



Menslink Annual Report 2011-12



Chairman's Report – Peter Clarke

At the end of my second year as your chairman, I am pleased to report to you that Menslink has had a good year. Notable highlights were:

- a successful business breakfast in late 2011,
- a 13% increase in membership to 89 members,
- securing ACT government funding (with an increase above CPI) for a further three years, and
- funding to allow us to run an additional camp each year.

We have reviewed Menslink's programmes and it is clear to us that mentoring and counselling give us the biggest bang for our buck. We therefore decided to focus on these with a view to increasing our output in these high leverage areas. With a very small team, we can't do everything, of course, so we have stopped offering the Drumbeat programme to build on what have proved to be our most effective outputs. Martin and the team have also been looking at ways to generate better outcomes from the mentoring and counselling programmes and there is more in the CEO's Report about this.

We've had some important staff changes over the last twelve months:

Bryan Duke, who has been a long term and very significant member of the Menslink team, left us in February to pursue his career elsewhere in the community sector. Bryan was a passionate manager of the mentoring programme and many young men and their mentors have benefited from his time with us. Bryan has been replaced by Garry Starling who has risen magnificently to the many challenges of being manager of the mentoring programme.

We have continued to improve the governance of Menslink and are now in much better shape than we were a year ago. That said, there is still work to do and ensuring Menslink is a well run, efficient organisation is a high priority for the board.

Andy Gregory leaves us at the 2012 AGM. Andy has been associated with Menslink since 2005 and we have benefited greatly from his wisdom and his commitment to what we do at Menslink. On behalf of the members and board, I thank Andy and wish him well for the future.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the very significant challenges faced by management and the small staff over the past year. Everyone has given of their best and despite the many uncertainties and extra work, I see a close knit, efficient and dedicated team. So on behalf of the board, thank you! And of course I couldn't write an annual report without acknowledging the ongoing work of our volunteers. Be they mentors, members of the Mentor Advisory Group or other helpers: without them we could achieve nothing. Thank you all very much!



Peter Clarke

Board Summary:

Director's Attendance at Board Meetings	
Director	Attended
Peter Clarke (Chairman)	7/7
Jim Rice (Vice Chair)	5/7
Simon Wallace (Treasurer)	5/7
Jenny Henderson (Secretary)	6/7
MacKenzie Clare (Board member)	5/7
Andy Gregory (Board member)	4/7
Wendy Addison (Board member)	5/7
Martin Fisk (CEO non-voting)	7/7

Sub-Committee Meetings	
Audit and Risk Committee	Attended
Peter Clarke	3/3
Simon Wallace	3/3
Performance and Remuneration Committee¹	Attended
Peter Clarke	0/0
Wendy Addison	0/0
Jim Rice	0/0

¹ The Performance & Remuneration Committee did not meet during the financial year

Treasurer's Report – Simon Wallace

Menslink recorded a solid financial result in the 2011-12 financial year with a surplus of \$7,003. An unqualified audit opinion has been provided from the new external auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The key areas of financial performance to note are:

- Revenue increased by \$14,209 on prior year driven largely from revenue for the business breakfast which was deferred from the previous year.
- Expenses increased on prior year mainly from an increase in employee expenses. This was from an increase in full time equivalent hours.

Retained earnings increased to \$77,892 which reflects the surplus for the current year. Other key items in the financial position are an increase in property, plant and equipment from the purchase of a motor vehicle and a decrease in short and long term provisions from the reduction in long service and annual leave.

Liquidity remains strong at \$88,256 although a decrease on prior year from the purchase of a motor vehicle and payment out of annual leave during the year.

Attached to this report are the audited financial statements.

CEO Report – Martin Fisk

In 2011, Menslink celebrated ten years as an incorporated association. This is a very important milestone in the life of any association. For us, it also represents about a thousand young men across our region that we have been able to support on their life's journey via one of our programs.

These ten years provided a strong foundation for us to prepare for our next ten years of support, growth and innovation.

At the beginning of the financial year, we set about consolidating what Menslink does well – mentoring and counselling young men – while improving our support infrastructure and systems to ensure the organisation is well run and positioned for the future. This plan entailed:

- Further enhancing our risk management practices and embedding a risk management culture in all aspects of Menslink's operations;
- Improving our financial management, human resource management and governance practices;
- Better understanding the impact we are having on the community; through both qualitative and quantitative analysis of our programs;
- Securing medium term funding by renegotiating our services contract with the ACT Government through to 2015;
- Reviewing our programs to ensure we maximised the effectiveness of our limited resources; and
- Actively promoting Menslink and advocating on behalf of young men to businesses, government agencies, schools and community groups around our region.

Menslink was able to deliver on all of these initiatives while maintaining and, in some cases, improving our services to young men and their families. We are on a solid footing to deliver improved outcomes for the young men in our region; helping them to make the right choices in their lives, enhance much-needed social skills and avoid the many negative outcomes that can befall them in today's world.

This report highlights the year's achievements and events in our mentoring and counselling programs, advocacy and community awareness, operations and staffing, as well as some commentary about the future outlook for Menslink.

Program Delivery for Young Men:

Mentoring Young Men

This financial year, despite some significant challenges, the mentoring program trained and matched thirteen mentors with young men, a significant improvement from the previous year where only six matches were achieved.

Twenty four mentoring relationships were maintained and case-managed by the team during the year; again an improvement from the previous year where only 18 matches were maintained.

During the year, we maintained our active program of Linkup activities and events for the young men, which aim to engage them in a group setting with activities which are both fun and sometimes challenging. This year, these included movie nights, kayaking, sailing, a visit to an old people's home and our popular summer camp with the surf school down at the coast.

We also introduced a series of innovations during the year to improve the safety and wellbeing of our young men, volunteers and staff, including:

- Ensuring all mentoring staff maintain first aid certificates and offering free first aid training to all volunteer mentors;
- Modelling our medical consent and information forms on the current Education Directorate standard; and
- Ensuring all activities and events undergo a structured risk assessment during their planning. This assessment is based on the Scouts Australia model.

For the first time we embarked on a program to collect quantitative baseline data on the wellbeing of each mentee joining the program. This data will be assessed against annual follow-up surveys to understand changes in the young men's emotional and mental wellbeing, relationships and social development. We will use this data – together with our case study materials – to assess and improve our program over time to ensure we are providing the best possible outcomes for young people and our community.

Counselling Program

The counselling program delivered 220 hours of individual and group therapy to 125 young men and their families, compared with 320 hours and 120 young men in the previous year. Counselling was provided both here at our offices and at a number of high schools and colleges around the region.

During the year, we reviewed our counselling program and concluded that there was additional unmet demand for a male counselling service – particularly in high schools and colleges where there is a lack of male counsellors and support workers. We also identified that our program could be expanded to meet some of that demand with only a relatively small amount of additional funding. This funding was sought from the ACT Government and, as a result, we have been able to expand our counselling program in 2012-13 to five days a week (from three days previously).

In order to focus resources on our core strengths and programs, Menslink decided to withdraw from providing the DRUMBEAT program to primary school students. DRUMBEAT is a very worthwhile program for people of all ages, but we felt that our continuing involvement diverted key resources from our own programs at a time when there were increasing alternative providers of this service.

Advocacy and Community Awareness

During the year, Menslink reached out to more people in the community to advocate on behalf of young men and to inform people about the work we do and the services we offer.

We actively promoted Menslink to young men, parents, schools, government, business and community groups. Through presentations and exhibitions and some limited media exposure, we reached over a thousand people who otherwise would never have heard of Menslink.

Our primary fundraiser for the year drew together over 130 people to learn about Menslink and raise valuable funds for our operations. In 2011 we had ten corporate sponsors, including major sponsor Actew Water and breakfast supporters ActewAGL, Bankmecu, DLA Piper and Yellow Edge. We also welcomed new supporters ACT Policing, Optus, PWC, Southern Cross Club and Thinkplace.



Treasurer Barr addressing the 2011 Business Breakfast

As part of this work, Menslink also invested in modernising our marketing and promotional material. This was an extensive exercise, including upgrading our web site and social media, brochures and case studies as well as our office and vehicle signage. We also changed our logo tag line to *Supporting Young Men* to better reflect what we do and to be more accessible to young people, parents, volunteers and business supporters.

Menslink also invested in government and community relations this year. With a new CEO, it was important to invest time in getting to know our government and community stakeholders and ensuring that Menslink was seen as a strong contributor to the sector. This work paid off, with Menslink being represented on a range of consultative forums.

Importantly, Menslink continued our work to promote suicide prevention awareness for men in our community. Together with other agencies such as ACT Health, ACT Policing, Lifeline Marmead, Mental Health Community Coalition, Ozhelp and Supportlink, Menslink organised a conference in June to discuss suicide prevention strategies for men. Over 140 people attended this conference and it received favourable press coverage on radio and TV networks.

Operations and Governance

During the year (it was a busy year), Menslink made improvements to our administrative areas as well; embarking on a program of overhead reduction and streamlining systems. Areas that received attention through the year included:

- Improved risk management, especially in the mentoring program;
- Improved financial management, including the appointment of a new auditor, improved financial controls and an 80% reduction in accounting costs;
- IT system and communications upgrades (which also reduced costs); and
- Upgrading our ten year old vehicle with a more modern (2009 model) utility

In June 2012, we renewed our services contract with the Community Services Directorate, securing our financial future until 2015.

Staffing

In February 2012, Bryan Duke resigned after nearly nine years with Menslink, seven of those as mentoring program manager. Bryan was with us for a long time and contributed a lot to the program and young men under his stewardship. We wish him all the best for the future.

Garry Starling has subsequently stepped up to the plate and was promoted formally in March to program manager. Garry introduced many innovations, while maintaining the essence of the program, applying his unique blend of experience, enthusiasm and innovation to the role.

During the year, a number of volunteers came forward to help out Garry in running and building the mentoring program, including a successful May intake. In particular, we would like to thank Scott Cassidy and Graham Hannaford for their invaluable support and assistance.

It was also pleasing to see the return of Mark Harbottle to the mentoring program after an absence of some years. He brings an incredible amount of passion, experience and expertise to the role – all delivered in his trademark laid back and laconic way.

Lesley Hyndal also returned to Menslink as bookkeeper after a number of years away and has done a terrific job in improving our accounting systems and processes.

Ed Zilinskas, our counsellor, left us towards the end of the financial year, after some eleven months in the job. During that time, he continued the Menslink tradition of high quality counselling for young men and was an important contributor to the organisation. We wish him all the best for the future.

Dan Fynmore, our casual mentoring support worker, left Menslink in January to pursue a life of travel and adventure. We will no doubt see Dan when he gets back.

The last month or so of the financial year saw a flurry of new recruits come into Menslink – all of whom have contributed to a revitalised and invigorated office environment. In order of joining:

- Fiona Brammall is our office manager and fundraising coordinator. Fiona comes to us after a long stint as full time mum and carer to two disabled kids, although has been involved in various volunteering organisations for many years.
- Ben Triglone is our mentoring coordinator. He comes to us with a varied career across the community, private and public sectors and has degrees in both psychology and sociology.
- Finn Liddy is our counselling program manager. He comes to us after two years working at Arcadia House, a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre where he provided counselling and case management. Prior to that Finn also worked in both private and public sectors, has a graduate diploma in education and a sociology degree.

Future Outlook

Building on the strong foundations set last year and with a reinvigorated team, Menslink is looking to expand our services. We want to reach out to the increasing number of young men in need brought about by population growth and the large numbers of young men and boys living away from their father.²

During this coming financial year, we will be:

- Expanding our counselling service from three days a week to five days a week, with a particular focus on outreach services;
- Expanding our mentoring service from two intakes a year to three intakes a year, starting in February 2013;
- Embarking on a two-year program to encourage young men to actively seek help when suffering emotional or mental distress by reducing the stigma associated with getting help. This program will be run in partnership with the Canberra Raiders rugby league team; and
- Continuing to campaign and advocate actively to our community on behalf of young men.

Finally, on behalf of Menslink, our young men and their families, I thank all of the people who contribute to the great work we do -our dedicated staff, our volunteer board of Directors, our volunteer mentors and ambassadors.

I would also like to thank the ACT Government, Actew Water, ACT Policing and all of our corporate supporters who provide funds and other assistance to enable us to help young guys across our community.

² In 2010, an astounding 17% of *all children* under seventeen did not live with their father. (Source: ABS Australian Social Trends)