



MUSCULOSKELETAL  
AUSTRALIA

20

ANNUAL  
REPORT

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[msk.org.au](http://msk.org.au)

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIR AND CEO

We're pleased to present to you the 2021 Annual Report for Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK).

If we thought 2020 was a challenging year, the compounding factors of another year in lockdown, increased consumer servicing demands, and significant fundraising constraints tested the resolve of all who contributed to our important work. We weren't alone in these experiences. The not-for-profit sector as a whole dealt with the additional stressors of a community under pressure. Despite these challenges, at MSK we're very proud to report an increase in support and advocacy for and on behalf of consumers throughout Australia.

Key to our consumer-focused approach is the work undertaken by our Consumer Advisory Committee. Our members' expertise, energy, and commitment ensure that people with musculoskeletal conditions are always at the apex of our service decision-making. We thank all who contributed to this important work.

Further to understanding consumer perspectives, the results of our major survey, 'Making the Invisible Visible,' gave us their voices and lived experiences. This enabled us to advocate and convey service and support priorities to government and the health sector with the confidence that comes from actively listening to consumers.

One key priority highlighted by the survey results was the need to make more people aware of these 'invisible conditions'. To that end, we sought to establish a National Day of Awareness for musculoskeletal conditions. So on Halloween 2021, Rattle Ya' Bones Day was born. Building on this year's success, Rattle Ya' Bones Day will be an annual event in our ongoing awareness-raising strategies.

At MSK, we believe that consumers own their health. We've adopted a model that supports self-care, so that we can provide the most appropriate assistance. Access to evidence-informed information is critical for determining positive health outcomes, so we continued to develop our digital and online services and resources. These free services, including our webinar series, eNewsletter, social media and website, provide information and support to people when and where they need it, giving them the tools to manage their health.

We'd like to finish by conveying our thanks to all who've been on this journey with us, starting with our National Help Line nurses and support volunteers. They were the reassuring voice for the many consumers who contacted us as they faced anxious times, self-isolation, and an ever-changing health system.

We'd also like to thank our consumers, generous partners, donors, supporters, and the MSK community for their tremendous support. We're incredibly grateful.

Finally, our sincere thanks to our skilled, passionate, and committed volunteers, Consumer Advisory Committee, staff and Board of Directors, for their tremendous work and determined approach to providing support for people with musculoskeletal conditions.

The voice of our consumer movement continues to grow and is beginning to be heard. Join us in 2022 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



# ABOUT US

## Our mission

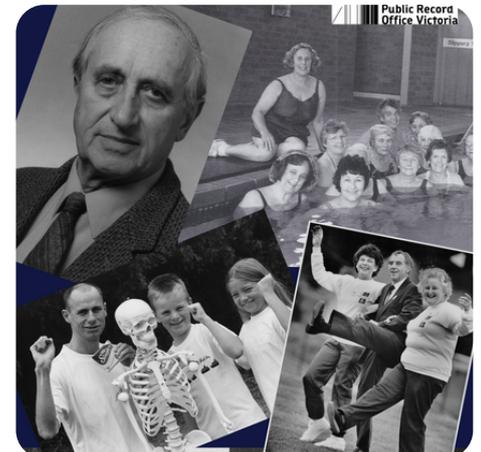
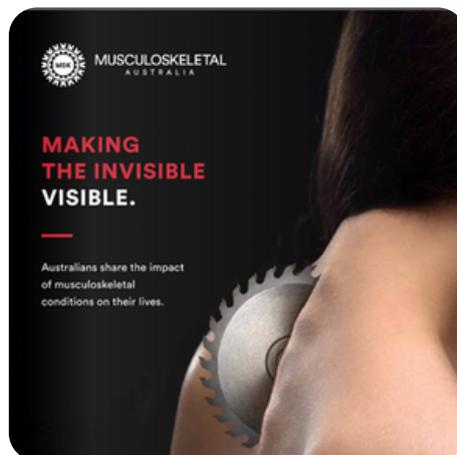
To support people for better musculoskeletal health.

Musculoskeletal Australia is a national, consumer-led organisation, supporting people for better musculoskeletal health. We work on behalf of the 7 million Australians living with conditions such as osteoarthritis, back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia and more than 150 different musculoskeletal conditions. Musculoskeletal Australia has been supporting people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions for over 50 years. Our vision is that the quality of life of people who have or are at risk of musculoskeletal conditions is improved.

Our focus is on providing information, education, and empathetic support for individuals and families: we care about people and their personal conditions and circumstances.

# HIGHLIGHTS

1. National Musculoskeletal Consumer Survey
2. Reconciliation Action Plan
3. Rattle Ya' Bones Day
4. Koadlow Community Lecture
5. Sharing our history in photos



# CONSUMER REPORT

## Helping people understand and manage their musculoskeletal condition by providing information and support.

As a consumer organisation that listens to and represents the voice of people with musculoskeletal conditions, the work we do is driven by what consumers tell us.

We're a people organisation first, listening to and representing the voices of people with musculoskeletal conditions. We believe in the co-design process incorporating input from our ambassadors and Consumer Advisory Committee and feedback from our National Musculoskeletal Consumer Survey. Our information and support services reflect this.

### MSK Help Line

Our phones continued to run hot throughout 2021 and in October alone we saw a 73% increase in calls in comparison to the previous year.

Our nurses responded to a range of enquiries, the most prevalent were from people who were experiencing pain, anxiety, loneliness and isolation.

Topical to 2021 were calls about COVID-19, anxiety about which type of vaccine to get and possible side effects. Of concern were the number of calls about the shortages of some medications people were prescribed to manage their condition. Callers told us that with the closure of gyms, hydrotherapy, and swimming pools they experienced an increase in their pain levels and were looking for help. Keeping active helps people manage pain and their musculoskeletal condition. Our nurses were able to provide support and practical information to those in need.



*"Thank you so much for the thoughtful response and resources, I really appreciate it. I really enjoyed the webinar and got a lot out of it. So, thank you."*

*"Thank you so much for your help today and for your patience in listening."*



**MSK HELP LINE**  
1800 263 265

# CONSUMER REPORT

## MSK Kids

Webinars, regular updates, and information resources provided much needed assistance to families of kids with juvenile arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions. This program, like our kids, continued to flourish throughout 2021.

As more and more families turn to us for support, our MSK Kids program needed to be ramped up to meet the growing demand.

In 2021 we hosted a number of webinars, that resonated with many families. Topics covered healthy eating, keeping active in pain, and transitioning from paediatric to adult care. Excitingly, these webinars enabled us to form relationships with new families as well as build closer bonds with the presenters and the organisations they represented, including the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and the Australian Physiotherapy Association.



### ***"I just wanted to say a huge thanks for last night's session.***

*We originally didn't include our daughter (10 years old) with viewing the session as we weren't sure how it would be pitched but brought her in to watch from about 10 minutes. A lot of the information has really struck home for her and we are already using the language last night and today to help frame conversations around her pain and movement. She is on crutches (for an injury) at present and today has actually put some weight on her injured foot as we acknowledged that the reluctance was more around the lasers going nuts and we needed to create a new highway for her brain to process it.*

*She went to bed telling us that all the information on the screen was how she had felt at times, and I think seeing it presented really validated 9 years of pain and often reduced capacity and movement.*

*Thanks again for your efforts in showcasing two fantastic speakers."*

New in 2021, we launched "Teen Talk". This online chat group is a safe place for young people aged between 13-20 with a musculoskeletal or chronic pain condition to connect with others who 'get it'. We were excited to see how Teen Talk grew in popularity in its first 12 months. Kids are coming together to chat about their thoughts and feelings, living with a condition as well as school, medications and general interests. We look forward to continuing to grow the platform in 2022.

Because we continue to work closely with our families, we know that pain and transitioning from paediatric to adult care can often be an issue. In response, we have created a range of new online resources that can help. If you'd like to keep updated on what's happening with MSK Kids, visit <https://msk.org.au/msk-kids/>

# CONSUMER REPORT

## Webinars, eNewsletters, social media and more...

Keeping in touch with our supporters and community is vitally important to us. The information we provide through our help line, webinars, e-newsletter, social media and website helped many people learn about and care for their physical and mental health.

People told us they needed information on specific topics and we answered the call by producing webinars that included - Musculoskeletal conditions and your employment rights; Pregnancy and arthritis; Hands and arthritis; Exercise and osteoarthritis and Pain management. Because of this our webinars continued to grow in popularity with a 10% increase in the number of registrations on 2020.

Similarly, consumer demand drove the content for our newsletter. Some of our most popular articles included - Worried about COVID vaccination? Is it time to change jobs? Focus on back pain and Staying connected.

*"There wasn't a lot of information for my specific condition - osteoarthritis - but my husband found a free webinar hosted by Musculoskeletal Australia on how to manage back pain. It was the help and support I needed to learn more and without them providing this wonderful free service I would still be navigating my way through understanding my condition."*



Website visits  
336,000



YouTube views  
213,345



Social media followers  
10,252



Webinar registrations  
5,243

# CONSUMER REPORT

## Koadlow Community Lecture

The Koadlow Community Lecture is a free public event held annually in honour of Dr Leslie Koadlow, a passionate rheumatologist who, with his secretary Alice Petty and consumer Mollie Riches, founded our organisation in 1968.

The theme for the 2021 Lecture came about as a result of the outcomes from our 2020 survey. The results clearly showed that the impact of back pain on people's lives is immense, and that many people suffer with this disabling condition.

Professor Peter O'Sullivan, a specialist musculoskeletal physiotherapist and Professor of Musculoskeletal Physiotherapy at Curtin University, joined us to present the 2021 Koadlow Community Lecture online - 'Making sense of disabling back pain'.

This year's Lecture was proudly supported by the Myotherapy Association of Australia.

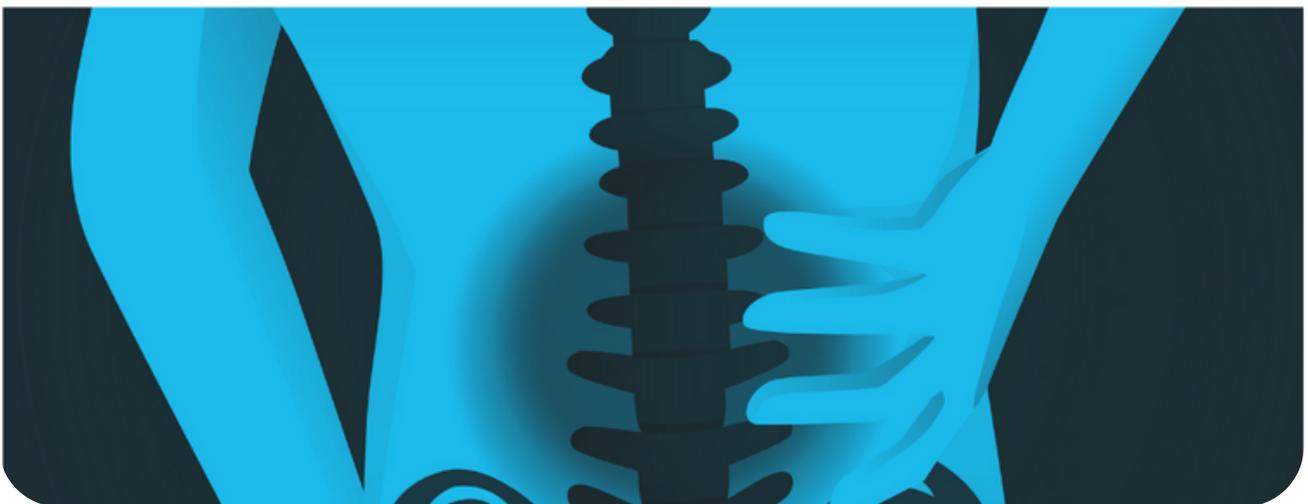
*"Thanks to @MSKAust for hosting a brilliant webinar and making it accessible to patients and practitioners alike."*

KOADLOW ONLINE COMMUNITY LECTURE

## MAKING SENSE OF DISABLING BACK PAIN



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*"Please thank Prof O'Sullivan for the best lecture I have ever heard on pain/back pain."*

# CONSUMER REPORT

## Peer Support Groups

We are grateful to the dedicated and passionate volunteers who lead our peer support groups that continue to impress us with their resilience, ability and willingness to try new things.

Our peer support groups are a great way for people to connect with others, share experiences and break the isolation that can often be felt if you live with a chronic health condition.

Many of the groups have joined our new peer support group Facebook page. This is a great way for them to connect and support each other.

It was great to see a number of groups continue to run exercise groups while adapting to the new and ever-changing COVID-era rules. Indoor classes became a walk around the neighbourhood and as restrictions eased, it was so good to see the eager return to warm water exercise classes.

Launched online in 2021, the update leader training for warm water and chair-based exercise saw the beginning of a new era in the way the training was delivered. This proved a huge success, with many of the leaders telling us that having this training online makes attending more accessible and affordable.



"When I meet with my support group it gives me a real lift. I find that by talking to my fellow members, I can tell them almost anything that's happening in my life and that picks me up. That really makes a big difference in my day-to-day life and living with arthritis."

# CONSUMER REPORT

## Self-care

In our 2020 consumer survey, people revealed that they were practising elements of self-care but needed more support to do this. We know self-care can sometimes feel like a luxury, but the truth is it's an investment in health.

Self-care encompasses all activities that people do to manage their conditions and contributes to the best level of physical and mental health and overall wellbeing.

As part of a broader project, we have created a set of self-care resources for musculoskeletal conditions that include rheumatoid arthritis, juvenile arthritis, back pain, ankylosing spondylitis and psoriatic arthritis. The resources cover medications, mental health, exercise, diet, managing health care appointments and many other aspects of self-care.

We are grateful to AbbVie and UCB for the generous grants received to develop the content for these self-care plans – the first step in this project.

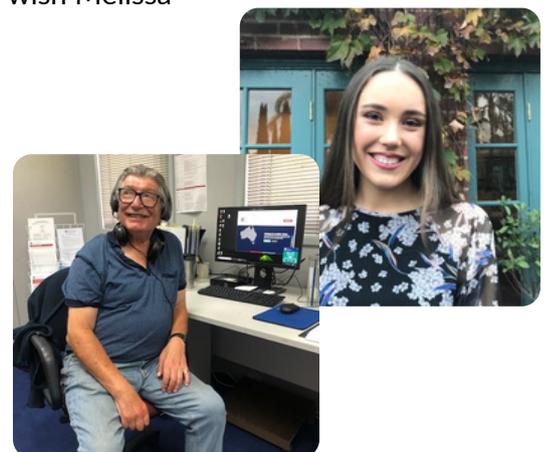
# VOLUNTEERS

We continued to receive wonderful support from our committed volunteers and many were able to assist us by working from home throughout COVID lockdowns. We are grateful to them for providing their time, skills and for some, their lived experience. Volunteers play an integral role in our organisation, and we value them.

We were pleased to receive the support of Practera, an organisation that connects learners to industry projects. Focusing on improving income generation from e-commerce, the Practera students undertook an in-depth review our online shop. The students presented their findings to our team along with a consolidated report to help create brand awareness and increase income to invest in our programs and services.

At the start of 2021 we were joined by Melissa Jones, an Accredited Practising Dietitian who committed to providing 12 months of delicious healthy recipes for our newsletter subscribers to enjoy. Melissa's recipes quickly became a very popular addition to our newsletter. We have two new volunteers joining us in 2022, and wish Melissa all the best.

**Thank you - to all our volunteers!**



# CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Our Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) includes people with a range of musculoskeletal conditions from across the country. They give freely of their expertise and time, advising the Board and management on the strategic planning of our organisation, as well as drawing on their lived experience to contribute to the development of our programs and services.



*"It's so important that people living with musculoskeletal conditions are heard and their experiences and perspectives are integrated into services, programs and advocacy."*

*- Annie McPherson, former CAC Chair*

At the end of 2020 we bade farewell to several inaugural members of the CAC and were delighted to welcome a number of new members during 2021.

Our gratitude goes to Wayne Lentsment and Matthew Sutherland for their commitment. We also wish to acknowledge the leadership of the Chairperson, Annie McPherson, who reached the end of her time in that role. Annie's incredible contribution to the CAC and MSK over many years is evidenced by her commitment and passion for advocacy – and we thank her.

We welcomed the new Chairperson, Angela Brown. Angela is a Wailwan/Ngemba woman and has several chronic health conditions including rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis.

We also warmly welcome Peter Button, Rachael Havrlant, Paul Klotz and Mikayla O'Neill.

*"Musculoskeletal conditions can be daunting. I want to be a change agent for awareness of the high impact musculoskeletal diseases have on people's lives. Through awareness and support, I believe we can contribute to people's wellbeing, both physically and mentally." - Angela Brown*



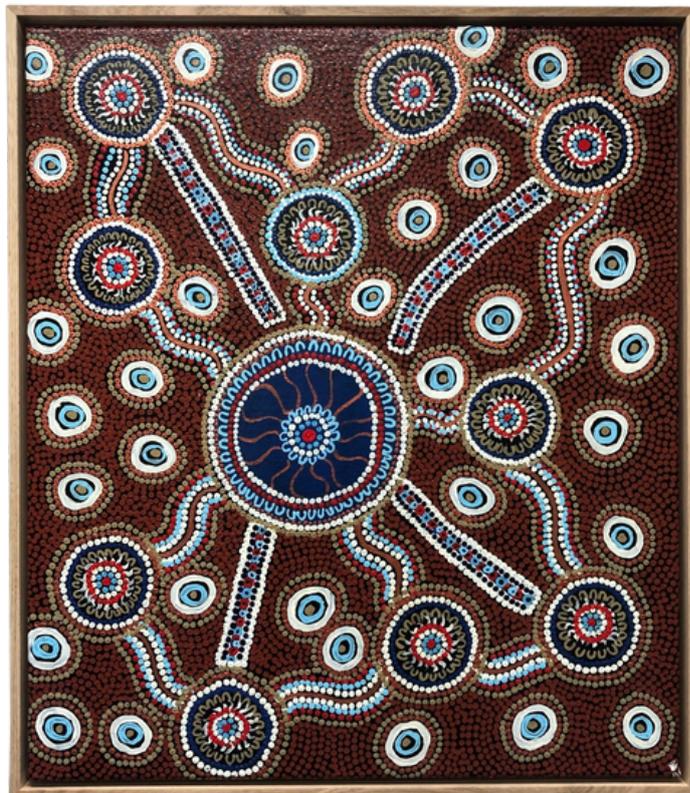
*"My chronic pain journey led me to MSK, initially for information, guidance, and support and eventually to becoming a member of the Consumer Advisory Committee. I saw this as a vehicle to raise awareness." - Paul Klotz*

# RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

MSK was proud to work on the creation of our first Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

As a people organisation and in line with our values, we aim to be inclusive of all peoples in all we do. We know that to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people actively, appropriately, and respectfully, we needed to have an understanding and acceptance of the five dimensions of reconciliation outlined by Reconciliation Australia and that all our actions and policies are guided by them.

We were delighted to receive approval of our RAP and you can find a copy of it here: <https://msk.org.au/reconciliation-action-plan/>



## The story of the painting

I have named it 'Community' because that is how I see MSK.

MSK is in the centre of the large circle, then the outside of the circle are all the people who make MSK work. The lines and pathways go out to the community and those that use our services. The lines and pathways are two-way, like song-lines, showing a journey. This represents MSK being informed by the needs of people with musculoskeletal conditions, as well as aiming to meet their needs.

You'll notice one circle doesn't have the same number of outside rings, that is because they represent those who are yet to find their way to MSK. Another is blue coloured, representing those who have been part of MSK and have moved on or are no longer with us.

We are grateful to Angela Brown, Chairperson of the MSK Consumer Advisory Committee, for providing the artwork for our RAP.

## A PICTURE IS WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

Throughout our 50+ year history, we have collected a vast number of photographs and ephemera. To preserve this, we embarked on a project to digitise a portion of our collection.

We were successful in obtaining funding from the Local History Grant Program, through the Victoria State Government and the Public Record Office of Victoria. The overall goal of the project is to improve access to our collection, to look back and enjoy our shared history. It is a way to celebrate the growth of our organisation and pay homage to the many members, volunteers, staff, community and commercial partners who have helped us get to where we are today.

We will be working to catalogue and upload the digitised photographs to Victorian Collections, an online archive for Victorian organisations, purpose-built by the Victoria State Government in partnerships with Museums Victoria.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



### Walk in July

People hit the pavement in July to keep active and help raise funds to support our free programs and services. It was great to see people registering to take part from as far away as Alice Springs. And special thanks to team Teen Talk and the team from In House Studio Fitness for their amazing fundraising efforts.

### Rattle Ya' Bones Day

On 31 October (traditionally known as Halloween), we launched the inaugural Rattle Ya' Bones Day – a National Day of Awareness for all muscle, bone and joint conditions. Rattle Ya' Bones Day is an outcome of our 2020 survey report 'Making the Invisible Visible: Australians share the impact of musculoskeletal conditions on their lives'. The report identified that people with musculoskeletal conditions often felt invisible and that the general population was mostly unaware of the impacts of these conditions.

We encouraged people to become involved in this event in a number of ways including taking part in a 'viral dance challenge'. It was great to see so many people dress up and embrace the Halloween theme in their challenge videos.

Others chose to record and post a message of support for Rattle Ya' Bones Day online. It was encouraging to see people with – and without – musculoskeletal conditions supporting the day in this way. Our thanks to Pharmacy Alliance, Pharmacy Guild (National and Victoria) and MedAdvisor for partnering with us and promoting this inaugural event.

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

We are extremely thankful and acknowledge the generosity of our donors, philanthropists, trusts, and foundations who support our mission.

## Thank you.

### Major donors

Rita Andre

Nick Baker

John Barke

Elsmaree Baxter

Norma Beaconsfield

Rosemary Castles

Ainslie Cummins

Jenny Giles

Catherine Gray

SM Linsdell

Joanne Manger

Dennis Nassau

Philip Newson

Robert Squire

Jenny Tatchell

Ralph & Barbara Ward-Ambler

Lee White

### Trusts and foundations

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Joe White Bequest

Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation

Pethard Tarax Charitable Trust

The Russell Foundation

The William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund

### Bequests

Patricia Anderson

Lindsay James Baldy

Ronald Charles Forsyth

Gladys Vera Hughes

Marion Isabel Jennings

Margaret & John Leonard

Patricia McArthur

Bruce Edwin McDonald

Gwyneth Smith

Jane Tindale

Clare Patricia Trevare

Reginald Glenn Wotherspoon

# COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

## Our partners

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

abbvie



Freemasons  
Foundation Victoria



Kingfisher Capital  
Investments



## DIRECTORS AND OFFICE HOLDERS

Dipak Sanghvi	Chair, Non-Executive Director
Jade Rowarth	Deputy Chair, Non-Executive Director
Arthur Charlaftis	Non-Executive Director
David Charles	Non-Executive Director
George Kalomallos	Non-Executive Director
John McLindon	Non-Executive Director
Natalie Sirianni	Non-Executive Director
Erica Traicos	Non-Executive Director
Professor Peter Choong	Director Emeritus
Rob Anderson	Chief Executive Officer
Philip Thomas	Company Secretary

## CONSUMER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Annie McPherson - Chair (until October 2021)  
Angela Brown - (appointed Chair in October 2021)  
Peter Button  
Phil Cole  
Anne Gleeson  
Rachael Havrlant  
Paul Klotz  
Wayne Lentsment  
Mikayla O'Neill  
Matthew Sutherland  
Sophie Thompson

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