



Musculoskeletal Health Australia

Knowledge. Choice. Connection.

Peer Support Group Manual

A guide for existing MHA affiliated Peer Support Groups

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MHA Help Line: 1800 263 265 | muscha.org

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Contents

About this Manual	Page 4
About MHA	Page 4
Vision	Page 4
Mission.....	Page 4
MHA affiliated Peer Support Groups	Page 4
Annual Affiliation Policies and Procedures.....	Page 5
Terms and Conditions	Page 5
PSG Operational Requirements	Page 6
Code of Conduct.....	Page 7
Managing Conflict.....	Page 7
Structure and Succession Planning	Page 8
Winding up a PSG.....	Page 8
Winding up an Incorporated Group	Page 9
PSG Activities and Events.....	Page 9
Key Contacts	Page 9

About this Manual

This resource provides the framework for the operation of Musculoskeletal Health Australia (MHA), formerly Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK), affiliated Peer Support Groups.

About Musculoskeletal Health Australia

MHA is a consumer-focused organisation delivering services and support, and advocating on behalf of Australians with arthritis, osteoporosis, back pain, gout and the more than 150 other musculoskeletal conditions. MHA also exists to advance awareness and understanding about musculoskeletal health.

Our Vision

By 2050 all Australians live free from the negative impacts of musculoskeletal conditions.

Our Mission

We exist to improve knowledge, choice and connection that drives positive outcomes for people impacted by musculoskeletal conditions, and to promote excellence in support and care.

MHA Affiliated Peer Support Groups

MHA affiliated Peer Support Groups (PSGs) form essential connections for people living musculoskeletal conditions and support the needs of those living in their local communities.

PSGs actively support the vision and mission of MHA, their activities and contribute to and support MHA to improve knowledge, choice and connection in relation to musculoskeletal health.

Peer Support Groups must:

- Provide a safe space and learning environment for people to share their experiences of living with arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions without fear of judgement or misunderstanding
- Increase social connectedness and create a sense of belonging within supportive peer support groups
- Empower people to build personal resilience, improve help seeking behaviour through increased knowledge of available services, the development of positive coping strategies and skills needed to access help
- Actively promote the work of MHA - including through fundraising and awareness raising campaigns.

Annual Affiliation Policies and Procedures

All MHA affiliated PSGs in Victoria are covered by MHA's insurance. To maintain up-to-date records, all PSGs must complete an annual registration process. All groups must complete an Annual Registration form providing information including:

- Leaders, office-bearers and/or key contact information
- Group activities
- Approval for the PSG to be included in MHA promotions and materials including the MHA Help Line, website, social media, newsletters and other communications.

Forms will be distributed annually by MHA in May and must be returned completed by 30 June.

All PSGs conducting physical activity programs such as seated exercise or warm water exercise classes will be required to complete additional forms on an annual basis. All registered MHA affiliated PSGs will be provided with Public and Products Liability Insurance for the amount of \$20,000,000.

Refer to - Musculoskeletal Health Australia's PSG Annual Registration Form

Terms and Conditions

All registered and recognised MHA affiliated PSGs must adhere to the following terms and conditions:

- Notify MHA of the group's nominated office-bearer and key contact including updating MHA on any changes to the PSG, its office-bearers or activities
- Act in the best interests of MHA including undertaking fundraising activities and promoting the work of MHA throughout the community. Any fundraising activities undertaken by the group where the funds are not directly benefiting the PSGs activities must be distributed to Musculoskeletal Health Australia to assist in providing services and support to improve musculoskeletal health
- Complete the annual registration requirements
- Provide annual financial statements for the PSG – these can include income/expenditure records, audited financial statements or bank statements by 30 June
- Maintain an up-to-date register of all those attending PSG meetings, activities and events (including guests)
- Undertake the necessary precautions to ensure the wellbeing and safety of all those involved with the PSG
- Immediately notify MHA of any accidents or incidents that occur as a result of PSG activities or events
- PSGs Incorporated in Victoria must notify Consumer Affairs Victoria of any office bearer changes by completing and submitting the *Change of Association Details* form via the Consumer Affairs Victoria website ([LINK](#))

Chair-based and Warm Water Programs

For PSGs delivering physical activity programs (chair-based or warm water)

- All exercise leaders must successfully complete MHA exercise leader training
- All PSG exercise leaders must maintain their training and be reaccredited every two years through MHA

Operational Requirements

All PSGs are required to adhere to the MHA terms and conditions and ensure the following:

Insurance

MHA provides Public and Products Liability Insurance coverage (\$20,000,000) to registered Peer Support Groups. Public and Product Liability Insurance covers personal injury and/or property damage to third parties that arise from PSG registered activities. All registered PSGs must complete an annual Incident Report form and submit this to MHA.

Registered MHA affiliated PSGs will receive copies of their annual insurance certificates.

Insurance Eligibility

To be eligible for Public and Product Liability Insurance coverage, all PSGs must:

- Have a current and up-to-date registration with Musculoskeletal Health Australia
- Comply with the terms and conditions set out in the MHA Peer Support Group Manual
- Ensure PSG key contact details are up-to-date and provided to MHA
- Inform MHA of any changes to the PSGs office-bearers, key contacts or activities within seven (7) days of the change
- Ensure the PSG maintains accurate and up-to-date records of all attendees at PSG meetings and activities (including guests)
- Provide MHA with details of all activities undertaken by the PSG and notify MHA within seven (7) days of any additional activities or events not listed on the annual registration form including the completion of a risk assessment form for any additional activities
- Notify MHA of all incidents, injuries or accidents that occur as a result of a PSG activity within two (2) business days.

Refer to - Incident/Injury Report Form

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment must be completed for any event or activity that is not listed on the PSGs annual registration form.

When conducting a risk assessment, please consider:

- What can go wrong – when and how
- What are the possible financial impacts – to your members, to others (costs can include time, loss of income/money)
- What is the likelihood of an incident or accident occurring
- What are the potential impacts
- What is the source of the risk/s and what can be done to eliminate, reduce or control the risk.

All risk assessments must be received by MHA at least four (7) days prior to the event unless otherwise agreed.

Refer to – Musculoskeletal Health Australia Risk Assessment Form

Code of Conduct

As a registered MHA affiliated PSG, all activities and undertakings of the PSG and its members, must be in the best interests of MHA, the PSG, its members, and the broader community.

PSGs and their members agree to respect the dignity, rights and views of others by acting in an ethical, courteous and helpful manner at all times and must:

- Be approachable and welcoming
- Embrace diversity and understand that everyone is different
- Be open to learning
- Commit to working with PSG leaders and office-bearers
- Show empathy and understanding particularly in relation to musculoskeletal conditions
- Understand and embrace self-help, self-care and self-management
- Respect all members of the PSG equally
- Actively participate and contribute as a member of the PSG
- Seek, accept and act on feedback on the PSGs activities and initiatives

Managing Conflict

Being part of a PSG requires all members to work together productively to ensure the effective operation of the PSG and the delivery of its activities. It is essential all PSG members recognise that there will be different views and ideas and that sometimes there will be disagreements.

Effectively managing any disagreements is essential to the ongoing success of all PSGs. Disagreements and conflict must be resolved as quickly as possible so that the PSG can continue to operate and provide positive and enjoyable experiences for all those involved.

If there is serious conflict within the PSG or a matter is unable to be resolved, please contact Musculoskeletal Health Australia on 03 8531 8000 (1800 263 265) for support and advice.

Structure and Succession Planning

As volunteer run groups, PSGs can determine their own structures that best suit the community in which they operate. Depending on the size of the PSG there may be a need for members to take on various leadership roles to assist in the group's operations and activities.

It is also important that the PSGs activities and operations do not become the responsibility of the same people every year. All PSGs need to consider rotating leadership positions amongst their members on a regular basis.

Winding Up a PSG

For a range of reasons PSGs may make the decision to cease operations. If the PSG has reached this decision there are a number of steps that must be followed to ensure the group's activities are finalised correctly.

1. Notify MHA that the PSG is ceasing operations
2. Ensure the broader community is aware that the group is ceasing its activities. This can be done by placing a notice in the local and community newspapers, on social media, ensuring the local council is aware the group is no longer operating and notifying all those on the PSG distribution lists are contacted
3. Ensure all records are either securely destroyed (if they are not required for auditing or legal purposes). Please note financial records must be kept for 7 years – this can be in hard copy or electronic
4. If the group is not incorporated, return all records to MHA
5. Ensure all outstanding accounts are paid. All remaining funds must be transferred to MHA.

Winding Up an Incorporated Group

Incorporated groups have significant legal and regulatory obligations that must be adhered to. An incorporated group's operations including ceasing to operate is determined by the group's constitution and various legislation (depending on the state or territory in which the group operates). Unless a group's incorporation is cancelled (by the relevant regulatory authority), there remains legal obligations after it ceases to operate.

PSG Activities and Events

Building awareness and understanding of musculoskeletal conditions within local communities is an essential part of the work that MHA does. PSGs play an essential role in building this awareness and understanding and raising the profile of MHA and the services and support we deliver.

All PSGs are encouraged to promote their affiliation with MHA by ensuring all promotional, marketing and communication from the Group includes the MHA name and logo.

MHA will provide PSGs with electronic copies of the logo and word mark as well as guidelines for its use that must be followed.

Before distributing materials that contain the MHA name and logo, PSGs are required to provide MHA with an electronic copy for approval. For approval, please send content to comms@muscha.org

Key Contacts

All general inquiries regarding Peer Support Groups should be forwarded to info@muscha.org

For all other inquiries please contact:

Gabi Massey

gabi.massey@muscha.org

03 8531 8000

Head Office
263-265 Kooyong Road
Elsternwick VIC 3185

Postal Address
PO Box 130
Caulfield South VIC 3162

Peer Support Groups 2024

Location/PSG Name	Contact	Phone	Email	Website	Socials
Ballarat Arthritis Peer Support Group	Lucy	0411 703 902	lucylloyd@gmail.com		www.facebook.com/Ballarat-Arthritis-Support-Group-295893173867926/
Bendigo Arthritis Club Inc	Sandra	0488 773 308	sandradoolan0@gmail.com	https://bendigoarthritis.weebly.com/	
Colac Arthritis Self Help Group	Lois	0406 337 746	loveeestef@gmail.com		
Cranbourne Arthritis Support Group	Janet	0420 925 153	janet-ward@live.com.au	https://casg.tidyhq.com	
Frankston Arthritis Self Help Group	Noel	0433 726 346	noel.vivian.white@gmail.com		
Glen's Goldies Self Help Support Group (Warburton)	Patricia	0419 144 514	pthole1@bigpond.com		
Glen Waverley - Eastern Suburbs Hydrotherapy Inc	Bronwyn	0467 631 835	brongjiles@gmail.com		https://www.facebook.com/Eastern-Suburbs-Hydrotherapy-Inc-357210837807046/
Healesville Arthritis Self Help Support Group	Barbara	0419 501 724	barbhegarty48@gmail.com		
Horsham Self Help Group	Lance	0455 548 445	lance.duffield@gmail.com		
Mt Beauty - Alpine Move Group	Heather	0407 885 042	jackson7089@gmail.com		
Pakenham Arthritis Self Help Group Inc	Berni	0411 098 519	bernadette.lilley@outlook.com		
Swan Hill & District Arthritis Self Help Group	Mary	0429 329 530	jmlnolen@bigpond.net.au		
Warburton - Glens Goldies SHSG	Patricia	0419 144 514	pthole1@bigpond.com		

Condition Specific Groups	Contact	Phone	Email	Website	Socials
Bairnsdale Fibromyalgia Support Group	Christine	0412 598 830	bfsgroup2016@outlook.com		
Ballarat Fibromyalgia & CFS Self Help Group	Jenny	0403 220 525	jennymcc49@msn.com		
Geelong Lupus & Sjogren's Support Group	Annette ph or Chris email	03 5259 1063	chrisash@hotmail.com		
Heidelberg - Ankylosing Spondylitis Group of Victoria	Annie	0408 343 104	asvictreasurer@hotmail.com aniasvic@bigpond.net.au vicko123@optusnet.com.au	https://www.asvictoria.org	https://www.facebook.com/asgroupvic https://www.asvictoria.org
Mount Waverley - Your Healthy Bones Crew	Carole	0438 256 887	carolemarshall@hotmail.com		
Age Specific Groups	Contact	Phone	Email	Website	Socials
Various locations in Melbourne - Young Women's Arthritis Support Group	Rosemary Tassia	0400 447 624 0413 858 286	rosemary@ywasg.com tassia@ywasg.com	http://ywasg.com/	http://ywasg.com/ Facebook https://www.facebook.com/ywasg Twitter https://twitter.com/YWASG