



**Musculoskeletal
Health Australia**
Knowledge. Choice. Connection.

Annual Report

2025

*National body empowering people impacted by
rheumatological and musculoskeletal disease
and advocating for excellence in care.*

CONTENTS

- 02** Message from the Chair
- 03** Message from the CEO
- 04** Consumer Advisory Committee Report
- 05** Webinar Series
- 06** The World's Biggest Sit In
- 07** B.A.M Helpline
- 08** Digital Reach
- 09** Research Partnerships
- 10** A Community Movement
- 11** Directors and Office Holders

Message from the Chair



With more than 7 million Australians living with a rheumatological or musculoskeletal disease, it is almost certain that you or someone you know is navigating life with the chronic pain and the often debilitating impacts of these conditions. My decision to join the Board of Musculoskeletal Health Australia (MHA) was shaped not only by my own lived experiences but also the experiences of my mum and many friends and colleagues whose lives have been profoundly affected by these invisible yet life altering conditions.

The physical impacts of rheumatological and musculoskeletal diseases (or RMDs) are well documented: acute and chronic pain, significantly reduced mobility, fatigue, joint damage and functional limitations. Because these conditions are largely invisible, they are often not associated with the most serious of health outcomes. This is a dangerous misconception. Evidence shows that people living with RMDs face increased risk of cardiovascular disease and other pulmonary disorders, as well as metabolic issues like diabetes and mental health concerns.

Living with RMDs can lead to confusion, despair and feelings of isolation. People face long wait times, high costs and the complexity of navigating an increasingly strained health care system. The personal and professional impacts can be profound.

This is why I am honoured to be part of MHA. For nearly 60 years, MHA has been a trusted authority and support for people living with RMDs. Despite the challenges of operating as a self funded not for profit, we continue to deliver high quality, evidence based services and support across the country — all free of charge.

We relentlessly pursue better health outcomes for people living with RMDs. We work across a broad range of clinical settings to advocate for world-class treatment and management and we are the only national organisation with a dedicated focus on awareness, prevention and early intervention. The evidence is clear - good musculoskeletal health delivers better overall health and wellbeing outcomes for everyone. From our free national helpline staffed by

qualified health care professionals (the only one of its kind in the musculoskeletal and chronic pain space), to our annual national movement campaign, The World's Biggest Sit-In, MHA continues to drive national awareness and action.

2025 was another challenging year for many Australians and for MHA. Rising living costs, continuing challenges within our health system in terms of access and affordability, and increasing numbers of people of all ages living with RMDs mean that nothing is getting easier.

This is why MHA's work is so essential. Providing free, evidence based support tailored to individual needs has never been more important. Through our partnerships with internationally renowned research institutions, we remain at the forefront of cutting edge research. We amplify the voices of consumers nationally and internationally to shape treatment and management options. We work directly with health care professionals to embed patient centred strategies that empower individuals to strive for better musculoskeletal health and the improved overall wellbeing that follows.

As Chair of the MHA Board, I am deeply committed to ensuring MHA remains the driving force behind empowering Australians towards better musculoskeletal health. More than this, we are determined to ensure that all Australians benefit from the incredible health and wellbeing benefits that come with good musculoskeletal health.

Our vision is clear - by 2050, we will see all Australians living free from the negative impacts of musculoskeletal conditions. With your continued support and engagement, we will achieve this.

Jade Rowarth
Jade Rowarth, Chair

Message from the CEO

When writing an annual report and reflecting on the year just past, it is always amazing to me how many things have been achieved, yet how much work still remains to be done.

2025 was a hive of activity at MHA in many new and innovative ways.

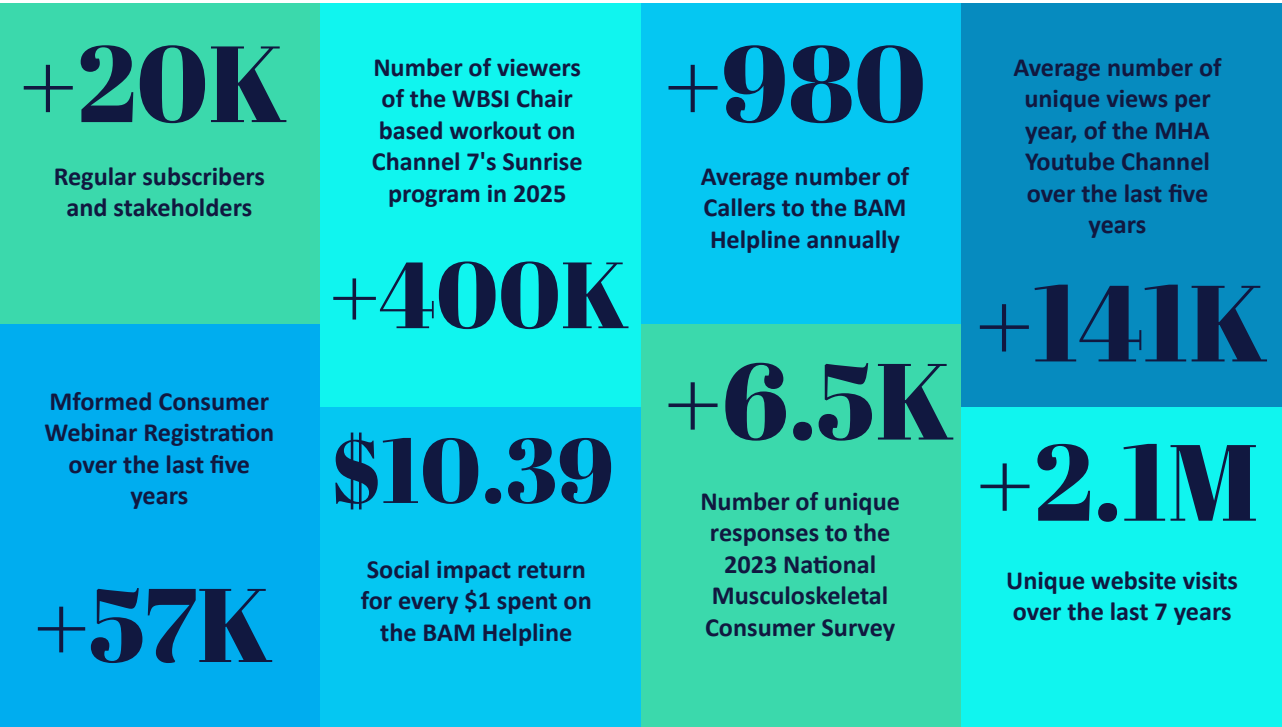
As always, our focus was to develop and deliver free services that support the millions of Australians who live with the chronic pain and disabilities that come with having rheumatological and musculoskeletal diseases (RMDs). This is driven by the recognised need to empower individuals, their families, and support networks to control and drive decisions relating to their health and wellbeing.

Continuing to shine a light on the life-altering impacts of RMDs, 2025 was the second year of our World's Biggest Sit-In Campaign. Unfortunately, Melbourne's weather was against us, and the main WBSI event, which had to be postponed until December, did not reach the world record that we set out to achieve. Whilst incredibly disappointing for everyone involved, we just know that 2026 is going to be THE YEAR!

Reflecting on the year, as always in the not-for-profit arena, it was incredibly challenging but overwhelmingly rewarding. Working with the amazing team of talented staff, directors, and volunteers at MHA is an incredible privilege. 2025 delivered some fantastic wins, a few minor losses, but as always, we continue to show up, determined to have a real and lasting impact on the lives of the millions of Australians living with RMDs and to build a movement that sees all Australians living with better musculoskeletal health as the key framework for improved overall health and wellbeing.

Helen Jentz
Helen Jentz, CEO

Our MPact



Consumer Advisory Committee

As we reflect on 2025, I would like to sincerely thank the members of the MHA Consumer Advisory Committee (CAC) for their ongoing dedication and invaluable contributions.

Throughout the year, members have generously shared their time, expertise and lived experience, ensuring the consumer voice remains central to Musculoskeletal Health Australia's work.

The CAC provides insights to assist MHA to continue to improve outcomes for people living with musculoskeletal conditions across Australia utilising their first hand experiences.

In 2025, the CAC has contributed to key initiatives across advocacy, program development, and service improvement. From shaping resources and campaigns to providing critical feedback on emerging projects, the committee plays a key role in guiding the essential support services delivered by MHA.

The CAC members' commitment and valued lived experience ensure MHA remains focused on what matters most, improving knowledge, choice and connection for all Australians impacted by musculoskeletal conditions.

On a personal note, I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of CAC Member Rob Chippendale, whose sudden passing has left a significant void in the MHA Consumer Advisory Committee. We got to know Rob well, with his passion for advocacy for consumers to be heard and acknowledged. His dedication to others, empathy for their situations and taking on challenges, will be greatly missed.

Angela Brown
Angela Brown, Chair

Why lived experience MATTERS



Nearly 1/3 of all Australians live with a musculoskeletal condition



Low Back Pain is the No.1 cause of global disability

Webinar Series

Throughout 2025, MHA's webinar series continued to connect consumers with leading national and international experts. We delivered cutting-edge information and updates across a broad range of health topics, including:

- Fibromyalgia: Managing Brain Fog & Fatigue - Presented by Dr Emma Guymer
 - Gout, Your Questions Answered - Presented by Professor Flavia Cicuttini
 - Building an Exercise Program for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Health - Presented by Professor Kim Bennell
 - Your Rights at Work - Presented by Jessica Dawson-Field
 - The Link Between Heart Disease and Arthritis - Presented by Dr. Monira Hussain
 - Hip Pain in Young Adults - Presented by Armando Faigl
 - Diet, Adiposity and Chronic Musculoskeletal Pain - Presented by Dr Susan Ward 2025
- Koadlow Lecture: Movement is Medicine - Presented by Gerald Quigley. A special thanks to Peninsula Hot Springs for their generous support towards the 2025 Koadlow Lecture and MHA.

The series remains a key platform for sharing evidence-based insights, practical strategies and emerging research to support prevention, early intervention, management and improved quality of life.

By empowering individuals through the delivery of accessible and reliable information, the 2025 series reinforced MHA's commitment to facilitating increased health literacy, self-advocacy and self-management, ensuring consumers can make informed decisions about their health and well-being.

Our sincere thanks to our presenters who contributed their time and expertise, helping ensure high-quality health and well-being information is available to all. The series remains available to watch on demand and for free via MHA's YouTube channel.



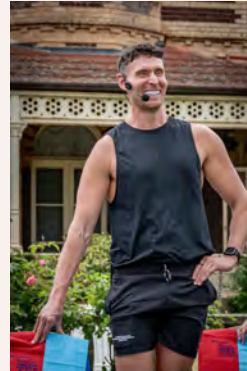
The World's Biggest Sit In

In 2025 a Sit Happened!

2025 was the second year that MHA called on Australians to take action and to make SIT HAPPEN at the annual World's Biggest Sit-In (WBSI).

WBSI is our national call to action developed to get Australians thinking differently about movement! WBSI gets people, of all ages moving, to rethink physical activity, and to raise awareness and vital funds to support people living with musculoskeletal conditions.

Chair-based exercise is an inclusive and accessible form of movement. It delivers many benefits and promotes the importance of staying active. Chair-based exercise improves cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility and bone density, while ensuring movements are safe, easy and controlled.



Melbourne presented significant weather challenges for WBSI 2025 which forced the October event to be postponed to December. Despite this, the campaign maintained strong momentum and engagement. The rescheduled live Melbourne event also marked the launch of the Musculoskeletal Health Expo, and we extend our deepest gratitude to our vendors and sponsors for their support.

WBSI would not be possible without our incredible ambassadors, Luke Hines and Gerald Quigley, whose ongoing support has been instrumental in raising awareness and inspiring participation nationwide.

MHA is proud of the continued success and impact of this initiative as we encourage Australians to think differently about movement to support better musculoskeletal health.

B.A.M Helpline

Our free, national B.A.M. (Back Pain, Arthritis & Musculoskeletal Health) Helpline is an essential, trusted support service providing a point of connection for people living with chronic pain and rheumatological and musculoskeletal conditions.

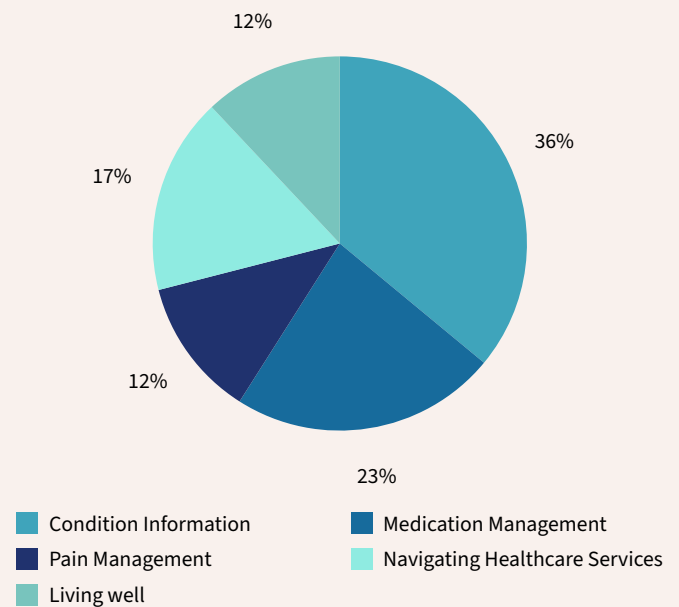
The Helpline, is staffed by qualified healthcare professionals, who respond to a wide range of complex and interrelated issues, including pain and condition management, medication information, and navigating health services, often alongside challenges such as mental health, social isolation and cost of living pressures.

The critical importance of the B.A.M helpline is only increasing. It offers free access to health care professionals, provides timely, accessible support and information when it is needed most, and is fully self-funded by MHA.

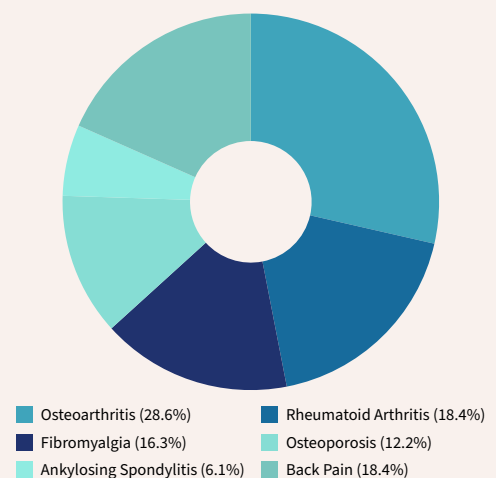
To ensure MHA is well-positioned to respond to increasing demand for support and information, the B.A.M Helpline underwent a major systems upgrade in 2025. MHA also undertook a national recruitment program to staff the Helpline with health care professionals.

In late 2025, we were proud to re-launch the upgraded B.A.M Helpline. Aligned with this was a dedicated campaign to increase public and professional awareness of the Helpline service.

Main Reasons for Calling



Top 6 Conditions Reported



BAM
Helpline
1800 263 265
Back Pain, Arthritis & Musculoskeletal Health



**Back
Pain**



Arthritis

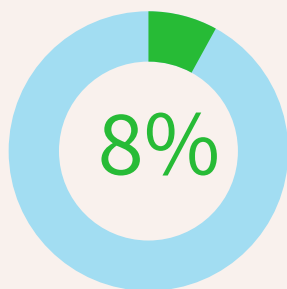


**Musculoskeletal
Health**

Digital Reach

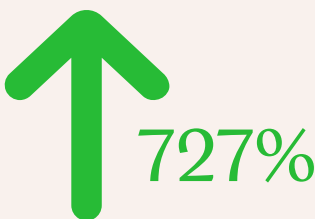
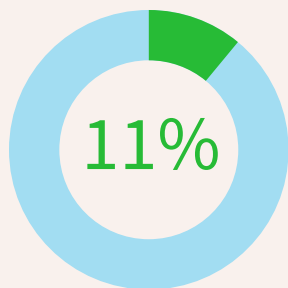
Throughout 2025, MHA continued its social media growth agenda. All platforms recorded increases in followers and engagement. This year MHA focused on a more targeted digital approach. Our engagement with healthcare professionals through LinkedIn delivered positive returns. We continued expanding our interactions with consumers across the country and the world, building self-empowerment and health literacy through the delivery of accessible, relevant content across Instagram and Facebook.

Instagram



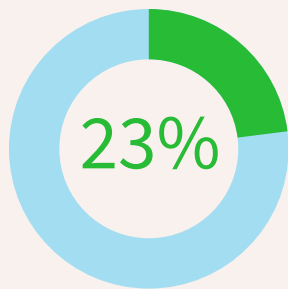
Follower Growth: 1,537 (1,421 in 2024) *Engagement: 217 (66 in 2024)*

Facebook

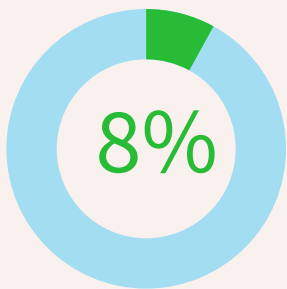


Follower Growth: 7,486 (6,723 in 2024) *Engagement: 13,107 (1,584 in 2024)*

LinkedIn



YouTube



Follower Growth: 885 (718 in 2024) *Subscriber Growth: 9,112 (8,420 in 2024)*

Research Partnerships

MHA's commitment to driving consumer-led research increased in 2025. Ensuring consumers are central to the exploration of clinical, evidence-based solutions for chronic pain and musculoskeletal conditions is embedded in all the research we support. By fostering collaboration, innovation and the exchange of expertise, we are driving more relevant, impactful solutions to the complex challenges of rheumatological and musculoskeletal disease.

Delivering best-practice community care for low back pain through an effective national help line

An upgrade to MHA's existing national Help Line to bridge the gap in community-based support services for patients with low back pain across Australia. The project aims to improve patients' self-management, and reduce preventable Emergency Department presentations for low back pain.

Australian SPine Registry (ASPIRE) - Collecting, Analysing, Evaluating and Protecting Australians after spine surgery

Low back pain is a leading cause of disability and healthcare costs, with spinal surgery a common but variable and costly treatment. The ASPIRE project aims to address this by enhancing the national spinal surgery database, bringing together experts to improve outcomes, increase transparency, and deliver safer, higher-value care for all Australians.

ASPIRE Awarded MRFF Grant

The Australian Spine Registry (ASPIRE), led by Chief Investigator **Professor Peter Choong AO** from the Department of Surgery, has secured one of two \$7 million Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Device Surveillance Grants.

ASPIRE aims to transform the existing Australian Spine Registry into a national clinical quality registry, with the goal of monitoring spinal implant safety, evaluating treatments, and driving world-class research on spinal healthcare.

Under the Australian Clinical Quality Registries framework, the project brings together:

- The Department of Surgery, University of Melbourne (lead organisation)
- ROSA Registry, Flinders University
- Department of Surgery, University of Toronto
- Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA)
- Neurosurgical Society of Australia (NSA)
- Spine Society of Australia (SSA)
- St. Vincent's Health Australia, Calvary Health, Epworth Healthcare
- Musculoskeletal Health Australia (MHA)
- Medical Technology Association of Australia (MTAA)
- South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute

These collaborators will gather critical patient data from around the country, focusing on spinal implant surveillance, evidence-based practice, and value-driven healthcare. Their work will enhance safety, improve patient outcomes, and foster innovative breakthroughs in spinal surgery in Australia and internationally.

The Department of Surgery extends their congratulations to all those involved in securing this grant and look forward to the significant contributions this project will make to the advancement of spinal healthcare.

Our commitment to research advances knowledge and delivers meaningful, real-world outcomes to improve the health and wellbeing of millions of Australians. Some of our 2025 research program are featured below.

Evaluating best practice community care for low back pain

Professor **Paulo Ferreira**, a member of the **Charles Perkins Centre**, has been awarded \$1.5 million to work towards delivering best practice community care for low back pain through an effective national health line.



This funding adds to a total pool of \$3.5 million for the project, following on from additional contributions totalling \$1.8 million made by Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK Australia), NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation, Australian Self-Care Alliance, and the Northern Sydney Local Health District.

Partnering with MSK Australia, Australia's leading musculoskeletal consumers group, Professor Ferreira's project intends to upgrade and evaluate MSK Australia's existing national Help Line to bridge the gap in community-based support services for patients with low back pain across Australia.

If successful, the upgraded Help Line will improve patients' self-management, and reduce preventable general practitioner and emergency department presentations for low back pain.

"The primary aim of this partnership project is to evaluate the effectiveness, implementation, and scalability of the MSK Australia Help Line for reducing utilisation of health services for low back pain," said Professor Ferreira.

"This will be the first national help line for low back pain in Australia.

"It has the potential to transform the lives of over four million Australians currently living with low back pain."

Demmer

The co-design of culturally relevant and effective musculoskeletal health information resources for First Nations Victorians. Focussing on prevention, diagnosis, and self-management of back pain, the goal, to empower First Nations Victorians by addressing the specific needs they have identified and to promote holistic approaches that combine traditional and mainstream methods for back pain management.

M^{Powered} supported by Abbvie

The development of a consumer health app prototype that delivers tailored individual support in the treatment and management of pain and musculoskeletal conditions. Focused on M^{Powering} consumers to feel confident and informed when navigating the health care system.

A Community Movement

The essential support services delivered by MHA are made possible due to the ongoing commitment and dedication of the MHA Community.

We sincerely thank our generous donors, philanthropic supporters, trusts and foundations for their commitment to 'movement' and Musculoskeletal Health Australia. Your support ensures we continue advancing our mission to improve knowledge, choice and connection, driving better outcomes for people living with musculoskeletal conditions and promoting excellence in care and support.

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- A Coswello
- D Shakespeare
- E Hamilton
- G Baker
- G Hodgkinson
- N Beaconfield
- G McKay
- E Baxter
- R Miller
- D & F Nassau
- R Ward-Ambler
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- H Ng
- A Cummins
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- M Walters
- L White
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- G Shalit & M Faine
- J & J Barker
- L Sherwood

Bequests

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- N Jarvis
- J Dundas
- A Coppleman
- G Lavery
- L Baldy
- E Clarke

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- JM Harrison Charitable Trust
- JOPA Charitable Trust
- Joe White Bequest
- The Russell Foundation
- The William Angliss (Victoria) Charitable Fund
- Australian Communities Foundation
- State Trustees Australia Foundation

Directors & Office Holders

Jade Rowarth	Chair, Non-Executive Director
George Kalomaillos	Deputy Chair, Non-Executive Director
David Charles	Non-Executive Director
John McLindon	Non-Executive Director
Natalie Sirianni	Non-Executive Director
Erica Traicos	Non-Executive Director
Professor Peter Choong	Director Emeritus
Helen Jentz	Chief Executive Officer

Consumer Advisory Committee

Angela Brown	Chair
Rob Chippendale	<i>Deceased</i>
Robyn Dunphy	
Melissa Gilbert	
Mikayla O'Neill	
Xenia Papayianis	

Patrons

Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC
Governor of Victoria
Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE FRS FAA FTSE

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