

2018/2019

# ANNUAL REPORT

  
**Arthritis**  
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY  
[www.arthritisact.org.au](http://www.arthritisact.org.au)

  
**build a better me**  
2 PROGRAMS, 1 OUTCOME - A BETTER YOU.  
[www.buildabetterme.com.au](http://www.buildabetterme.com.au)

**pain**  
support

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# FROM THE CHAIR

2018/2019 was certainly been an exciting year for Arthritis ACT. The Board made a strategic commitment to invest in the expansion of services and have been pleased with the feedback from our members that these services are so well utilised and appreciated. The Board believes lower cost services should be available to the community and recognise the value in offering excellence to our community. Appropriate management of arthritis and all its associated complications should be available to everyone in the community, not just persons who can afford to pay for private services.

When I first became a Board Member of Arthritis ACT just 4 years ago we had 4 staff, 3 of whom were part time. Arthritis ACT was struggling to have name recognition within the Canberra Community, and very few referrals made from our public health services or the multitude of Canberra GP's, who all manage a large workload of persons with musculoskeletal and pain conditions. We are now in a situation where everyone in Canberra has heard about hydrotherapy in particular, and we are getting daily referrals from GP practices and the hospitals for clients to engage with our services to assist them in improving their health and wellbeing.

Arthritis ACT has been consistent in its lobbying Government about the need to provide adequate hydrotherapy resources to the Canberra community in particular, but in doing so, we have also been able to raise other issues in these conversations. We have issues in Canberra around being able to access adequate conservative treatment for osteoarthritis to assist people to avoid joint replacement, or if that is not possible, have them better prepared for the inevitable surgery.





Our funding for Strength and Balance was due to expire at the end of the year, but due to the great work of our staff team and the data they collected we were able to win a grant with Sports Aus to continue this project for another 18 months. We are committed to working with both levels of Government to ensure this sort of program is ongoing. Improving people's balance is imperative to avoiding unwanted fractures, including hip fractures, which puts lives in real danger, as well as being a very large cost burden on our health and aged care systems. In all the programs our staff team operate, we aim to provide not just value for Government dollar but all programs are preventative, therefore saving the health budget even more over the longer term.

Many of our programs have existed for several years due to the commitment of our volunteers, and this is especially true in hydrotherapy. Late in the financial year the Government engaged with third party consultants to review the need for hydrotherapy in the ACT. As part of that review it was found that volunteer peer supervisors alone should not be model of the future. We will continue to work with our volunteers supervisors because even as we have staff taking over these sessions, these volunteers have been crucial in not only keeping our pool users safe, but they have also built the community that has become a special and integral part of our pool community. We salute our pool supervisors, and we look forward to working with them all for many years to come.

We have worked with Pain Support ACT throughout this year to bring about an amalgamation of our two services. This allows both organisations to further grow and excel at what they do. We will be bringing Pain Support members onto our Board in the new financial year and there is a robust reference committee to ensure all types of pain remain considered by Arthritis ACT.

I thank the team at Arthritis ACT, the amazing staff who go far and beyond, to strengthen and develop systems and programs while remaining focused on the members of the organisation and their needs. Thank you to Bec Davey CEO who has had a challenging year bringing Arthritis to a new place within service provision and the complexity of being an NDIS provider. To my colleagues in the Board, who have lent their expertise and strategic direction through this time of growth, I thank you for your wisdom, confidence and support.

Finally, thank you to all our members who participate in our programs across Arthritis ACT. We appreciate your trust and support, both financial -so that we can offer our programs to those who need them most, and through participating in our programs makes us the organisation that we are.

Carol Mead  
Chair – Arthritis ACT



# FROM THE CEO

It is now just on 5 years since I came to Arthritis ACT and I remember five years ago a colleague asking me how long I thought I would stay. Having done my research and studied management theory I of course answered with 'well five years seems to be the appropriate time for a CEO to remain with an organisation'. Five years down and I feel like I'm only just beginning to understand our organisation, our members, the needs of our community. Five years down, and my vision for Arthritis ACT is only just beginning to take shape. So I hope that after five years, neither my Board nor our members are getting sick of me, because I feel like we're only beginning!

This financial year has been dominated by one word - 'pool'. It's become in many ways the new unmentionable four letter word in my vocabulary. There's been times that I've wondered what are we fighting for? Times when it has seemed unreasonable that in 2019 we still have to justify health interventions. Why do we have to justify preventative health measures over and over again? Why do we have to justify the value preventative health constantly. Nothing has changed! If we keep people moving, if we keep them more pain free, then they present to the health system less often. When people move more, they are happier, their mental health is better, their waistlines are smaller and their world is bigger. There are probably none of us at Arthritis ACT who are here because we want to be. We are here because we need to be. We need to make lives better. We need those living with musculoskeletal and pain conditions to feel they are wanted, that they are important, that their conditions matter. We are all here because we care. In my case, I will keep fighting for all our members, because I care.

I want to say a big shout out to the entire team I work with. You are all rock stars! To our amazing volunteers - what you do for us is beyond words. You create communities who care for each other. Most people will be able to cope with anything if they know there is someone who cares. There are no words to express how grateful we are to you all. To my staff team, you are my inspiration. I see your concern for our members, the way you try and seek out every ounce of knowledge, understanding, compassion and time to ensure you improve the lives of those you work with. It's barely ever easy work - our community need everything we can give them and more, and I know you all take it home with you. Too often I receive replies to emails and texts late at night or early in the morning. Our community is lucky to have you caring for them as you do. Finally to our Board, it would be easy to decide to just do things the easy way, to toe the line, not make a fuss, and be completely risk adverse. Our Board are prepared to support us to make the changes that need to be made to support our community. Thank you.

Rebecca Davey, CEO



# Hydrotherapy

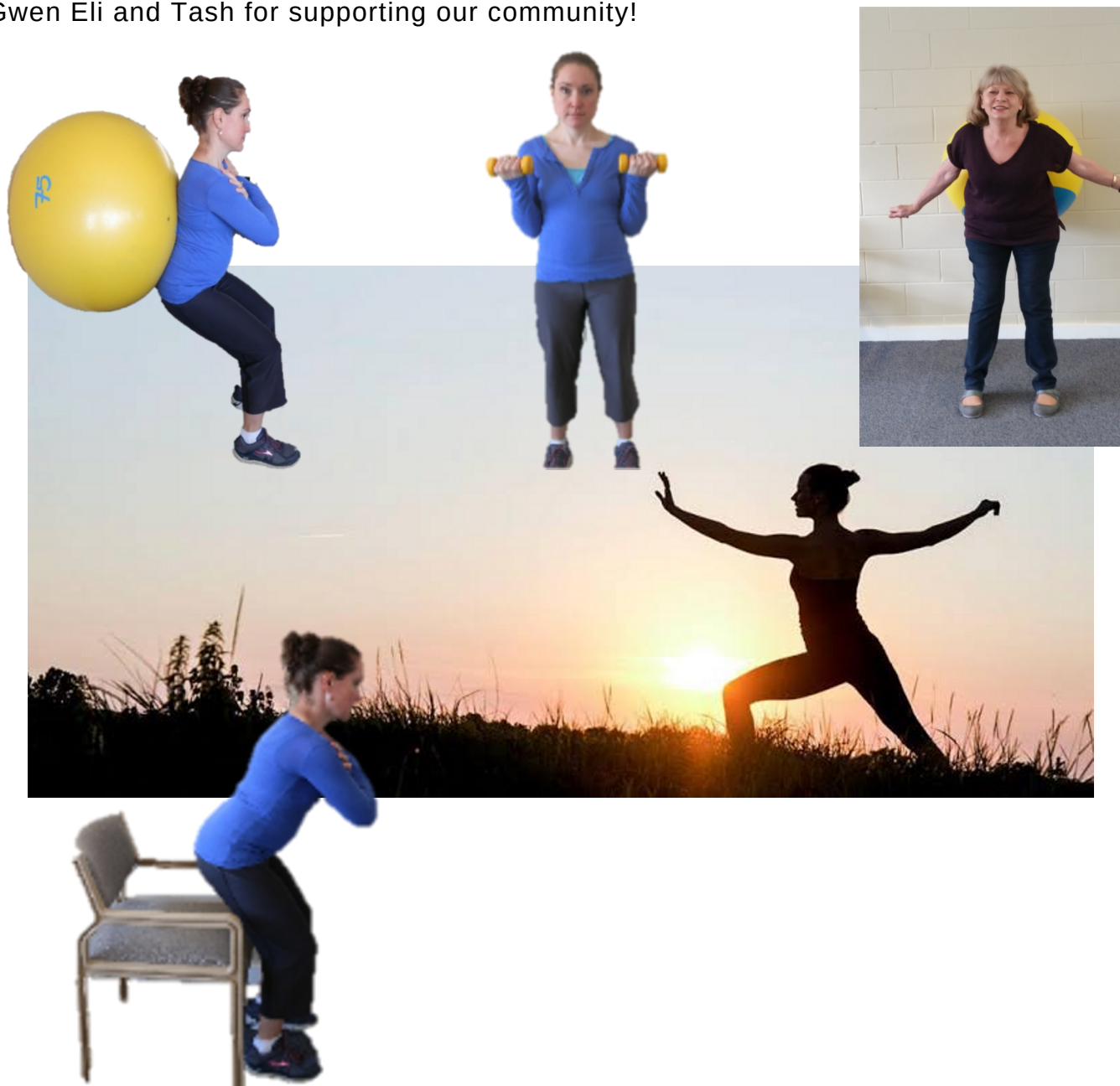
Arthritis ACT delivered 1330 sessions of hydrotherapy in 2018/2019. At an average of 10 persons per session, that was 13,300 hours of hydrotherapy, improving 13,300 nights of sleep for participants across Canberra, 13,300 more hours of social interaction for people living with the effects of pain, less drugs for pain consumed, less presentations to A&E because people had a cost effective choice for relieving their pain, a significant reduction in the level of type 2 diabetes for those participants engaging in regular hydrotherapy, a reduction in the amount of surgery required to improve joints, and an increase in the satisfaction of those who have had joint replacement because of this therapy. Hydrotherapy is not a lifestyle choice, it is a matter of no choice for many of our participants. For many, it is the pool or it is full time care, extended hospital stays. It means broken families, reduced social participation, increased mental health distress. Most importantly our hydrotherapy program has given many of our peer volunteers a sense of purpose, and many of our participants an escape from their daily battle with pain, and a community who understands. What are you doing to improve your pain?





## Exercise Physiology including Tai Chi and Yoga

When you are living with chronic pain, when you are struggling to do the basic requirements of life, when everything is a struggle, the thought of exercise is tough. What we know, though, is exercise is the key to a long, happy, and health life. Our team of exercise professionals live and breathe the support they provide. They are caring, but they can be rough when you need them to be! Most of all, they just want the very best for you. Our exercise physiologists can offer you one to one support, support in hydrotherapy, group classes, home programs, they can support you at your local gym to work out what is best for you, or they can teach you how to use your own environment to use your body to best of it's ability. We also regularly support student exercise physiologists to learn about musculoskeletal and pain conditions so they will go out into the world as better practitioners in the future. Thank you Sophie, Hannah, Gwen Eli and Tash for supporting our community!





# Dietetics

Food is medicine, and the sharing of food is inherently social and we are hard pressed to think of a culture in which sharing a meal is not an essential part of life. Whilst there is endless wisdom to be found in books and on the internet about our diet, it is inherently personal and our program is just that - personal. No judging, no unrealistic expectations. We all know that a good diet leads to better health outcomes. It's the personal touch that makes it more attainable. Talk to Erica our TimTam eating dietitian!



## Strength & Balance

For the past 3 years the ACT Government Health Promotions Grants program has funded Strength and Grants programs across Canberra. 1328 participants benefited from this program. In a program with people at high risk of fractures and early death as a result of falls, not one hip fracture was recorded in the participating cohort. This was a cohort where up to 10% of participants would have been expected to have such an injury. More importantly participants remained engaged with an active lifestyle leading to better health outcomes. In 2019/20 Ausport will continue to fund this initiative.



# GLA:D

Arthritis ACT was one of the first providers of GLA:D in the ACT. GLA:D®, or Good Life with Arthritis: Denmark, is an education and exercise program developed by researchers in Denmark for people with hip or knee osteoarthritis symptoms. Arthritis ACT has been in a unique position where we have been able to offer Dietetic, Counselling, Occupational Therapy and social participation as a part of GLA:D. We are also able to open our exercise room for GLA:D graduates to continue the exercise program at no cost. As we know with all health/exercise programs, it is the continuation beyond the original program that is the key. Ongoing good health depends on continual behaviour change, not just intermittent interactions. A big shout out to Jacqui Couldrick, Physiotherapist, who has so single-mindedly ensured that Arthritis ACT maintain a strong focus on osteoarthritis and ensuring the best outcomes for those living with osteoarthritis



During this year we made an unfunded commitment to training and supporting a group of peer mentors to improve the wellbeing of all our members. Our peer mentors have brought about the most amazing supports to our community. One to one support, social engagements, craft groups. A big thank you to all our peer mentors, Jan, Michelle and Emma for the difference you have made.

# Occupational Therapy

Arthritis ACT recognised the needs of our members were being inadequately met in many ways in the mainstream health system. The need to house modifications, for support to identify the right aids and processes to reduce the amount of energy that living with chronic pain can lead to a person expending on simple every day tasks was a constant conversation we were having with our members. We were able to bring on an Occupational Therapist during the year to assist our members. There is a general shortage of OT's in the community at present so for our members to be able to access this type of specialist care and support has been amazing and very welcome.

## Volunteers

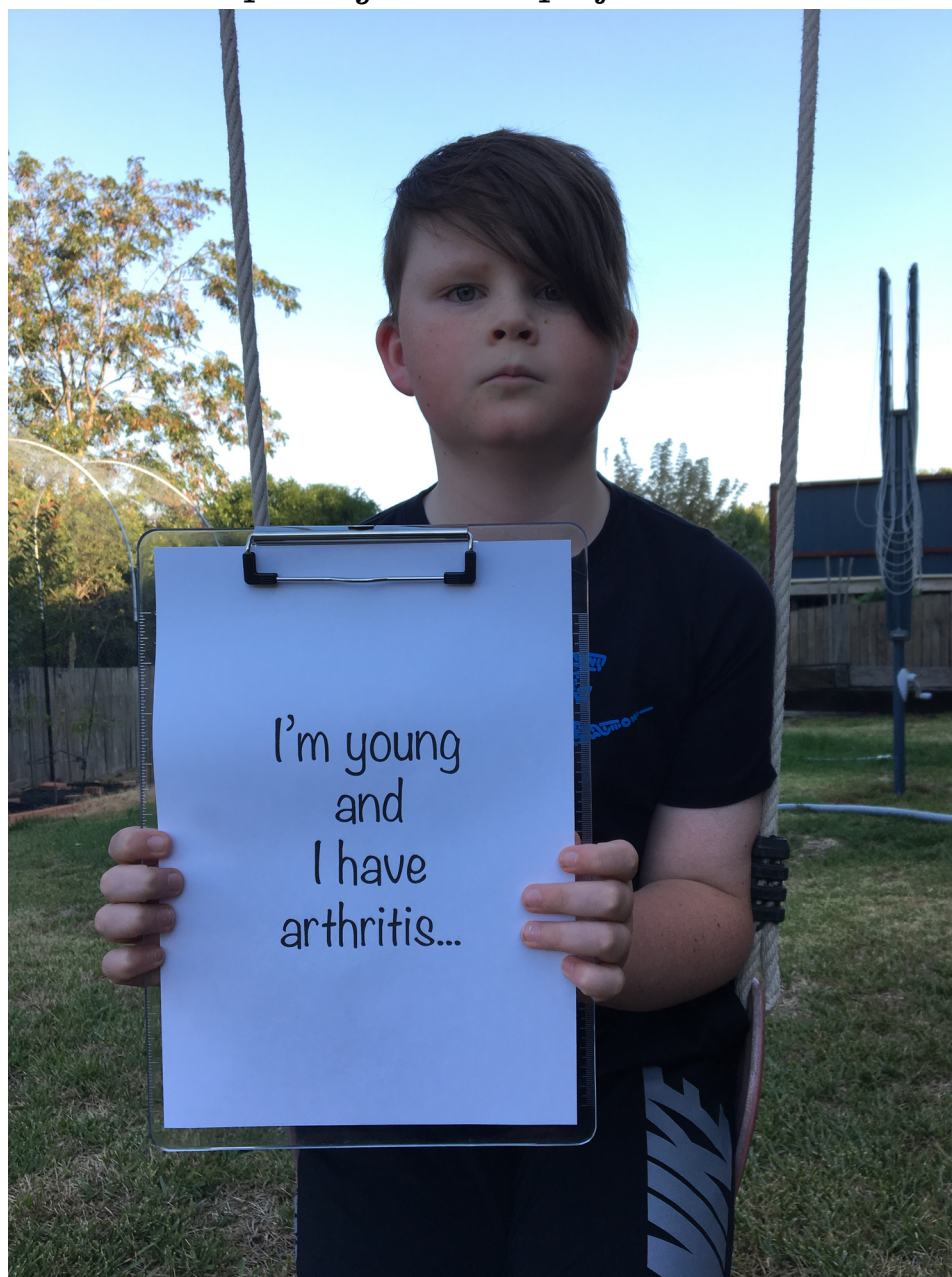


Our volunteers have been a mainstay of our organisation for many many years. We would never have been able to offer especially so much hydrotherapy time with them. This year the group has swelled with a very informed group of advocates who have worked tirelessly to ensure hydrotherapy remains accessible on the Southside in particular, but for all Canberrans generally. There are too many of you to name here, but thank you, thank you, thank you from all our members who are touched by the work you do.



# Juvenile Arthritis

This year the Board decided we needed to have a dedicated resource for kids living with Juvenile Arthritis, their parents and their siblings, and for young parents, especially young mums, who are living with pain conditions and trying to adjust to parenthood. A special thank you to Linda for all she is putting into this project, which is not easy.



## Younger parents with pain

# Treasurers Report

*Our Treasurer Andrew Fleming has omitted from his report his retirement from the Board at the AGM. Andrew has served the community for 10 years. We are honouring his service with Life Membership, and thank him for his service.*

The Foundation recorded a Net Loss of \$113,176 for the year ended 30 June 2019 after recording a Net Profit of \$49,388 in the previous year due mainly to a planned increase in expenditure on staffing to substantially increase the services provided under the Fee for Service program. The Foundation, however, remains in a strong financial position with Funds available for future use totaling \$455,368 including Cash and short term interest bearing deposits of \$308,076 and Investments totaling \$248,488 as at 30 June 2019.

In the current year Arthritis ACT received \$636,593 in Revenue which represented an 18% increase over the previous year. As in past years the main source of revenue was the base funding grant from the ACT government managed by the ACT Health Directorate which has now been extended for a further 3 years through until 30 June 2022.

The Foundation also received Donations of \$73,499 in the year which showed a significant increase on the prior year and we are extremely grateful to the individuals responsible.

As mentioned previously the Foundation devoted significant resources this year to increase the services provided through the Fee for Service program which commenced two years ago. As a result, revenue of \$84,022 was recorded this year which compares with \$27,376 in the previous year. Fee for Service includes Counselling services, Dietetic clinics, Physiotherapy clinics, Yoga and Strength and Balance courses which have proved very popular with our members. In addition, Revenue from Warm Water Exercises and Member subscriptions also showed significant increases on the prior year at \$55,696 and \$30,624 respectively while other revenue captions showed minor changes in comparison with the prior year.

Income from Investments was similar to last year. Investments and cash not required in the short term was again managed by the professional financial management firm appointed in mid-2015 to manage the investment of the Foundation's surplus funds in accordance with our Investment policy and risk appetite. This ensures that the funds are being well protected while also producing good returns.

While expenditure was again very carefully managed this year, staffing for the services provided under Fee for Service was substantially increased and as a result Total expenses for the year of \$756,314 showed an increase of 50% compared to the previous year. Employee Benefits expense totaled \$579,528 which represented a 61% increase on the previous year expense of \$359,817. Marketing and Promotion expense at \$31,227 also increased in comparison with the previous year while other expense captions were broadly in line with the prior year.



As in previous years, the Revenue generated in the year has enabled the organisation to;

- deliver information services about arthritis, osteoporosis, pain and related conditions to the ACT and region community;

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- provide educational and training opportunities for health professionals and peer educators to enhance their capacity to prevent and reduce the impact of arthritis, osteoporosis and related conditions;

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- deliver a range of self-management and support services designed to improve the health and quality of life for people affected by arthritis, osteoporosis and related conditions;

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- raise community awareness about arthritis, osteoporosis and related conditions through health promotion programs; and

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- encourage and contribute to research and promote the role of Arthritis ACT to the community.

During the year the outsourced financial company who we contracted last year continued to provide a full suite of financial services including monthly and annual financial reporting, forecasting and budgeting, provision of relevant information to the tax authorities, and providing advice on the Board Finance Committee. At the commencement of the new financial year we also further improved financial reporting by successfully installing a new financial reporting system.

As in prior years the Financial Statements for the year were fully audited by an authorised audit company. While the Foundation is not required to have an audit performed on the annual financial results, the Board believes that this is imperative to ensure good

governance and provide evidence that the financial resources of the Foundation are being properly and prudently managed. The auditors again this year issued an unqualified audit report on the financial position and results of the Foundation which you will find later in this Annual Report.

The organisation cannot achieve its goals without significant financial assistance from fund raising contributions and gifts and the Foundation sincerely thanks all who donated so generously during the year. Importantly, from a financial perspective, there is an enormous contribution made by the personnel and volunteers whose efforts are not reflected in the financial statements but who warrant special mention. Without their generous giving of time, achievement of the goals described above would not have been possible. We wish to acknowledge the significant benefit to Arthritis ACT of these unpaid efforts.

In summary, the Foundation has further developed and matured over the last year and continues to be well placed to build on its existing delivery of programs and services in 2019/20.

Andrew Fleming  
Treasurer