



Menslink Annual Report 2010-11



Chairman's Report – Peter Clarke

Menslink has seen some changes the past 12 months. Significantly, after four very successful years as the CEO, Glenn Cullen decided to move on to fresh pastures and new challenges within the community services sector. As Menslink's second CEO, Glenn expanded our programmes and influence, and put Menslink firmly on the map. We have much to thank Glenn for and were of course sorry to see him go. That said, he went with our very best wishes and he continues to play an occasional volunteer role for us.

This of course led to the recruitment of a new CEO and we were pleased to employ Martin Fisk in the role last April. Martin comes with a strong history in both the private and public sectors. He has founded, built and grown a couple of companies and worked at senior levels in Customs and Border Protection. Martin brings great vitality and enthusiasm to this pivotal role. We have already seen some of Martin's skills as he has set about reinvigorating Menslink's programs while tackling the ever-present funding challenges and a range of other operational tasks set for him by the Board.

I'd like to make special mention of one of our longest serving directors, Jim Rice who stood in for me as Chair of the board during my leave of absence.

Last November, the Board set in train two significant reviews.

Firstly, the board decided to investigate and introduce a way of monitoring and improving its own performance. To this end, we have agreed the attributes that we believe you require of your board and we are now assessing ourselves against those capabilities. This will allow us to identify any areas where we are less strong than others so we can then address them through training, coaching and mentoring, and at future elections. With this in mind we will make the results of our considerations available to members.

Secondly, we instigated a review of the governance of Menslink; that is the rules, policies and procedures that ensure the organisation is operating efficiently, effectively and within the law. A large part of this is our risk management plan and the board is taking an active interest in monitoring its development and implementation. The Board acknowledges that this places an extra load on Martin and the staff and that this sort of change is never universally popular.

However, it is essential that we continually review our governance and performance so that Menslink continues to provide its valuable services to the community in the best possible fashion for many years to come.

The Men's Link community was greatly saddened by the loss to epilepsy of one of our young mentorees towards the end of last year. His death coincided with the annual camp and had an obvious and lasting impact on the mentors, mentorees and staff who had grown close to him over his time with us. The Men's Link board, staff and wider community are considering ways to commemorate his loss and to celebrate the good things he brought to our community.

Looking forward, we envisage an active year ahead, with several new initiatives, some funding opportunities and further improvements and expansions of our core programs for young men in the region.

Already in the new year we have run another business breakfast, in October to coincide with Youth Mentoring Week. This event, building on Glenn's earlier successes, lifted the bar to a new high so I anticipate these will continue to go from strength to strength.

In summary, it has been a very full and challenging year. I congratulate Bryan, Garry and Ed for their continued enthusiasm and unswerving commitment to making Menslink all it can be. They have had some very significant challenges this year (not the least of which has been welcoming a new CEO at the helm) and I've been impressed by the way everyone has quickly established friendly and productive working relationships, and focused on the future. I know under Martin's leadership we can rely on the team for another successful year.

Of course, none of this would be possible were it not for the selfless and generous time our volunteers and the other members all contribute. Thank you very much for everything you do, for your guidance to our young men (and, when necessary, to us) for your wisdom and support, and for being willing to find time in your busy lives to help our mentorees and other clients.

Men's Link has embarked successfully on a significant change process, and is in good shape as it positions itself for the future.

Treasurer's Report – Simon Wallace

The 2010-11 financial year closed with Men's Link in a solid fiscal position and an unqualified audit opinion provided.

Overall our income was slightly down on the previous year by \$5,000, largely as a result of deferring the business breakfast into the following financial year. Despite the lower income, Menslink delivered on our service commitments and finished the year with a \$9,000 surplus.

The 2010-11 year saw the implementation of portable long service for the community sector within the ACT. This resulted in long service expenses moving from a non-cash long term liability to a current cash expense.

During the year we received a specific-purpose grant of \$17,500 from ACT Health to deliver men's suicide prevention conferences over the next few years. Unexpended funds of \$14,000 were carried forward to 2011/2012.

Our balance sheet also remains healthy in particular with our cash balance as at 30 June improving by more than \$20,000.

Fixed assets were depreciated to better reflect their true value, reducing by \$6,000 over the year. Long term liabilities were also reduced, reflecting the reduction in long service leave provisions for two staff members who resigned during the year.

As at June 30, our retained earnings increased to nearly \$71,000.

Attached to this report are the audited financial statements.

CEO Report – Martin Fisk

The 2010-11 year has been one characterised by change for Menslink. It is certainly a credit to the organisation, our staff both past and present, our Board and all our supporters that Menslink has been able to withstand that change and emerge with strength and resilience.

The year has seen some major staff changes, with a new CEO, Life Coach and Mentoring Program Support staff member all appointed in the year.

These staff changes – representing over 50% of the people at Menslink – have been accommodated within Menslink without significant disruption to the services we provide young men in the community. While there was an impact on numbers of young men supported by Menslink during the latter half of last year and the early part of this year, both our mentoring and life coaching programs are now at or near capacity.

Importantly, 2010-11 has not only been a year of change, but also a year of consolidation. This has allowed us to refine and improve our organisation and continue to build the foundations to grow our service delivery in the future.

Staffing

During the year, Glenn Cullen, CEO, Russ Whitewood, Life Coach and Warren Adair, MYM Program Support all announced their resignations from Menslink to pursue other interests.

Glenn joined Menslink in 2005 and was promoted to the Chief Executive position in 2007. Over the past three to four years particularly, Glenn has strengthened the organisation and increased community awareness of the important work we do. He has been an excellent CEO during his years with us.

Russ Whitewood was with the organisation since its inception and it was sad to see him leave in the latter part of the year. During his time with Menslink, he helped countless numbers of young men through both group work and individual counselling when they needed help.

While Warren Adair was only with us for a short period during the year, he provided us with great support during Linkups and our annual camp.

I would personally like to thank these staff members – in particular Glenn and Russ – for the excellent job they did for Menslink and the young men in our community and wish all three of them the very best in their future careers.

I would also like to thank Bryan and Garry for their unwavering loyalty and commitment to Menslink during this time of change. It cannot have been easy to accommodate a new CEO at relatively short notice (I was appointed only a week after my interview) and they have both made me feel welcome and supported me during my transition period.

Finally, I would like to welcome Ed Zilinskas and Daniel Fynmore to Menslink in the roles of Life Coach and MYM Program Support respectively. Their commitment and enthusiasm has ensured as smooth a transition as possible.

Service Delivery

Despite a number of disruptions during the year, including significant staff changes and the unexpected death of one of our mentorees, our core programs have continued to deliver reliable, high-quality and responsive services to many young men and their families.

Life Coaching Program

Under Russ' stewardship, we continued to see a wide number of young men and their families from across the region and from all walks of life. While most young men were seen at our premises in Griffith, Russ also performed outreach work at one or more high schools in our region, providing a valuable service to young men who needed some extra assistance in a school setting.

During the year, over 120 young men sought and received support from our life coaching service, with over 320 hours of individual counselling provided during that time.

Mentoring Young Men Program

The Mentoring Young Men (MYM) program continued to support young men through the provision of high quality mentoring for young men in need of an additional positive adult male role model in their lives.

In my view, having now reviewed a number of youth mentoring programs, the key to the Menslink approach is the intensive and well thought out training that our mentors go through; as well as the ongoing case management provided to both mentors and mentorees by Bryan and Garry. Independent studies show that mentoring relationships that last beyond six months provide lasting benefits to the young person and it is a testament to this program that the overwhelming majority of matches last one year or more.

Unfortunately, we were unable to complete our May intake of mentors last year, which resulted in half the number of young men being mentored than we anticipated. However, it is pleasing to note that we had a full intake in October this year with a waiting list of new mentors looking to volunteer for next year already.

The MYM program trained six new mentors during the year, while maintaining and case managing over eighteen active matches for young men. We held twelve group events for mentorees and their mentors during the year, including the annual camp, Christmas BBQ (where families are also welcomed), movie nights and the ever-popular Lazer-zone outing.

DRUMBEAT Program

During the year, Menslink also expanded our delivery of the DRUMBEAT program to primary and high school students. DRUMBEAT (Discovering Relationships Using Music - Beliefs, Emotions, Attitudes & Thoughts) is a Holyoake program we deliver to young men aged ten and above. During the year, we delivered the program to three primary and high schools across Canberra. Results from this program have been so impressive that some schools have now purchased their own drums and are delivering in-house programs to students.

Community Awareness

Despite a significant hiatus during the changeover of CEO's, Menslink maintained and enhanced its profile and standing within the community. Notable achievements during the year included sponsorship agreements with high profile sporting teams including Cricket ACT and the Brumbies rugby team, both of whom promoted Menslink to their members during the year.

Menslink has also been active in setting up a local chapter of the Australian Youth Mentoring Network called Mentors ACT!, which aims to promote mentoring amongst potential volunteers within our local region.

Finally, Menslink was actively involved in sponsoring and setting up a conference addressing men's mental health and suicide prevention in June this year. Attended by over seventy employers, academics and community sector workers, this conference looked at social determinants of male suicide and strategies – particularly in the workplace - and strategies to engage men at risk of suicide.

Menslink continues to enjoy an excellent reputation within all sectors of local government and is actively engaged with the Community Services Directorate (our primary funder) and the Health, Education and Justice Directorates.

With the changeover of CEO's during the latter part of the year, it was decided to defer the annual business breakfast until October and so no specific Menslink fundraiser or community awareness event was held during the year.

Organisation Development

The Menslink Strategic Plan was developed by the previous CEO and Board earlier in the year to guide the organisation for the next three years. However, events during the year – especially the appointment of a new CEO – have required us to take a more cautious approach to organisation growth and development.

The Board, CEO and MYM staff have focused through the year on improving risk management practices within the organisation. The new policies and procedures we have developed will increase risk awareness and management by all staff and mentors and enhance the safety and well-being of the young men in our care, as well as volunteers and staff.

Obviously the work of organisation development is an ongoing process and we need to continue to refine and improve our service delivery, organisational governance and risk management practices throughout the coming year.

Future Outlook

Menslink finished the 2010-11 year on solid ground. This year, we have continued to build on that solid ground, particularly in the areas of:

- Community awareness, where we held a very successful business breakfast and are looking to upgrade our web site and promotional materials. We will continue to ensure that we are easily accessible to people in need, volunteers and corporate sponsors
- Engagement with government, to ensure continuing and appropriate financial and other support for the valuable work we do
- Corporate governance, further enhancing our risk management, financial management and operational management practices

Of course, we will continue to deliver our valuable services to young men in need within our community.

Finally, I would like to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to all the people involved in supporting Menslink and the young men in our care. Bryan, Garry, Ed, Daniel, our Board of Directors, our volunteers, our corporate supporters and the ACT Government all contribute to our community and the work we do. Without all of you we would be unable to support these young men and help them develop into their full potential.