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ANNUAL REPORT



MUSCULOSKELETAL
AUSTRALIA

Making the invisible visible

Musculoskeletal conditions can rob people of their ability to work, study, care for family, move without pain, be socially active and live independently. Yet these conditions are often dismissed as 'just a bit of arthritis' or 'just a sore knee' and are seen as an inevitable part of the ageing process.

This is not the case...musculoskeletal conditions can be life changing, painful and constant. And because these conditions are invisible, others cannot understand the anguish people with these conditions have to deal with day in and day out.

We want to make these invisible conditions visible and help Australians really see people living with musculoskeletal conditions -

because they are everywhere - friends, neighbours, parents and children.

Musculoskeletal Australia is a consumer organisation that listens to and represents the voice of people who have arthritis, osteoporosis, back pain, osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia, ankylosing spondylitis, gout, lupus and other musculoskeletal conditions.

The work we do is driven by what consumers tell us, and together with the help of our staff, Consumer Advisory Committee, volunteers, peer support groups and many others, we are able to provide the information and support people need to manage their condition.

We will make the invisible **visible.**



Chair and CEO's Report

It is our pleasure to present the 2020 Annual Report for Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK).

To say that this has been a challenging year would be a tremendous understatement. Like the rest of the world, our organisation was forced to consider a new reality that required an immediate response. And yet despite these challenges, we achieved our most successful year to date, supporting a greater number of consumers - a validation of our consumer-driven business model.

Future planning, adopting contemporary practices and technology, and most importantly, listening to consumers ensured that MSK was well positioned to deal with the fallout of COVID-19.

We quickly became proficient in delivering digital and online services and resources, as evidenced by our successful consumer webinar series, eNewsletter, social media and website. Our adaptability meant that we were able to shift quickly to live streaming of public lectures and events.

We also continued to provide free information resources to support people to manage their health during these difficult times.

Another of our major achievements from 2020 is the development and dissemination of the largest ever survey of people with musculoskeletal conditions. This survey was led by the interests and ambitions of our consumers and developed in conjunction with our Consumer Advisory Committee and partner organisations. The results have been compiled and we are excited to share some of the results in this report.

Our commitment to empowering people with musculoskeletal conditions is the key to our ongoing success. There is no 'one size fits all' model for managing musculoskeletal conditions. By understanding that, and adopting a model that supports self-care, MSK can provide services and resources that empower people to determine their own path and achieve the goals that are important and relevant to them.

That said, we were pleased to see the Federal Government endorse the Self-Care for Health: A National Policy Blueprint in October 2020 produced by the Mitchell Institute and Victoria University and eagerly await how best this policy is actioned for the betterment of MSK consumers.

We would like to thank our generous partners, donors, supporters, and the MSK community at large for their vital support, for without which, we cease to be able to serve.

Additionally, our thanks to our talented and committed Board of Directors, Consumer Advisory Committee, staff, and volunteers for their tremendous efforts and single-minded approach in supporting people with musculoskeletal conditions.

The voice of our consumer movement grows stronger every day. Join us in 2021 as we expand our reach through an increased range of services, programs, and exciting events to make these invisible conditions visible!



Dipak Sanghvi
Chair



Rob Anderson
CEO

Directors and Office Holders

Chair, Non-Executive Director

Dipak Sanghvi

Deputy Chair, Non-Executive Director

Jade Rowarth

Non-Executive Director

Arthur Charlaftis

Non-Executive Director

Christine Cussen (retired July)

Non-Executive Director

David Charles

Non-Executive Director

Erica Traicos

Non-Executive Director

George Kalomallos

Non-Executive Director

John McLindon

Non-Executive Director

Natalie Sirianni

Director Emeritus

Professor Peter Choong

Chief Executive Officer

Rob Anderson

Company Secretary

Philip Thomas

Consumer Advisory Committee

To ensure our organisation is doing all we can to support consumers in meeting our goals, the MSK Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) collaborates with our Board and management on strategic direction and planning.

- Annie McPherson - Chair
- Tassie Antoniou
- Maggie Cripps
- Wayne Lentsment
- Beryl Logie
- Stephanie Powell
- Sam Squires
- Matthew Sutherland
- Nicky Yeomans

What we do

Our mission

To support people for better musculoskeletal health

Our vision

The quality of life of people who have, or are at risk of developing musculoskeletal conditions is improved

Musculoskeletal Australia exists to help people who have musculoskeletal conditions of any type.

Our focus is on providing information, education, and empathetic support for individuals and those that support them: we care about people and their circumstances.

We do this by providing a range of services that include:

- comprehensive and accessible information and resources on [our website](#) and via our social media channels
- a national Help Line staffed by nurses and supported by volunteers who are living with musculoskeletal conditions
- webinars, providing the latest information on conditions, treatments, and living well, delivered by top experts in their fields
- resources specifically designed for children with juvenile arthritis and their families and educators
- a network of peer support groups that provide opportunities to share information, ideas and friendship
- leadership in the development of community-based programs for people with musculoskeletal conditions
- consumer perspectives in broader forums, including input into consumer-focused research
- representation of the consumer perspective via our Consumer Advisory Committee.

We also undertake policy and advocacy work on behalf of all Australians who have musculoskeletal conditions.

We inform

Koadlow Public Lecture

There is a broad community interest in knowing more about the use of medicinal cannabis for musculoskeletal pain.

We responded to this need by presenting the online lecture Medicinal cannabis: Weeding out the facts which included presentations by Prof Iain McGregor, Academic Director, Lambert Initiative for Cannabinoid Therapeutics, University of Sydney, and Dr Richard di Natale, former leader of the Australian Greens and former Senator for Victoria.

The lecture provided the community with impartial, evidence-based information about medicinal cannabis and its current availability and use in Australia. To date, the lecture has been viewed more than 1,000 times on our website.

MSK Help Line 1800 263 265

During 2020 our nurses responded to callers concerned about COVID-19 and the impact it could have on their conditions.

Some of the common themes from callers were increased feelings of anxiety, loneliness, and isolation. Our nurses and a group of volunteers also made follow-up phone calls to those people throughout the year to ensure they received the support and information they needed.



"It was so reassuring to speak with a nurse about my condition as I was quite anxious about how COVID-19 could affect my existing condition. She really put my mind at ease." - Consumer



We inform

Webinars

Our free consumer webinars are a great way for people with musculoskeletal conditions to hear from experts about these conditions. They provide practical, up-to-date information, knowledge and skills to help manage musculoskeletal conditions effectively. They continue to attract a large audience, with many people also viewing them on MSK's YouTube channel. You can view our past webinars [here](#).

Topics for our webinars are chosen from consumers' feedback - primarily from calls to the MSK Help Line.

Some of the topics included Musculoskeletal conditions and your mental health; Diagnosing and managing Polymyalgia Rheumatica and Staying strong and on your feet in older age.

Our sincere thanks to the presenters who freely gave their time, knowledge and expertise throughout the year.

MSK eNewsletter

Keeping in touch with our supporters and consumers is essential to us. Due to COVID-19, we increased our newsletter's frequency to provide people with the information they needed, when they needed it, to help them care for their physical and mental wellbeing. Topics included 'How to stay active during iso', 'Mental health', 'Sleep' and 'Healthy eating and managing your weight'. [Check out our newsletter and subscribe for free.](#)

Resources

[Our website](#) continues to be our central knowledge hub for up-to-date, evidence-informed information about musculoskeletal conditions and how to live well.

342,000
website visits
^ 222%

MSK News
17,144 subscribers
^ 170%



Getting to know our consumers

Making the invisible **visible**: Australians share the impact of musculoskeletal conditions on their lives.

In our ongoing commitment to better understand the lives and concerns of people living with musculoskeletal conditions, MSK embarked on the first, national, consumer-focused survey to collect the voices and stories of people living with these conditions.

We needed people to tell us - in their own words - what they were experiencing and what they needed.

More than 3,400 people - with a broad range of conditions and from all corners of Australia – completed the National Musculoskeletal Consumer Survey.

They provided information about how their conditions impact work and study,

the effect on their physical, mental and social health, relationships and finances.

The results of our findings will enable us to provide better services and support for Australians with musculoskeletal conditions.

It will give us the information to advocate for improved healthcare and greater recognition of the impact of these conditions.

One of the key areas that MSK will be focusing on is self-care. We want people to feel empowered to play an active role in managing their condition/s and we want support for self-care to be embedded across health services.



93%

say their lives were negatively impacted by their condition



66%

said their ability to work had been impacted by their condition



66%

said their condition had an impact on family and personal relationships

“Regular, constant, unremitting pain is THE MOST debilitating of conditions both physically and emotionally. I am a strong, fiercely proud woman but I am reduced to less than I am by this condition (and to tears sometimes) and while I know it will always be with me, I choose NOT to believe there is not more available to help me.” - Consumer

Getting to know our consumers

As a result of our findings, there are six areas of action which will form the basis of MSK's future activities. We invite you to read the full report [here](#).



People need support so they can work



People need affordable services and financial assistance to get the care they need



People need support to practice self-care



Consumer data should be used to advocate for better care



Services should be more integrated



There needs to be more understanding of what musculoskeletal conditions are and how they affect people

Consumer involvement

Having your say

The MSK Consumer Advisory Committee encourage and support consumers to have input into Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee (PBAC) decisions. The PBAC is an independent expert body appointed by the Australian Government which recommends new medicines for listing on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The PBAC wants to consider consumer views in its decision making, and we are working to ensure this happens for medicines relevant to people with musculoskeletal conditions. [Learn more about how we do this.](#)



Keeping older Australians active

Physical activity is important for good musculoskeletal health and the Active Neighbourhoods for Older Australians (ANOVA) project increased the opportunities for older people to become more active. MSK completed the second and final year of the ANOVA project (funded by Sport Australia) at neighbourhood houses throughout Australia.



Despite the disruptions of COVID-19, many neighbourhood houses were able to continue with their planned programs or adapt them in line with the changing conditions. A key achievement of the program was the development of a Community Connectors program that used peer support to incorporate the training of older people as Community Connectors. They encouraged and assisted others to engage in physical activity.

The project's aims were to:

- enhance older people's understanding of the benefits of regular physical activity
- improve access to physical activity – especially for those who are socially isolated and disadvantaged and not engaged in physical activity
- improve the knowledge and skills of Neighbourhood House staff and volunteers involved in planning and delivering age-appropriate physical activity.

“This grant has been so wonderful for us and our community members, and all our class participants have embraced the online delivery so well that we are planning dual delivery of our adult recreation classes in 2021.” - Neighbourhood House staff

We support

MSK Kids

There was a growing need to provide continue to support for the many families and children living with juvenile arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions who contact us for help. One way MSK answered the call was by providing webinars on relevant topics, which attracted a large audience, including some from as far away as Mozambique and Jordan and many in remote areas of Australia and New Zealand.

We also trialled an online MSK Kids parent support group, that enabled parents to come together to share experiences in a relaxed and friendly environment. The feedback received from those who took part was encouraging and we plan to host similar online forums in 2021.

To help teenagers with musculoskeletal conditions connect, MSK developed an online teen group – Teen Talk. The online chat will give young people aged between 13-20 the opportunity to get together in a safe environment to share tips, support one another and ‘hang out’ together in a virtual space.

Teen Talk will be run by three of our youth ambassadors – Thalia, Jen and Damien.

The MSK Kids web page, eNewsletter and social media platforms continue to provide up-to-date information and news to an ever-increasing number of subscribers about juvenile arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions in younger people.



We support

Our people

We would like to recognise and thank the outgoing members of our Consumer Advisory Committee for their commitment to our organisation and other people with musculoskeletal conditions.



Thank you to:

Tassie Antoniou
Maggie Cripps
Beryl Logie

Stephanie Powell
Sam Squires
Nicky Yeomans

Their departure left some some big shoes to fill, so we put the call out, inviting people to apply to join our Consumer Advisory Committee. As a result, we want to welcome Phil Cole, Anne Gleeson, and Sophie Thompson to the committee.

When we asked their reasons for joining the Consumer Advisory Committee, they replied...

'To use my lived experience to help others. To exchange information and consider the issues and priorities of Musculoskeletal Australia's consumers. To ensure the consumer voice is heard.'
- Phil Cole

'I feel I am at a point where I know enough about my condition and have a lived experience to give back and be of benefit to the committee. I would like to provide the perspective of a young person living with arthritis to address issues such as employment, relationships and education as well a promote the fact that arthritis can affect anyone.'
Sophie Thompson

'I really believe in the work that is being done by Musculoskeletal Australia and am keen to participate and facilitate this work further.' – Anne Gleeson

We look forward to having them as part of the MSK team.

Our community getting behind us

Walk in July for MSK

If you were one of the many people who put on their walking shoes to take part in Walk in July for MSK, we thank you.

Participants walked to help raise awareness of these often silent yet debilitating conditions. This year's theme was - "Overcome the silence surrounding musculoskeletal conditions" which resonated with many participants.

Those in the know are aware that musculoskeletal conditions can take away the ability to work, care for family, and move without pain. And yet, for those not in the know, these conditions are often dismissed as "just a bit of arthritis."

Funds raised through events such as this are crucial in continuing our work in the community. At the end of July, more than **\$7,000** was raised and we thank you!



"I was really happy to participate in the Walk in July for MSK. I felt empowered by the opportunity, and my goal was to try and walk 10,000 steps each day which I achieved 2-3 times per week. As a person that has lived with an initially misdiagnosed and misunderstood musculoskeletal condition for 25+ years, it is my hope that some of these training clinicians will now have an increased awareness and understanding of musculoskeletal conditions and the people that live with them daily." - Participant

Our supporters



Bequests

A gift in Will is a lasting legacy for the next generation. We are so very grateful for the generosity of people who have, throughout our long history, included Musculoskeletal Australia as a beneficiary in their Will. These gifts help us to plan now and offer hope for future generations

Sandra, who is a long time employee of MSK, realises what an important role we play in providing support for people with musculoskeletal conditions.

"In the end, it's all about helping others – showing them that I care. It feels good to have made plans to help people after I've gone.

I've worked for Musculoskeletal Australia for some years, so I can see first-hand the wonderful work they do in helping people who struggle daily with the pain and discomfort of musculoskeletal conditions.

I believe to give is to give the gift of love, and that love heals. Hopefully, in some small way, the legacy left by me can help Musculoskeletal Australia find ways of supporting people to cope with arthritis, osteoporosis, back pain, and other musculoskeletal conditions.

It's a great feeling to know that I can help build a better, healthier future for the next generation." - Sandra



Our supporters

Together we can do good

Our gratitude and thanks to all our generous donors, supporters, volunteers, trusts, foundations, corporate and government partners who share our vision of supporting people for better musculoskeletal health.

Our work is only made possible through your generosity, and we thank you.

Donors and fundraisers

We are grateful to those who donate to our organisation through regular giving, our appeals, as a Friend of MSK and fundraising events.

Volunteers

Delivering our services would not be possible without our committed volunteers' support, and we are grateful to them for continuing to provide their time and skills throughout a challenging year.



“I started as a volunteer with MSK in 2018 to prepare a timeline and selected photos for a digital display to celebrate MSK's 50 year anniversary. Everyone was so welcoming and I enjoyed the work so much, that I asked if I could return the following year to sort and arrange the photographic collection.

I am passionate about local and community history, and MSK's extensive photographic collection depicting volunteer-led programs, fundraising and community events was a perfect fit.” - Christiane



Our supporters

Major giving

We greatly appreciate and acknowledge the generosity of our major donors, philanthropists, trusts, and foundations in helping us achieve our mission.

Major donors

All Souls Opportunity Shop
Rita Andre
Geoffrey Baker
Nick Baker
John & Jennifer Barke
Norma Beaconsfield
Ainslie Cummins
Janine Dyer
Jenny Giles
Catherine Gray
Pat Howell
SM Linsdell
Joanne Manger
Norma Minney
Marion Rae Moir
Dennis & Fairlie Nassau
Dianne Shakespeare
Greg Shalit & Miriam Faine
June Smith
Robert & Beverly Squire
Jenny Tatchell

Elizabeth Turnbull
Ralph & Barbara Ward-Ambler
Lee White

Trusts and foundations

Hopetoun Fund
JM Harrison Charitable Trust
Joe White Bequest
Marion Popplewell Charitable Trust
Pethard Tarax Charitable Trust
The Russell Foundation
The William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund

Bequests

Lindsay James Baldy
Nancy Blumfield
Joan Barradell
Arthur Davies
Nina Elzow
Archieleen Helen
Hangar
Bruce Edwin McDonald

Government and corporate partners

We are proud to be working alongside the following organisation to improve the lives of people living with musculoskeletal conditions.

abbvie

 Comfort Feet
Foundation®

Janssen
PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES OF
Johnson & Johnson



Kingfisher Capital
Investments

 Medicines
Australia

 PENINSULA
HOT SPRINGS

 Spectrum Therapeutics™

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and Human
Services

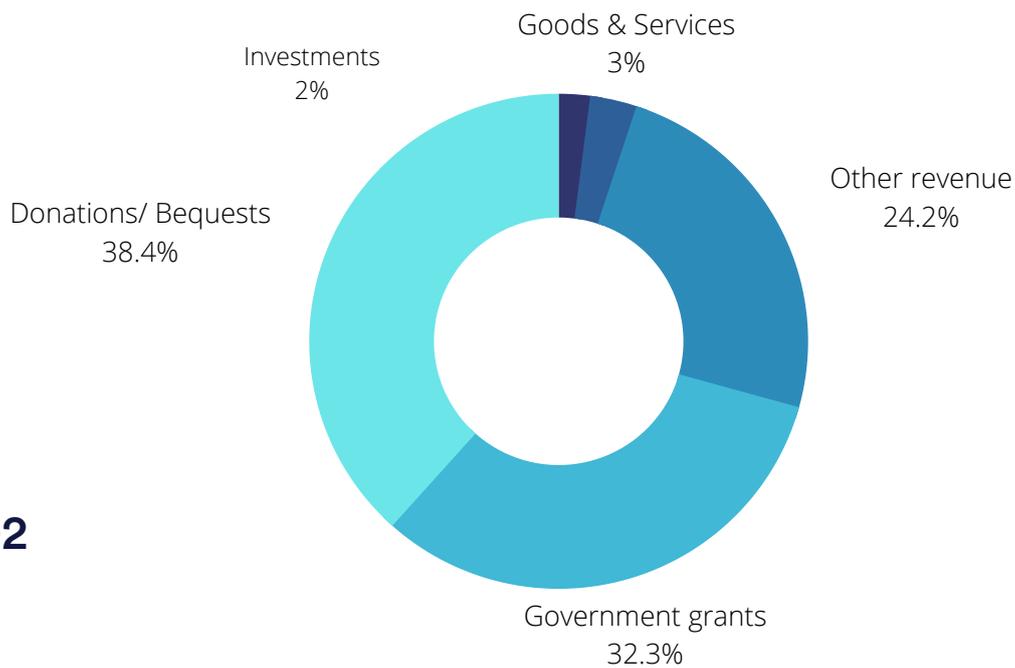
Financial Overview

The impacts and challenges related to COVID-19 required not only a revision of our strategic objectives, but also cost-effective program delivery to achieve them.

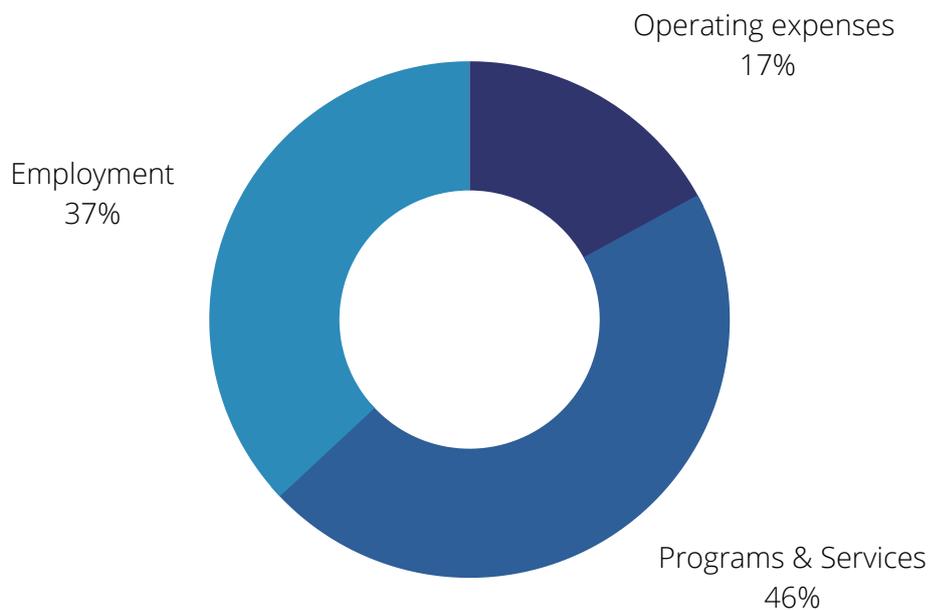
Income and expenditure for the financial year 2020 resulted in an operating profit of *\$298K.

This result puts MSK in a strong position for continued growth in 2021 and beyond

Income
\$2,398,102



Expenses
\$2,099,311



Our financial year is 1 January to 31 December. *Please refer to the Financial Statements 2020 for further information

We're committed to our mission of supporting people for better musculoskeletal health.

There are many ways you can help up achieve this mission.

[Get involved](#)

[Subscribe to our eNewsletter](#)

For information on partnering opportunities, please call the Commercial Team on +613 8531 8004



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