

Enter The Bruce



Tabby inspires BCBS art award

Bruce the big tabby has inspired countless people in his role as Nova House's therapy cat.

The gentle soul has been there for some of people's toughest times. And also their most proud, as they journey through withdrawal from alcohol or drugs at Bendigo Community Health Services' residential house.

Now, Bruce is set to influence the city's creatives within and without of the Nova House walls.

BCBS has launched The Bruce – an art award that honours and promotes the work of Nova House.

Senior Leader AOD Clinical Services Amanda Gould (left) said Nova is seeking submissions of art that adheres to the theme of 'Bruce'.

"We want the community to know that Nova House is a normal, peaceful place, where people do normal, peaceful things," she said.

Like, making art, doing crafts and yes, smooching a cat.

CONTINUED PAGE 2

IN THIS ISSUE:

- BCBS is a Victorian Public Health Awards finalist!
- Prepare for Summer Emergencies Blitz begins
- Cheers to Skip and co for the coffee
- World Diabetes Day advice
- Our Pledge of Support for Treaty
- Busting myths on gender-based violence
- Growing connections with headspace



Top left: Senior Leader AOD Clinical Services Amanda Gould gets some cuddle time with Nova House's Bruce.



Acknowledgement of Country

Bendigo Community Health Services acknowledge we live, work and enjoy Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung Country. We extend our appreciation to the Djaara and Taungurung peoples. We pay respect to Elders past and present for their continued holding of memories, traditions, culture and community aspirations. We recognise sovereignty has never been ceded and express our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of colonisation and their lasting impact. May we walk forward together in harmony and the spirit of healing. It was and always will be Aboriginal land.



We support people to develop and maintain their personal, gender, sexual, cultural religious and spiritual identity.

BCHS is proud of:



Quality
Improvement
Council

'Yes ... we are
a QIC accredited
organisation'



Get creative for Nova

FROM PAGE 1

"We're inviting not only our clients to submit a piece, but anyone who knows about Bendigo Community Health Services," Amanda says.

"Maybe they've accessed one or more of our services in the past, or maybe they will in the future. Basically, any local person of any age is welcome to submit."

The winning artwork will be chosen by the clients who are staying at Nova House during the week of December 8 - 12.

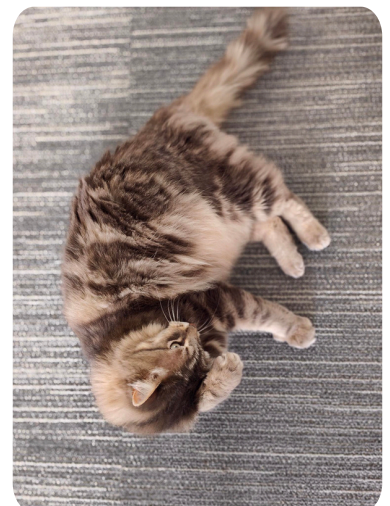
The 'prize' for the winner will be to have their work featured and credited on a BCHS greeting card. They will also be celebrated on the BCHS website and social media as a champion of creativity and community health.

The competition guidelines are as follows:

- Open to anyone of any age living in Greater Bendigo.
- Works can be in any visual medium, submitted digitally.
- Works must be in a dimension easily reproduced on a standard-sized greeting card.
- Works must relate to the theme of 'Bruce' - this can be interpreted in any way the artist chooses.
- Digital images to be emailed to bchcomms@bchs.com.au accompanied by the artist's age, suburb and contact details.
- We may share entries during and after the comp for promotion. Please state if you DO NOT want yours shared.
- Deadline is **Wednesday, December 3.**

Amanda is also calling for donations of art and craft supplies so people within Nova House can not only contribute to the competition if they wish, but continue to get creative long after it's finished.

Donations can be dropped off at the BCHS Central site, 164 - 171 Hargreaves Street, Bendigo.



**Get social
with us:**



www.bchs.com.au



“This has halved wait times and improved client experience.”

BRIGHT SPARKS:
Some of the fab members of the BCHS Sexual & Reproductive Health Hub, snapped for IDAHOBIT Day this year, in support of Bendigo's LGBTIQA+ community.

WOMEN'S HEALTH HOTLINE COUP

Our Sexual and Reproductive Health Hub is a finalist in the 2025 [Victorian Public Healthcare Awards](#).

The hub has been recognised in the Excellence in Women's Health category for its work to significantly increase access to time-critical women's health care.

SRH Hub Clinical Lead Dr Karishma Kaur said women in central Victoria faced long wait times, fragmented care and poor access to timely pregnancy counselling and termination services—especially in rural areas.

“Many missed the window for early intervention and were forced to undergo surgical terminations far from home,” Dr Kaur said.

In response, SRH Hub Senior Leader Kathlyn Crisp said BCHS launched a nurse-led phone line and strengthened partnerships to provide rapid access to triage and coordinated care.

Leveraging existing staff, the initiative streamlined workflows and collaborated with stakeholders to enable same-day care.

“This has halved wait times and improved client experience—transforming reproductive healthcare across regional communities,” Kathlyn said.








The awards are a celebration of excellence in public healthcare and acknowledge the achievements of healthcare professionals, volunteers, and public health services.

BCHS CEO Mandy Hutchinson said she was incredibly proud of the achievement, which was a testament to the team's hard work, dedication, and innovation.

“We are constantly looking at how we can grow our services to respond to community need, and this initiative is the perfect example of how an agile community health service can use its expertise, partnerships and initiative to do just that,” Mandy said.

“I congratulate the team on their award nomination, as well as the other services listed in this award category.”

BCHS' nomination is named alongside Maryborough District Health Service and Western Health. The winner will be announced on November 26.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
30						1 Vegecarian Festival at The Great Stupa
2	3	4	5	6	7 Bendigo Blues & Roots Weekend 	8
9	10	11	12	13 World Diabetes Day 	14	15
16 16 Days of Activism begins RESPECT	17	18	19 International Men's Day 	20	21	22 
23	24 	25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women	26	27	28  Eaglehawk Children's Festival	29

What's on in November...

InRoads leads to Spring St

Karl, Clare and Rhi, of our InRoads program, swapped the streets of Bendigo for Parliament House in Spring St last month, along with our CEO Mandy, for the Community Health First Our People, Place & Partnerships Impact Report launch.

Karl spoke of the life-changing impacts of our InRoads program, which connects people experiencing or at risk of homelessness in Bendigo with health and other services.

InRoads features in the state-wide report, alongside outcomes from 21 other registered independent community health organisations.

Community Health First advocates for and represents community health at the government level.



TIME TO GET SUMMER READY

Blitz week launching to prepare former refugees for potential heat and fire dangers

Bendigo Community Health Services is launching a 'Prepare for Summer Emergencies Blitz' for Bendigo's Karen, Dari and Dinka speaking communities, ahead of a predicted hotter-than-normal season ahead.

For the past five years, BCHS has worked with local migrant and former refugee communities to build resilience and capacity to better understand and manage climate emergencies.

The award-winning Emergency Preparedness Program has engaged more than 5500 people at education sessions and events, and even more either via online videos and fact sheets.

Refugee and Cultural Diversity Senior Leader Kaye Graves said the program had co-designed a host of proven resources to prepare non-English speaking people for the harsh realities of a central Victorian summer.

"It's essential for people who are new to our country to know about the dangers of summer heat, fire and floods, and how to stay safe when risks arise," Kaye said.

"Our fact sheets and videos are produced in language, by and in consultation with our bilingual staff of lived experience, and local emergency services.

"We have developed the program to a point where we know it is culturally safe, and it works."



BCHS staff Nido and Christina, with Sue Bell, of the CFA, photographed at a BCHS Emergency Preparedness education session in 2024.

The 'Prepare for Summer Emergencies Blitz' kicks off on November 10 with five days of social media posts featuring essential information in language.

Refugee Project Facilitators Nido Taveesupmai and Zahir Azimi said Bendigo's Karen and Afghan communities were active on social media, so the BCHS Facebook account was the ideal place to reach them.

"We encourage our community to connect with our Facebook account from November 10 to watch and share the videos if the information can help them or someone they know," they said.

"The week's content will cover heat health and fire preparedness. And although the videos we are sharing are in either the Karen, Dari or Dinka language, each has easy English subtitles to benefit everyone."

BCHS will also keep the information in language flowing throughout the summer as needed and as high risk days emerge.

The videos and other resources has also be found on the [BCHS Resources and Publications page](#), under the topic 'Emergency Preparedness'.

Child safety commitment

Bendigo Community Health Services values children from all backgrounds. We are dedicated to making our community a safe, nurturing and welcoming place for children to grow and develop. We are committed to making sure ALL children reach their individual potential. We will do this by supporting families to keep children safe, healthy, happy; helping families support children to reach their full potential; and effectively advocating for children and being a champion for quality outcomes in child health and wellbeing. Visit bchs.com.au to read our child safety commitment in full.

WORLD DIABETES DAY

With the Chronic Disease Management team

We're highlighting one of BCHS' busiest teams: Chronic Disease Management, and just in time for World Diabetes Day on November 13, where the theme is 'Diabetes and wellbeing at work'.

What challenges do employees with diabetes face?

1. Balancing glucose management with work:
 - It can be difficult to eat or take breaks regularly.
 - Hypo- or hyperglycaemia can impact alertness, safety, and performance.
2. Limited workplace support or understanding:
 - Not all workplaces have clear policies or awareness around diabetes management – leading to discomfort around testing, injecting, or taking breaks.
 - Lack of safe storage for insulin and limited access to healthy food options can make self-care harder.
2. Psychological and social impacts:
 - Fear of being treated differently or missing out on opportunities can increase anxiety.
 - Rural and regional workers may face limited access to diabetes educators or peer support.

What can employees do to support themselves?

- Keep healthy snacks and water on hand.
- Plan blood glucose checks and medication around work tasks; set reminders if needed.
- Ask about reasonable adjustments.
- Inform a trusted colleague who can assist if you experience low blood glucose.
- Connect with local services like NDSS, Diabetes Victoria, or Diabetes Australia for resources and workplace advocacy materials.
- Take movement breaks to support glucose stability and circulation. No more than 30 minutes on the chair without a break!
- Prioritise sleep, stress management, and routine.

Cheers to Skip and co for the Mental Health Month brews

We partnered with ten local coffee shops during our Mental Health Month initiative.

The BCHS Health Promotion team gifted ten surprise free cups of coffee each day throughout October.

Out in Eaglehawk, Skip's Coffee Shop passed on the love from its Sailor's Gully Road window; as the Borough baristas are accustomed to doing!

We set out to promote the act of giving, as it's one of the sure-fire 5 Ways to Wellbeing - along with taking notice, being active, connecting and keeping on learning.

Give the 5 Ways to Wellbeing a go and help keep the good mental health vibes going throughout 2025 and beyond...



With thanks to the Fab Three: BCHS' CDM team Joyana, Deb and Jessie.

SHARING OUR PLEDGE OF SUPPORT FOR TREATY

We took part in a Treaty Pledge Forum for local leaders with our valued partner Bendigo Health last month, through the Bendigo Reconciliation & Allies Committee.

The forum promoted the role organisations can play in support for Treaty in Victoria.

It was also a chance to meet the first of our pledge actions, stated here:



BCBS CEO Mandy Hutchinson spoke at the Treaty Pledge Forum last month.

We are proud to acknowledge the Dja Dja Wurrung and Taungurung peoples, Traditional Owners of the lands where we do our work/across Victoria. As a community health service, we pay our respects to their Elders past and present and remember that sovereignty was never ceded.

As an organisation firmly committed to advancing social justice and equality, we want to play our part in righting the wrongs of the past and be part of creating a better future together.

With profound respect for the sovereignty, culture, and rights of First Peoples, we're pleased to announce that we will walk with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria on the journey to Treaty.

We recognise that when it comes to First Peoples communities, cultures and lands, the experts are of course First Peoples.

The past can't be changed, but we can choose to take steps today that will help heal the ongoing pain caused by the injustices of yesterday.

We believe a better tomorrow is possible and Bendigo Community Health Services pledges our unwavering support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria.

To help build support for the shared journey to Treaty, BCBS will:

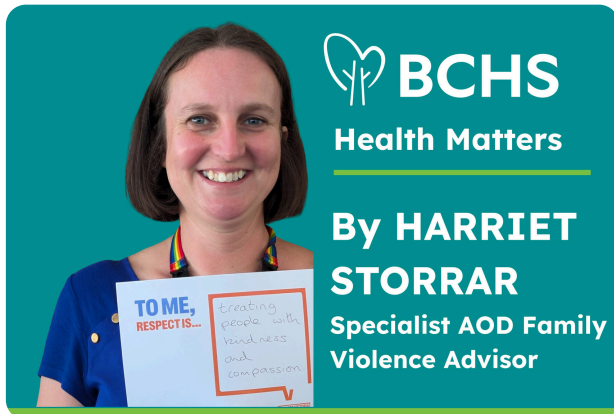
- Collaborate with First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, Dja Dja Wurrung, Bendigo Reconciliation and Allyship Committee, and other local organisations to co-host a Treaty Pledge Forum for local CEOs and leaders,
- Publicly support the rights of First Peoples and promote the implementation of Treaty commitments through our communication channels and networks,

- Continue to increase awareness and understanding of First Peoples' cultures, histories and the Treaty process throughout our organisation, and
- Strengthen existing partnerships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Traditional Owner Groups to better support community and bring their voice into service delivery and design decision-making.

By making this pledge, we affirm our commitment to the self-determination of First Peoples in Victoria as they assert their rights, tell their truths, and chart a path towards, and healing through, Treaty-making.

Together, we will create a future where First Peoples' voices are heard, rights are respected, and justice is realised for generations to come.

The myths vs realities of family and gender-based violence



Ahead of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence from November 25, we're debunking myths and highlighting steps everyone can take to help make our community safer.

Myth: Men and women are equally likely to perpetrate family violence.

Reality: While family violence occurs across all genders, the vast majority is perpetrated by men against women. Women and children experience much higher rates of injury, fear, and homicide linked to family violence. Men are far more likely to inflict frequent, severe, and intimidating behaviors.

Myth: Family violence is only physical.

Reality: It also includes emotional, psychological, sexual, financial abuse, and coercive control. It is an ongoing pattern of behaviour that can include multiple, often subtle, tactics used to intimidate and control.

Myth: Alcohol and drugs cause violence.

Reality: Neither alcohol nor drugs cause violence; perpetrators choose to abuse, though substances may escalate severity.

Myth: Family violence only occurs within families from low socioeconomic backgrounds or particular cultures.

Reality: Abuse occurs across all socioeconomic backgrounds, ages, cultures, and beliefs. Gender inequality is the driver of family violence; when men are valued more than women, and have more power, resources and opportunities.

Myth: If it was bad, victims would leave.

Reality: Leaving is complex— barriers include fear, lack of finances, concern for children, isolation, and threats from the perpetrator. Women and children are most at risk during and after separation.

Myth: Abuse is a momentary loss of temper.

Reality: The abuser makes a decision to abuse. It is an ongoing behaviour to enforce control through fear.

Myth: Children aren't affected if they don't witness abuse.

Reality: Children living in abusive households are almost always affected psychologically and emotionally, regardless of what they witness.

Understanding and challenging these myths is crucial to prevent and respond to family violence. You can:

- Challenge the condoning of violence against women
- Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- Build new social norms that foster personal identities not constrained by gender stereotypes
- Support men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and positive, supportive male peer relationships.

Where to seek support

All BCCHS staff are trained in identifying and supporting people experiencing and using family violence. Even if you are seeing them for something else you can speak to your practitioner, and they will support you.

1800RESPECT - Confidential information and support for people impacted by violence.

Men's Referral Service – 1300 766 491

Counselling, information and referral for men concerned about their behaviour.

GROWING CONNECTIONS



Christine and Ku Htee, of our Settlement Services team, introduced a group of Karen teens to headspace Bendigo last month.

headspace staff were keen to learn more about the Karen culture, while in turn sharing information about headspace services and programs.

There were giveaways and prizes, and it was fantastic to see young people take away some leafy greens from the onsite veggie garden. We look forward to likewise seeing grow the connection between these two BCHS services.



Advance equality through sport

BCHS CEO Mandy will speak at the Gender Equity Coalition's 16 Days of Activism event **Power in Partnership: Advancing Equity Through Sport and Community.**

The Gender Equity Coalition is a diverse collective of organisations, businesses, schools, community groups and individuals dedicated to advancing gender equity across Greater Bendigo.

Mandy will be joined by Tricia Currie and Bendigo City Football Club representatives at this important community event on **December 1 from 4.30 to 5.30 at the Bendigo Library.**

RSVP via the library website, or here [Power in Partnership: Advancing Equity Through Sport and Community](#).



We had fun at the Bendigo Library's Parenting Expo for Children's Week - connecting with kids, parents and carers, promoting our Family Services and gifting copies of our new kids activity book.

The book includes health, safety and wellbeing messages for kids. Pick up a copy at our sites.

Our services at a glance

Did you know we run more than 50 services supporting the community?
Find out more about how we can help you and your family at www.bchs.com.au

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS COUNSELLING (ADULT & YOUTH)

Brief and ongoing counselling support, assessment and referrals for individuals and families affected by alcohol and drug use. Youth alcohol and drug counselling provides supportive counselling for young people 16 to 25 years.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS CARE AND RECOVERY COORDINATION

Provides support, advocacy and referral for individuals accessing treatment programs.

FAMILY DRUG SUPPORT

Our qualified alcohol & drug counsellor provides support and education to families experiencing challenges related to the use of drugs or alcohol.

MOBILE DRUG SAFETY WORKER

An experienced harm reduction worker is available to individuals anonymously to access NSP services and receive harm reduction education, information and support.

NEEDLE SYRINGE PROGRAM (NSP) OUTREACH TEAM

NSP provides clean injecting equipment, safe sex and health information, harm reduction education, support and referral to health and welfare services.
Phone: 1800 636 514
7.30pm-10.45pm Tuesday – Saturday.

NON-RESIDENTIAL WITHDRAWAL SERVICE (HOME BASED)

Provides non-residential withdrawal treatment and support services in conjunction with your medical practitioner.

RESIDENTIAL WITHDRAWAL SERVICE (NOVA HOUSE)

An adult residential program for people undertaking alcohol and or drug withdrawal for individuals 21 years and over who live in Victoria. An assessment process is required to ensure people are suited for Nova House.

SPECIALIST PHARMACOTHERAPY

Specialist Alcohol and Other Drug practitioners provide Opiate Replacement Therapy. This includes LAIB (Long acting Injectable Buprenorphine), Buprenorphine and Methadone.

PEER SUPPORT WORKER

Our qualified, lived experience worker is there to provide assistance and support to help you navigate your AOD journey.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Providing specialist children's health and allied health services for children, adolescents and their families.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

Provides group programs for children 2-5 years who have a self or managed NDIS plan.

FAMILY DAY CARE

Provides quality education and care for children up to 12 years of age in the homes of approved educators.

FAMILY SERVICES

Family Services offers an outreach service that assists children and parents to identify goals and respond to their unique needs and concerns.

Family Services takes the time to get to know what the family's strengths and challenges are for children and young people and then works together with parents and carers to make plans to address these needs.

PAEDIATRIC PHYSIOTHERAPY AND PODIATRY

Provides assessment, management and support for children and adolescents.

PHYSIOTHERAPY

Provides assessment, management and support for adolescents and adults who have concerns with mobility and acute/chronic pain

SMALLTALK SUPPORTED PLAYGROUP AND IN HOME SUPPORT

With a qualified facilitator, Smalltalk uses a set of strategies that parents can use to enhance the home learning environment for children from birth to school age. The Smalltalk program is delivered through 5 supported playgroups and can be offered to individual families in their home.

COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH

CULTURALLY SENSITIVE COUNSELLING

Available to people of refugee background and in a relaxed private space, talk about your worries and start to find ways to cope with them. You will receive acceptance, support and respect in a safe and non-judgmental environment.

COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH

Short to medium term counselling, holistic assessments, referral adults working towards better health and well-being. Includes depression, anxiety, relationship issues, family difficulties, grief and loss.



EDUCATION & PARTNERSHIPS

HEALTH PROMOTION AND EDUCATION

A range of programs and initiatives that empower individuals to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence needed for better health and wellbeing. We also offer skilled speakers are available to address groups on health and wellbeing issues.

HEALTH JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS

BCHS clients have access to free and confidential legal advice from a lawyer provided by Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre.

WORKPLACE AND EMPLOYMENT HEALTH

Supporting workplaces to assess and develop specific workplace health programs to suit their needs.

STAYING HEALTHY

DIABETES SERVICE

Nurse-led clinic providing information, education & clinical care to people living with diabetes. Referral required. Includes Type 1, Type 2 & other types of diabetes, CGM starts and reviews available.

COMMUNITY DIABETES CLINIC

Short-term doctor-led clinic for people living with Type 2 diabetes requiring medical intervention and management. GP or specialist referral required.

ELMORE SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP

Offers support to frail, aged or disabled men and women to assist to maintain independence in the Elmore Community.

EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

Offers exercise & lifestyle support to assist in the prevention & management of health conditions and injuries.

FALLS AND BALANCE EXERCISE PROGRAM

A group exercise program designed to reduce falls risks in adults, increase strength and improve balance.

MEDICAL PRACTICE

Doctors offering bulk billing general practice services at Mitchell Street.

QUIT SMOKING PROGRAM

Free program to help reduce or quit smoking.

PODIATRY

Provides assessment, management and support for children, adolescents and adults with mobility and function issues, foot care and monitoring of foot health.

STRENGTH TRAINING

Providing an opportunity for older adults to complete a personalised exercise program in a supervised group. We aim to support individuals to improve or maintain strength, balance, mobility and function.

TYPE 2 DIABETES EXERCISE PROGRAM

A group program offering exercise and lifestyle support for people with Type 2 diabetes.

SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH HUB

Blood borne virus (BBV) and sexually transmissible infection (STI) prevention, testing and treatment, including PrEP and PEP. Contraception education and services. Pregnancy testing, care and termination. Endometriosis and Pelvic Pain clinic. Women's health including managing periods, menopause, and cervical screening tests. Trans and gender diverse sexual health.

MEN'S HEALTH CLINIC

Annual check-ups, health assessments and referral information for men and gender diverse people.

**For appointments or more information
call: 5406 1200**

Fax for all sites: 5441 4200

PO Box 1121, Bendigo Central, Vic 3552

FORMER REFUGEES

HUMANITARIAN SETTLEMENT SERVICES PROGRAM (HSP)

Supports newly arrived humanitarian arrivals of refugee background in Australia with a range of services to address immediate needs and ongoing orientation to their new country.

REFUGEE HEALTH NURSE

Supporting service agencies to better understand and deliver health care to refugees where they live. Contact our central office.

SETTLEMENT ENGAGEMENT TRANSITION SUPPORT SERVICES (SETS)

use intake, assessment, goal plans, referrals and advocacy as cornerstones of practice. Utilising a range of engagement strategies including groups, individual and family settings the service aims to equip people with knowledge and confidence to make informed decisions and goals.

REFUGEE AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY TEAM MIGRANT AND REFUGEE HEALTH

Co-designed culturally specific health information and education opportunities to build health and wellbeing, safe sustainable living and capacity to access services.

YOUTH

HEADSPACE BENDIGO

Supports young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years who are experiencing difficulties. Phone: 5406 1400.

YOUTH COUNSELLING SERVICE

For young people under 25 years, individual sessions and support available. Includes alcohol and drug counselling.

YOUTH HEALTH SERVICES

Provides a youth friendly health service including GP's, nurses and counsellors.



RESPECT IS CHALLENGING



ONLINE HATE & DISCRIMINATION

**BCHS is taking part in the 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
From November 25**

**RESPECT IS KNOWING YOU CAN
HELP PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM**

