNGÉ

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.

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



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 10 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 to achieve systemic change.



HOLLY DAWSON

Holly is a descendant of the Bunurong people and grew up in Boorloo (Perth) on Nyoongar Country. She has worked as a campaigner and strategist for international organisations and environmental advocacy groups with a strong focus on movement building and knowledge sharing. She has almost 10 years experience. Holly works at the Online Progressive Engagement Network which supports 20 digital first advocacy groups across 20 countries facilitating learning and coordinating transnational campaigns.

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 over 30 years of social change experience, with 17 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.



AOIFE CARLI HANNAN
Fundraising Coordinator

Aoife is the newest member of the Commons Library team. Her primary focus is on coordinating the library's fundraising campaigns. Drawing on six years of grassroots fundraising, Aoife is interested in identifying and expanding on new and existing opportunities. In addition to her work at the Commons, Aoife also works for Friends of Aileu - supporting projects in health, sustainability, and women's rights in Timor-Leste.

We would also like to thank Claire Turner for bookkeeping, Organise Us for social media support, and Glenn Todd from Action Skills for crucial website maintenance.

COMMONS VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers contribute new ideas, skills, interesting resources, community connections and reliable support that makes the Commons Library stronger.

The second year of the Commons volunteer program involved trialling new ways to work with volunteers through the twists and turns of the pandemic, climate impacts, and the federal election.

Volunteers reported from the FWD+Organise conference in December 2021, gathering resources to amplify the impact of the conference.

Volunteers developed a number of resource guides to make it easier for library visitors to find what they need. They also undertook important maintenance work on the Commons website to ensure an accessible user experience.

In June we opened up our volunteer training to anyone interested in the skills of developing resources to support social change (including book reviews, interviews, infographics and case studies).

In the second half of 2022 we will support volunteers to interview campaigners and community leaders. This interview series will highlight innovative social change work led by First Nations people, people with lived experience seeking asylum, and people with disability.

Thanks to the funders who have supported the volunteer program in 2021/22 including the John T Reid Foundation, and a number of contributors listed in the Commons Donors section of this report.

Many thanks to all our volunteers for your valuable contributions to the Commons!

“

I began volunteering with the Commons to leverage my experience in curating resources to support their valuable community service. Since then, the volunteer program has provided training and ongoing support that has helped me build new skills.

Along the way, my capacity to volunteer has fluctuated and yet I have always felt like a valued part of the team and remain highly motivated to contribute.



E.T. Smith

2022-2023 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 Expand our reach to new audiences

The Commons is a public library for the benefit of the Australian public. Not surprisingly, a large proportion of our visitors are located in the bigger cities on the east coast. With support through the Australian Communities Foundation we will intentionally connect with people around the country.

3 Amplify the voices of lived experience

With the support of the John T Reid foundation the Commons will partner with Australian Progress to carry out interviews with First Nations leaders, people with disability, people with lived experience seeking asylum, showcasing innovation in social change.

4 Map organising models in Australia & NZ

The Commons Library is partnering with Australian Progress to undertake important research into organising models in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. A survey was distributed and has gathered many valuable insights. Articles exploring themes from the survey and case studies will be released in late 2022.

5 Improve accessibility & champion inclusion

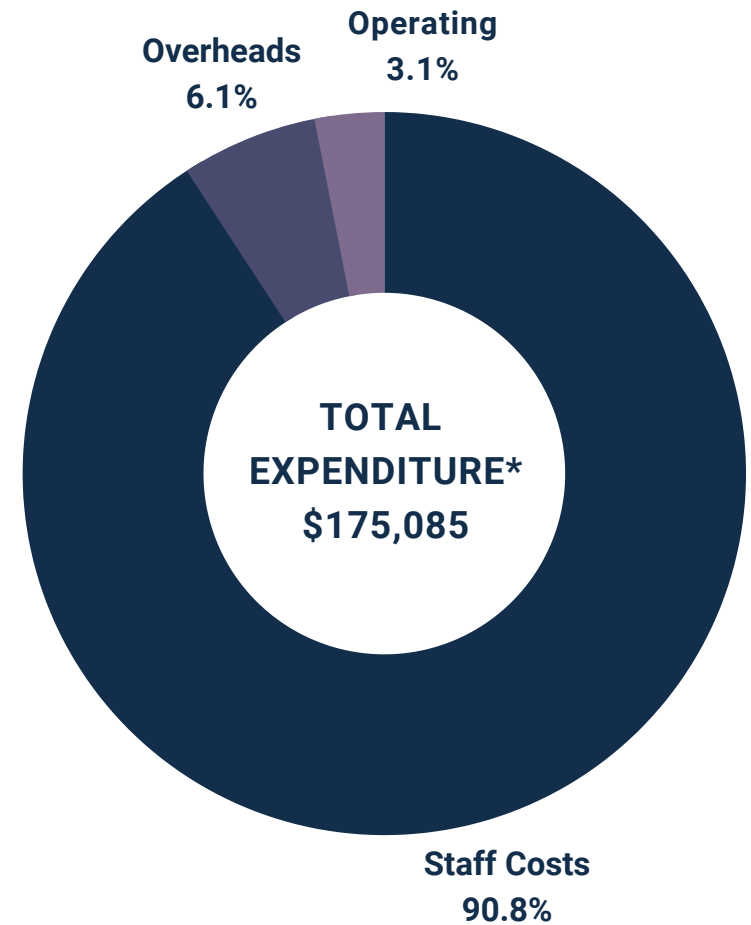
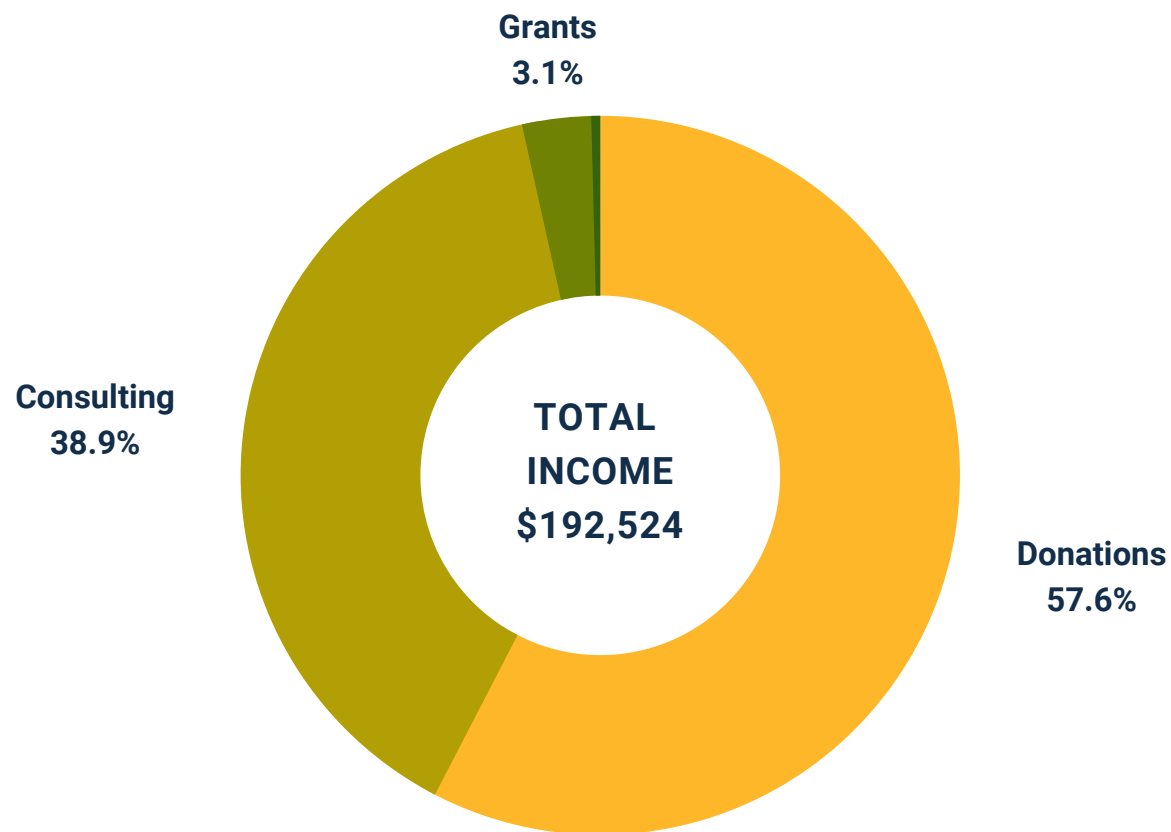
State Trustess Victoria have funded the Commons to develop and collate Easy Read resources, case studies of advocacy led by people with disabilities, and guides to accessible events, relevant technology, and consultation processes. The project will include training by Council for Intellectual Disability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

6 Build the Commons Community

The Commons has become a much loved progressive institution. We intend to be here for the long term! As demand for the Commons Library increases it is imperative we develop a strong foundation for our long term growth. We are grateful to our regular donors who make our work possible.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

2021/22 FINANCIAL YEAR



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



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