



Living Proud

LGBTIQ+ Community Services of WA



ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024



Always Living Proud



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CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

Barry Cosker
Chairperson

As always, it is my great honour to introduce the Living Proud Annual Report. Once again, reflecting on the year past gives us chance to pause and allow ourselves to fully absorb just how much progress has been made in growing the organisation, how much support we have provided to the community throughout Western Australia, and how much we have continued to actively advocate for change.

The 2022/23 Annual Report painted a picture of a resilient and resurgent organisation, supported at all levels by deeply passionate and capable people. I am so proud that we have not only continued to build upon that renewed foundation but also achieved some truly momentous successes; high on the list being securing much-needed funding from the State Government, appointing our inaugural Chief Executive Officer, being a founding member of the State Government's 'Whole of Government' LGBTIQA+ Inclusion Strategy Reference Group, and publishing our ground-breaking LGBTIQA+ Primary Health Care Priorities report.

Each of these will be pivotal as we move through our golden year celebrations and then onwards into our next 50 years serving the community and improving the lives of LGBTIQA+SB folk across Western Australia.

On behalf of the Board and the community I would like to give deep thanks to all our staff, our volunteers, our supporters and our stakeholders – both past and present. Without you, Living Proud would not exist.

In closing, it would be lovely if you are able to join us at one of our many 50th birthday celebratory events taking place throughout the year. I am so excited to see what the next year brings for Living Proud and I hope you are too.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP 2023/24

The Board wishes to thank Erin Leahy and Tony Lee who both stood down during 2024, and it extends a warm welcome to Grace Cayley who joined as a new Ordinary Member.

The Board would also like to thank Meaghan Holden who stood down from the Board upon their successful appointment as the Living Proud CEO.

- Barry Cosker – Chairperson
- Meaghan Holden – Co Vice Chairperson (resigned June 2024)
- Erin Leahy – Co Vice Chairperson (resigned June 2024)
- Sam Gibbings – Treasurer
- Daniel Smith – Ordinary Member (Acting Secretary from March 2024)
- Sarah Turner – Ordinary Member
- Laurene Coller – Ordinary Member
- Ben Nowrojee – Ordinary Member
- Tony Lee – Ordinary Member (resigned May 2024)
- Grace Cayley – Ordinary Member (from December 2023)

Strengthening and diversifying our Board remains a key organisational objective and we are always keen to receive expressions of interest to join our board.

If you are passionate about making a difference, then we'd love to hear from you at chairperson@livingproud.org.au.

OUR VALUES

Pride

Integrity

Community
&
Connections

Working
Together

Building
Capacity of
Others

Respect

PRINCIPLES

Positive
Change

Resilient
Workforce

Continuous
Improvement

Effective
Decision
Making

Partnerships

Non-
discrimination
& Equality



CEO'S REPORT

Meaghan Holden

CEO

It is a great honour to present my first report as the inaugural CEO of Living Proud. I want to start by recognising and paying deep respect to the many individuals who have built this organisation over the past five decades. Living Proud stands where it is today because of their tireless commitment, unwavering courage, and dedication to serving our LGBTIQ+ communities in Western Australia. I acknowledge the struggles, the barriers they overcame, and the path they forged so that this organisation could continue to make a difference. I recognise that I am the custodian of their efforts and am charged with building on their work and carrying it forward.

In my short time as CEO, I have been inspired by the people who breathe life into Living Proud. To our staff, who bring compassion, skill, and a deep sense of purpose to their work every day – thank you. To our incredible volunteers, who give their time and energy to ensure that our community has access to support, connection, and care – thank you. To our Board, who provide invaluable guidance, governance, and vision for our future – thank you. It is truly a privilege to lead this organisation alongside you all.

This year has been one of change, growth, and renewal. From strengthening our internal structures to developing new partnerships, we have worked together to lay the foundations for a strong and sustainable future. Yet, at our core, our mission remains the same: to meet the needs of our community, to provide meaningful support, and to improve the wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ people across Western Australia.

As we look forward, I am excited about what lies ahead. We are embarking on important new initiatives that will respond to the ever-evolving needs of our community. This is not work that we do alone. In addition to our ongoing work, we are also prioritising collaboration with other organisations and partners. By sharing knowledge, resources, and expertise, we can broaden our reach and strengthen our collective impact. Living Proud is committed to working together, to lifting each other up and to strengthening services and supports.

Thank you for your continued trust, support, and passion for Living Proud.

OPERATIONS REPORT 2023–2024

Staff

The 2023 – 2024 year was one that was filled with change and possibility. We said goodbye to Jaini Shah, Michael Atkinson, Sam Lynch, Jack Meakins, Robyn Litvins-Salter and some of our QLife Peer Supporters*. We would like to sincerely thank all of these people for their hard work, commitment and contributions to the work of Living Proud and to the LGBTIQ+ Community in WA.

With the WA State Government announcing funding for LGBTIQ+SB community service organisations, Living Proud undertook a review of the structure to set our foundations for the future. The reviewed structure saw the introduction of:

- Our first Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- A Services Manager to oversee the development and delivery of our direct service programs
- An Events Officer and
- The merging of the Living Proud Volunteer Coordinator and the QLife Volunteer Coordinator.

Some more changes are planned to support our business development and to expand our service delivery programs.

These changes are an exciting step forward for Living Proud and place us in a strong position for the future as we continue to work to support the LGBTIQ+SB community in WA.

**Names of some service delivery staff are withheld for safety reasons.*

TRAINING & CONSULTANCY



53

sessions delivered across WA

35 in metro
2 in Bunbury
2 in Busselton
5 in Geraldton
2 in Newman



7 online

Participant Feedback

"So interesting & insightful. It felt like a really safe space where we could discuss issues raised openly. Sarah was a wonderful facilitator. I wish everyone could do this training. Often the people who don't do it are the ones who need it most"



97.2%
rated the training
content and the
facilitators
'Excellent'

95.1%
reported their capability
to welcome LGBTI people
to their service increased

97.9%
reported their
understanding of LGBTI
issues has increased

QLIFE & QPROGRAM

Support provided to WA:

1061
calls

1018
webchats

583
hours phone
& webchat
support

Since the launch of QLife in 2013, there is increasing complexity in the issues being presented at QLife. QLife's support relates to discrimination & violence, family & domestic violence, sexual assault, suicide, mental health issues, trauma and other psychological distress. QLife is a critical, indispensable service to the community and has provided support to people at some of the hardest times of their lives.

The service continued to offer peer connection and support to people who can't access these vital aspects of life where they are due to geographical distance, disability or family violence, or a lack of acceptance from people around them. The program measures its impact by supporting people to stay alive. Every time we respond to a call or chat, we are undertaking suicide prevention and intervention.

Thankyou to the QLife volunteers who show up every week to support their communities and be the person on the other end of the phone (and webchat) many of them wish they had when they were questioning their own sexuality or gender.



*"Living in a remote community
there is no one I can talk to
about my LGBTI issues and I
really appreciate the
compassion and understanding
that was shown to me."*

QLife service user

QLife Highlights of the Year

MICHELLE HUNTER (SHE/HER) JOINED AS SERVICES MANAGER.

Michelle is a proud Queer social worker of 20 years having worked in areas such as homelessness, mental health, family and domestic violence, justice, women's services, carer services, academic social work research, health, LGBTIQ+ inclusion and HIV spaces.



Michelle Hunter

This is not not Michelle's first time with Living Proud. Many years ago, Michelle was a volunteer 'telephone counsellor' when the organisation was known as GLCS.

Michelle is a passionate advocate for the LGBTIQ+SB community and a strong commitment to building meaningful, collaborative partnerships across the sector to ensure LGBTIQ+ folk in WA and nationally have access to supports they may need to thrive and lead healthy and well lives.

Michelle is a proud queer mum of two young children who keep her grounded and inspire her to work to make a difference in this world.

We are so pleased to welcome Michelle and excited to work with her in the future!

"Really insightful advice only a queer person could give. I tried 6 months of therapy to no avail but just one webchat with the right person really helped me move forward. Thank you!"

QLife service user

QLIFE CELEBRATED 10 YEARS AS A NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND SERVICE PROVIDER.

In December 2023, QLife celebrated a decade of QLife's impact at a special event at Parliament House in Canberra.



QLife 10 year event (Parliament House Canberra - December 2023).

Attended by: Senator Louise Pratt, Hon Warren Entsch MP, Stephan Bates MP, Hon Patrick Gorman MP and representatives from LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, Living Proud, Twenty 10, Diverse Voices, Switchboard Victoria. Colin Longworth (Living Proud volunteer, centre)

Our very own Colin Longworth, a volunteer at Living Proud since the 1980s (pictured centre) spoke to the federal representatives

"The main change I'd love to see is extra funding for the organisation to staff phones, particularly in periods of high demand, so fewer people have to wait to get through," he said.

"When another decade has passed, I hope conversion therapy is outlawed federally, and there's less of a general heterosexual assumption in society."

-Colin Longworth

QLife and Living Proud are committed to continuing to support our community and to advocate for law reform and social change.

QLIFE WAS AWARDED ACCREDITATION TO THE NATIONAL SAFETY AND QUALITY DIGITAL MENTAL HEALTH STANDARDS.



Qlife was awarded Qlife was awarded accreditation to the National Safety and Quality Digital Mental Health Standards, a significant vote of confidence in the standard and delivery of the service.

After many months of hard work across QLife's partner sites, our lead partner, LGBTIQ+ Health Australia, was granted the accreditation. This achievement, and QLife's 10-year milestone, signal the service's quality and consistency amid ongoing growth in demand.

National QLife Impact Report (2022 – 2023)



of service users felt it was important QLife is a LGBTIQ+SB specific service.



of service users felt it was important they were supported by someone from the LGBTIQ+SB community.



reported that it was important for them to contact QLife today.



of service users report they feel less distress after speaking to QLife.



would contact QLife again if they needed more support.

"Thank you so much. It is so important to reach out to someone from my own community."

QLife service user

QProgram

Living Proud is a proud partner delivering a pilot program, **QProgram**, to offer an enhanced QLife Service.

The focus of QProgram is on improving the mental health outcomes for participants with multiple unmet needs, improving strategies for managing distress and fostering a sense of belonging and connection.

Experienced peers supporters work with participants through a telephone and SMS based outreach model of care to assist them to identify and achieve their personal goals, to enhance their self-efficacy. A key part of this program is provision of gender affirming care.



QLife representatives from around the country gathered in Melbourne.

QLife is a national service operated in partnership with:

LEAD PARTNER



NSW



QLD



VIC



WA



PROUD & CONNECTED GRANTS

In partnership with the Mental Health Commission we were delighted to launch our new small grants initiative, the Proud and Connected Grants Scheme.

The aim of this program is to increase connection and build resilience within the LGBTIQA+ community, while aligning with outcomes outlined in the Commission's WA Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-2025.



Government of Western Australia
Mental Health Commission



Living Proud
LGBTIQ+ Community Services of WA

The small grants were made available specifically to LGBTIQA+ community groups and organisations with the following eleven recipients awarded a total of \$150,000:

- GRAI – WA Quality of Life Survey
- Kimberley Blak Pride – Kimberley Blak Pride Festival 2024
- Out South West – Dining for Diversity Luncheon and Workshop
- Albany Pride – Albany Pride Support Group
- OUTMidWest – Regional Training Pilot
- PFLAG – Supporting Regional PFLAG+ Groups and Events
- Queernarvon – Queernarvon Festival weekend
- TransFolk of WA – Training for Peer Support Groups
- Busselton Pride Alliance Inc – Empowered and Connected Festival: Busselton
- Ending Conversion Practices WA – Development of a Conversion Practices Survivors Network
- Care Collaborative – QUILTBAG sewing workshops

The initiative was incredibly successful in connecting community, building capacity of organisations and community groups, developing information and resources and delivering training. This was an incredible opportunity for groups that do not normally have access to the resources to undertake such activities and it strengthen, motivated and inspired them!

Living Proud would like to express our gratitude to the Mental Health Commission for supporting this project. Feedback from recipients and attendees was overwhelmingly positive and we hope there will be future opportunities to do this in the coming year.

Living Proud was able to develop deeper relationships with the 11 LGBTQIA+SB groups selected. It's hard to quantify the depth of relationship building this project was able to achieve. It gave us the opportunity to speak with all these groups in a capacity we hadn't previously been able to. We learnt about each organisation's capacity and goals and were able to share the resources we had to offer



Geraldton
Opening Closets Training
for LGBTQIA+ Community

Half Day Workshop

The half day workshop runs for 4 hours and covers the following:

- ✓ An introduction to LGBTQIA+ mental health
- ✓ A model of sexual diversity
- ✓ Sex and gender concepts and terminology
- ✓ Inclusive practise guidelines
- ✓ Understanding the impact of homophobia
- ✓ A framework for supporting LGBTQIA+ people

This is a very interactive training. The training gives participants opportunity for discussion and questions.

Time 12pm - 4pm	Date: Tuesday February 6th	NEW Venue: Geraldton Library Meeting Room 37 Marine Terrace
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Healing Spiritual Harms

Free Training to Support Survivors of Sexual Orientation & Gender Identity Change Efforts, and the LGBTQIA+ Conversion Movement

Boorloo (Perth)

Sunday 7 April
OR
Monday 8 April

Expressions of Interest
Now Open



LGBT+ and 50+
Loneliness and quality of life
under the rainbow

Research design and report
by Dr Frances Goodwin (PhD)

2024 update supported by
Living Proud Community grant

With the generous and professional quality of the research design and report, the research project is a landmark in the field of research on the loneliness of older LGBT+ people. Dr Frances Goodwin, 2024

GRAI Rights in Ageing Inc. 2024



VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are our foundation and our backbone. They are the reason Living Proud has existed for 50 years. They are the reason we have been able to operate a support line to LGBTIQ+SB community in WA over several decades. They are the reason that we are able to remain connected to community.

The decline in volunteering during COVID-19 was substantial with nearly two thirds of volunteers (66%) estimated to have stopped volunteering between February and April 2020. This reduction in volunteering across Australia is equivalent to 12.2 million hours per week.

Volunteering and the ongoing impact of COVID-19, Volunteering Australia (May 2021)



Living Proud has undertaken to rebuild volunteering in Living Proud and the LGBTIQ+SB community following the international decline in volunteering rates during COVID. We have explored opportunities such as peer support, events and office support and recruited 19 new office and events volunteers in the 2023 - 2024 financial year.



We know that volunteering is a mutually beneficial undertaking that enriches the volunteer, the community recipients and the organisation. For many it is an opportunity to “give back” to community, to be the person they wish they had when they needed help, it is an opportunity to meet others in community in a way that doesn’t involve clubs or bars. Volunteers had supported us through community peer support, social media, supporting events, developing the volunteer program and working on projects.



Sarah Collins presenting at Volunteering WA State Conference

In November 2023, Sarah Collins (Volunteer Coordinator) presented at the Volunteering WA State Conference. Sarah's presentation *"Supporting Peer Volunteers Amidst Adverse Public Discourse: Insights from Living Proud WA"* explored peer volunteering and how both the service recipient and the peer volunteer face similar challenges when there is negative media and public debate around marginalised communities. Sarah explored how Living Proud supports its Peer Supporter volunteers, with particular focus on the lead up to the 2017 marriage equality postal vote and the public discourse about trans and gender diverse people and identities.

Sarah offered strategies for supporting volunteers through times of collective adversity.

By prioritising the volunteer experience, Living Proud has established effective strategies for supporting volunteers during periods of negative public discourse, which has parallels with other societal issues and volunteers living at the intersection of multiple minority or marginalised groups

Living Proud is incredibly grateful to all our volunteers for their support, commitment and generosity. Whatever way you contribute, know that it has a massive impact and we couldn't do it without you!

If anyone is interested in joining Living Proud, email volunteerco@livingproud.org.au

QUEER & ACCESSIBLE PROJECT

The 2023–2024 period offered fantastic opportunities to enhance accessibility for queer people with disability and increase the visibility of Living Proud and the Q&A Project. We were able to provide access information to various event organizers, which significantly improved accessibility and boosted attendance by people with disability. One of our key achievements was offering the Access Concierge service at five events, which helped attendees navigate and fully participate in these activities.

Additionally, we established Living Proud/Q&A information stalls at several events, including the Disability Expo at the Perth Convention Centre.

The Q&A Project is a federally funded Information, Linkages and Capacity ILC Grant, which enables us to collaborate with partners, undertake impact & needs assessment studies, and work to improve the accessibility of queer spaces for people with disability.



These stalls proved invaluable in providing essential information to community members. We also contributed funds to enhance accessibility features at events like Transfolk, Pride Fairday, Barn Dance, and more, ensuring that these events were more inclusive for people with disability.

Our efforts extended beyond event support, as we engaged in multiple conversations with stakeholders about access appraisals. This helped us strengthen relationships and build new connections for future collaboration on ongoing accessibility initiatives.

We were able to further relationships with groups we've supported in the past, such as Pride WA, while also cultivating new partnerships with organizations like the Barn Dance team and Team Perth.



A standout project for us was the development of The Zone, a concept created in consultation with the community. This was brought to life at Pride Fairday 2023, where The Zone became a Queer Disability Pride Zone.

It served as a one-stop shop for information, resources, and service providers catering to queer people with disability. We also hosted our own stage featuring performances by queer or ally artists with disabilities, which was a huge hit. In addition to this, there were roving entertainers, games, face painting, chill zones, and plenty of fun, making The Zone a memorable and engaging space for everyone.



Events supported by Queer & Accessible



**Team Perth
Faction
Carnival
2023**



**Pride Parade
2023**



**Pride
Fairday 2023**



**Barn Dance
2023**



**Spectres
Basket-Ball
2024**



**'The Zone' at
Pride
Fairday 2023**

OTHER HIGHLIGHTS

LGBTIQA+ Primary Health Care Priorities in Western Australia: Insights for Advocacy and Action

The LGBTIQA+ Primary Health Care Priorities in Western Australia: Insights for Advocacy and Action report, produced by the Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health (CERIPH) in partnership with Living Proud, highlights the critical health disparities faced by LGBTIQA+ communities across Western Australia. Despite being a recognised priority population in various state and national strategies, LGBTIQA+ individuals continue to experience poorer health outcomes compared to the broader population, exacerbated by systemic barriers such as discrimination, stigma, and a lack of culturally competent healthcare services. The report draws on extensive community consultation, surveys, and desktop reviews to provide an evidence-based understanding of the health needs and priorities of LGBTIQA+ people, particularly those in regional, rural, and remote areas.

A key finding of the report is the under-resourced and volunteer-driven nature of LGBTIQA+ community-controlled health services, which are essential in providing inclusive, affirming, and safe care. The reliance on volunteers and inconsistent funding hampers the ability of these organizations to meet growing demands for primary health care, especially for transgender, intersex, and other marginalised groups within the LGBTIQA+ spectrum. Furthermore, mainstream health services often lack the training and awareness needed to provide appropriate care, contributing to experiences of stigma and exclusion that discourage many individuals from seeking medical support.

The report's Agenda for Action outlines a clear path forward to address these challenges through increased funding, policy reform, and collaboration between government bodies, community-controlled organisations, and mainstream healthcare providers.



Make tomorrow better.



Specific recommendations include the development of a state-wide comprehensive primary health service for LGBTIQ+ people, expansion of peer-led trans-specific services, and targeted health promotion initiatives. The WA Primary Health Alliance is highlighted as a key stakeholder in mobilising resources to support these actions, particularly in funding new programs and facilitating partnerships to improve access to care across the state.

This report serves as a foundational roadmap for achieving equity in health outcomes for LGBTIQ+ communities in Western Australia. By addressing the identified barriers and prioritising inclusive, intersectional approaches, policymakers and healthcare providers can make meaningful strides toward reducing disparities. The findings also emphasise the importance of centering LGBTIQ+ voices in the co-design and delivery of health services to ensure culturally safe and affirming care. Ultimately, implementing the report's recommendations will contribute to a more inclusive and responsive health system that supports the diverse needs of LGBTIQ+ people across Western Australia.

Living Proud would like to sincerely thank the project team: Dr Jonathan Hallett, Dr Shoshana Rosenberg, Associate Professor Gemma Crawford, Michael Atkinson, Corie Gray and Thomas Trainer. We would also like to thank the organisations and individuals who contributed their time, thoughts and experience to inform the report.

We look forward to continuing our work with Dr Hallett and CERIPH to action the report in the coming year.

Government funding

In February 2024, the Cook Government committed \$900,000 to develop Western Australia's first LGBTQIA+ Inclusion Strategy, aiming to advance equality, reduce discrimination, and improve outcomes for LGBTQIA+ people.

This two-year initiative, led by the Department of Communities, established WA's first peak body for LGBTQIA+ community, to oversee implementation and ensure collaboration across government agencies. Additionally, it government also included dedicated funding for Living Proud, TransFolk of WA, and GRAI. This has been a 'game changer' for Living Proud and the sector as it has allowed us to work with government, community and each other in a way that has never been possible due to a lack of resources.

The strategy addresses significant challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ people, such as stigma, exclusion, and barriers to accessing services. By fostering partnerships and promoting inclusive practices, it aims to improve health, social, and economic outcomes, creating a safer and more equitable community. This initiative builds on previous consultations and highlights the government's commitment to systemic, long-term change for LGBTQIA+ Western Australians.

Living Proud would like to thank Rainbow Futures for its tireless advocacy resulting in the funding and the development of the strategy.



L-R: David Gibson (GRAI), Sam Gibbings (Living Proud), Hon. Hanna Beazley MP, Misty Farquhar OAM (Rainbow Futures, Nat Latter (Rainbow Futures), Dylan Green (Transfolk WA)



TREASURER'S REPORT

Sam Gibbings
Treasurer

The financial year ending 30 June 2024 marked a period of significant investment for Living Proud, strategically aimed at fostering organisational growth, while maintaining our core mission of providing vital social and peer support to the community.

Several key financial initiatives contributed to our progress. The transition to Beyond Bank has enhanced our financial flexibility, two \$250,000 fixed-term deposits at six-monthly intervals, combined with interest accrued on operational accounts, resulted in a substantial increase in interest income, rising from \$520 last year to \$32,766 this year. This increase was further complemented by the securing of a two-year, \$200,000 service agreement with the Department of Communities to assist in delivering the Whole of Government LGBTIQA+ Inclusive Strategy. This agreement represents a significant opportunity for Living Proud as it positions us as a key partner for future collaborations and funding opportunities aligned with our strategic objectives, creating a strong foundation for continued growth and stability.

We achieved a modest surplus of \$2,487. While much smaller than previous years, this reflects our deliberate balance between investing in long-term growth and managing day-to-day operations. Key initiatives this year included investing in our leadership with the appointment of Living Proud's first-ever CEO, a pivotal step for future growth and impact. In addition, a comprehensive wage review, conducted with expert legal counsel, ensured all staff contracts complied with the Social and Community Service Award (WA). This review resulted in back payments to staff to rectify previous underpayments, ensuring compliance with their legal entitlements.

This year, Living Proud reaffirmed its commitment to supporting and fostering collaboration across the broader community sector. In partnership with the Mental Health Commission, we continued to coordinate the Proud and Connected Community Grants initiative. This initiative provided essential funding to smaller LGBTIQA+SB community groups across Western Australia, empowering them to deliver vital projects and make a positive impact within their communities. By auspicing these groups, we facilitated their access to these grants and strengthened their capacity to create positive change.

Living Proud remains in a strong and liquid financial position, with total cash reserves of \$1,285,390 and net current assets of \$1,189,037. These figures demonstrate our disciplined financial planning and resource allocation, ensuring we are well-prepared for future challenges and opportunities.

As we celebrate Living Proud's 50th year, I extend my deepest thanks to our Board, staff, and volunteers. Their dedication has been essential to our success and continued community support.

As I step down from the Board in my final year as Treasurer, I reflect with deep appreciation on the opportunity to give back to the organisation that once saved my life.

Witnessing Living Proud's growth and positive impact has been a privilege, and I am confident that with the ongoing commitment of its community, it will continue to thrive for many years to come.

CONTACT US



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**City West Lotteries House 2
Delhi St West Perth 6005**



ABN 57 684 379 285

If you require confidential support please contact QLife on 1800 184 527 or via the website between 3pm-midnight to speak with a peer supporter:

<https://www.livingproud.org.au/qlife/>



