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# EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Men's Link Incorporated  
Annual Report 2016-17



## Chairman's Report – Michael Battenally

Members of Menslink, we are privileged to be contributing to the positive wellbeing of young men across the Canberra region. I would like to acknowledge the fifteen years the Menslink Board has provided governance and strategic support for this not-for-profit body. Our esteemed Vice Chair, Jim Rice, was also a member of the inaugural board, and I will use this opportunity to publicly acknowledge Jim and all past board members for their vision and contribution for the common good that Menslink continues to deliver on.

The 2017 board listed below has actively undertaken its role through regular Board meetings, and supplementary Board Committee meetings fulfilling governance responsibilities for audit and risk, performance and philanthropic initiatives.

### 2017 Menslink Board

Michael Battenally (Chair)	Jim Rice* (Vice Chair)
Dion Cannell* (Treasurer, Audit & Risk Committee)	Mark Whithear*
Cathy Skippington (Secretary, Audit & Risk Committee)	Denis Sargent*
Scott Winsor* (Chair of Audit & Risk Committee)	Bronwyn Fagan (Audit & Risk Committee)
Louise Carter (Resigned June 2017)	Kathleen O'Sullivan* (from August 2017)
Martin Fisk (CEO Menslink, non-voting Executive Officer to Board)	

\* seeking re-election at 2017 AGM

Reflecting on 2017, board members sought to undertake broader roles using the skills and expertise they bring to Menslink. This is evidenced by the work in Board, Committee and opportunities to represent Menslink in community relationship development. The Board has continued to work with the CEO, Martin Fisk, in monitoring policies, strategic planning, immediate and longer-term financial management and maintaining a focus on strengthening the organisation.



*Mentoring at its best on the banks of the Cotter River, Summer Camp 2016*

The 2017 financial year was another year of growth for Menslink. Menslink has been able to provide a high level of transparency to our funders with regards to the value-for-money service delivery. This is critical work and has contributed to the ongoing philanthropic and government commitments supporting a strong financial position. Recurrent funding, grants and donations have maintained growth, ensuring a sound financial position as reported by our Treasurer, Dion Cannell.

The Big Night Out (BNO) charity ball in November 2016 was an amazing celebration of Canberra's support for Menslink. Peter Munday is to be congratulated and thanked for leading the way with this inaugural event that raised an amazing amount of money to support our vision. Jim Rice, Ron Shepherd, Rebecca Swan, Martin Fisk, Todd Wright, and all who were close to the planning and actions behind this initiative must also be congratulated. Please join us in the BNO 2018 event on March 23 – you will not be disappointed. (Thanks to Allbids I took home a surfboard yet don't surf – it's that sort of fun fundraising event!)



*Chair Michael Battenally (c) with Rick Davis (l) and Peter Munday (r) from Lennox at the Business Breakfast*

In 2017 one member of the board, Louise Carter, resigned due to a variety of demands on her time. On behalf of the Menslink community I thank Louise sincerely for her valued contribution at the board level. We subsequently called on a past board member, Kathleen to occupy the vacancy for the remainder of this year.

You will be aware that all current end-of-term Board members are seeking re-election to the 2018 Board. We believe the current Board is very effective and the opportunity to build on this with members invested in the strategic intent is a great opportunity for the organisation. Having said that, we are a democratically elected body and the opportunity for new nominations is always welcomed.

It has been an honour to be in the Chair role again this year, thanks significantly to the acumen, contribution and teamwork of my fellow board members. I do hope to continue as their Chair into 2018, and with the new constitutional rules in place, will leave that with the elected 2018 Board to endorse along with other executive board positions.

The strong growth in young men and their families seeking support confirms the results Menslink is achieving in the community. Our ability to meet that growth in demand highlights the commitment of our staff, our volunteers, the government and our sponsors and donors to the community 365 days a year.

The work with schools is simply fantastic through the Silence Is Deadly campaign, PRIDE group work and frontline counselling. Our marquee program, Menslink Mentors, is superb and as an older Canberran myself, it is priceless knowing the impact the mentor 'blokes' have on the cohort of young 'lads' in our community

The multi-disciplinary approach of our services and programs is where the Board sees the investment continuing to grow. As a Board we have spent significant time working through the idea of the 'Menslink expansion'.

The reality is now that as Canberra's population and residential footprint expands, the 'Menslink expansion' challenge is to keep pace with demand on services and programs in our local area. Menslink will also build on its monitoring and review of performance, gathering data and feedback to ensure we are delivering on the commitments we make.

On behalf of clients and members, I wish to thank our volunteers for their support and involvement with an organisation that continues to make a positive difference to the lives of young men and their families in our community. In particular, the commitment of our mentors reflects strongly on the values of the Menslink organisation;

### **Empathy – Trust – Care – Integrity – Achievement - Innovation**

Finally and on behalf the Board of directors, I would like to thank our CEO Martin and the Menslink staff for their very significant roles in delivering another excellent year for Menslink and thereby having a very significant impact on our community.



Michael Battenally  
Chair Menslink  
12 November 2017

*"Menslink helps young men make better choices to engage positively with society, because young men matter to our society."*



## Treasurer's Report – Dion Cannell CA

Growing community support and continual recognition of our work has resulted in Menslink exceeding financial forecasts for this reporting period.

Upon joining the Board in 2015, it was always a goal to achieve an asset base representing a greater percentage of annual outgoings. This provides security for Menslink and assists in the continuity of services to our young guys through not so financially positive times. I believe Menslink has made considerable progress towards this, particularly over the last 12 months.

For the financial year ended 30 June 2017, I am pleased to report a year end surplus of \$81,085 and an increased net asset balance of \$257,636. Whilst the community demand for the important services performed by Menslink still exceeds our capacity, the improved financial position allows for support, services and assistance for more young men than resources have previously allowed.

In 2017, our healthier financial position funded additional investment in staff development and in-depth analysis of the reach of Menslink services. Increased efficiency in day to day operations, due in part to such investment, saw the unit cost of our direct support reduce by 9% on prior year comparisons. More importantly, the increased financial support from our generous donors has enabled Menslink to expand our program to now incorporate 10-12 year olds and the trialling of new innovative programs.



*CEO Martin Fisk and one of our mums collecting donations at the Handmade Markets*

I would like to again thank PwC for their continued provision of pro bono audit services to Menslink. PwC found no significant issues during the course of their audit. Consistent with guidance issued by the ACNC, PwC have made a qualified conclusion which is a standard qualification issued for all not-for-profit entities who receive cash donations. We appreciate and thank them for their continued support.

We will continue to expand our services and community reach as funding allows, closing the gap between the needs of young men in Canberra and the provision of support provided by Menslink. I congratulate Martin, our mentors and the wonderful Menslink staff on the delivery of our programs throughout the year.

Attached to this Treasurer's report are the audited financial statements.

## CEO Report – Martin Fisk

In May 2017, Menslink celebrated fifteen years as an independent organisation. This was a significant milestone and one of which we can all be very proud – staff, Board members, volunteers, parents and of course the young guys themselves.

In the last fifteen years, we have directly supported over two and a half thousand young men and their families get through tough or challenging times. We have also presented our key messages of support and hope for young men to over fifty thousand people and reached many more through radio, television and other media.

The 2016-17 financial year was another year of significant growth for Menslink, as we supported over a hundred more young men than in the previous year, while nearly doubling the number of students attending our *Silence is Deadly* mental health sessions. At the same time, we developed two new programs that extended our reach and support even further. In summary this financial year, Menslink:

- Increased the number of young men receiving counselling support by 35%, with a 25% increase in the number of counselling sessions provided;
- Increased the number of young men in our mentoring program by nearly 18%, largely reflecting a higher retention rate (a key indicator of program quality);
- Delivered nearly eighty *Silence is Deadly* presentations to 11,900 young men, a 79% increase in coverage from the previous year;
- Delivered our first *Silence is Deadly* presentation to a Primary School;
- Developed a new group program for male high school students engaging in risky or anti-social behaviour;
- Extended our mentoring program to include a leadership element for graduate mentees who want to develop further life skills;
- Welcomed over five hundred guests to our 2016 Business Breakfast to hear former Australian of the Year Rosie Batty talk about domestic and family violence;
- Held our inaugural *Big Night Out* fundraiser with over 360 supporters getting together for a terrific night, raising nearly \$120,000 for our programs; and
- Continued to invest in our systems and training to improve quality, efficiency and outcomes for staff, volunteers and our young men.



*Our 2016 summer camp at Greenhills on the Cotter*

Menslink continues to attract and retain extremely talented and dedicated people who support our work and young men: staff, Board members, volunteer mentors, corporate sponsors, donors and a wealth of people who just do their bit; whether raising funds and awareness or simply helping out at our events. These people are the lifeblood of Menslink and do so much (with very little reward or recognition) to support the next generation of young men – I am honoured to be able to work alongside them.

I would also like to acknowledge the Community Services Directorate of the ACT Government, who have supported us since our inception fifteen years ago and continue to be our major funding source.

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

## **Program Delivery for Young Men:**

### ***Mentoring Program***

During the year we actively supported and maintained fifty-three (53) mentoring relationships, up 18% on the previous year.

We trained 31 volunteer mentors and matched them with young men; a record number for Menslink. Twelve young men and their mentors graduated from the program this financial year, giving a retention rate of 71%, which was up from 66% the previous year.

In previous years, we marked the end of the two-year mentoring journey with an informal get-together where certificates were awarded. This year we decided to put an exclamation mark on proceedings, holding a formal "rite of passage" ceremony with both graduating mentees and mentors during an overnight stay in Namadgi National Park. It was well received by all and a fitting send-off to those leaving the program to go onto bigger and better things.

Linkup attendance was better-than-ever with an average of 38 people attending each event, a 26% improvement from the previous year (and our second straight year of improvement). This is particularly important as Linkups provide young men (and their mentors!) with an opportunity to extend the range of friendships and relationships with other mentees and mentors – not just with the one person.

#### ***One of our mentors talks about his experiences leading to becoming a mentor this year:***

*"I went through some rough times as a teenager and learnt some really tough lessons on what and what not to do. So the chance to help a young guy potentially learn those life lessons a bit easier than I did was really too good an opportunity to pass up.*

*The experience I have had as a mentor has really surprised me. It's much more rewarding. It's the first time I've truly felt part of the Canberra community. Seeing a group of guys selflessly support young guys through their journey to becoming a man is really empowering.*

*My mentee and I really have developed a great mateship. He is just a fantastic young kid and is really flourishing from a relatively shy kid into a confident young man who's now only too happy to introduce himself and positively engage with others.*

*I'm proud to be part of the mentor program as it really does enable young and old to learn from, enjoy, and assist each other. Having men, both young and old, in the Canberra community who have a positive mindset from being through this program is just a fantastic thing to be part of."*

***Josh Turk, Mentor and former client***

March's Family BBQ & Awards day was particularly well-attended with 62 people. In years gone by, we have struggled to engage extended family members of mentees, so this year it was particularly encouraging to see so many mums and siblings in attendance. This is perhaps an indication of the greater community traction Menslink now enjoys.

Other Linkups during the year included events with the Canberra Raiders, ADFA, ACT Policing and Icon Water as well as our first Summer Camp at Greenhills which was arguably the highlight of the year's activities. Our guest speaker was Chris Nunn, who inspired all through sharing his experiences as Head Coach of the Australian Paralympic team.



*Mentors at the 2017 Mentor Retreat*

Our annual two-day mentor retreat in Jindabyne was also well-attended, with many activities for our hard-working volunteers, as well as a wide-ranging discussion on the impact of trauma on our young guys. Thanks again to mentor Andrew Marshall and his dad Colin for organising!

Our partnership with Outward Bound continued for the fourth year, with many young men returning for a second or third time - this time as leaders for those who were embarking on their maiden trip. We would like to thank Zoe Routh from Inner Compass, whose "Unconference" raised the funds for our Outward Bound course this year.

Also continuing was our partnership with Club Lime. Many of our young men continue to gain enhanced fitness and confidence from the complimentary gym passes which have come their way.

### **Counselling Program**

The counselling program delivered 1200 free counselling sessions to 422 young men and their families, compared with 957 sessions and 312 young men in the previous year. Not only did we support a record number of clients during the year, but the growth in demand for support (a 35% increase from 2015-16) was also a record and shows no signs of abating.

Around 60% of our counselling sessions are conducted in schools, as it is far easier for young men to access our support in school rather than travelling to Holder. We added an additional school to our list in 2016-17, taking the number of schools we directly support to eleven.

#### **Single mums responded to our mentoring quality and impact surveys with the following comments:**

*"Thank you thank you thank you. I hate to think where my son would be without this program. He is building self-confidence, respect and finding positivity again. It has even made his father take a greater interest in his son."*

**Single mum**

*"I can't thank Menslink enough for the last twelve months. I've watched my son transform confidently with his schooling, sports and in general his whole attitude is happier with the wonderful support he receives from Menslink and his mentor."*

**Single mum**

*"Last night, I went to parent teacher night. This time last year I had a boy who was struggling in all his subjects, failing to attend school, negative and rebellious. He was self-harming and our communication was incredibly difficult."*

*Last night his teachers all praised him. He is doing really well in his assignments and tests. They all said he had a good attitude in class and there were no concerns about attendance. He is bright, engaged, doing his best and a joy to teach."*

*On the way home, I cried. Not with the fear and frustration of last year, but with pride and gratitude."*

**Single mum**



During the year, we expanded our counselling team to meet increased demand and to ensure we maintain our minimum waiting time for clients (around one week or less for urgent cases). A short waiting list is a critical feature of our service. For young men in crisis, a lengthy delay in getting support can be extremely demoralising and even discourage them getting any support at all.

We continue to see a large number of counselling clients from single mother families and a significant number who have been exposed to domestic and family violence. We are also seeing many clients referred to us for anger management, with a strong correlation to a history of exposure to family violence.

Our quality and impact surveys from schools also showed an improvement over previous years, with 83% reporting a moderate or significant impact on staff and peer relationships, class engagement and mental wellbeing of our young guys. All schools rated Menslink as good or excellent in quality measures such as professionalism, counselling practice and attitude towards clients.

### ***Silence is Deadly campaign***

During the financial year (spanning two educational years), Menslink presented our key messages to around 11,900 male students in 79 sessions. This represented a very significant increase of 79% and 52% respectively from the previous year, showing the high regard in which the program is held by schools, universities and sporting clubs across the region.

Demand for our program (now in its fifth year) extended geographically this year as well, as we presented our key messages to high school students in Yass, Goulburn, Queanbeyan, Braidwood and even Jindabyne.

We also had a request to run the campaign for a younger audience, so we trialled it with Years Five and Six boys at Conder Primary School during the year.

We continued our successful partnership with the Canberra Raiders this year. Their involvement in the campaign is highly valued by schools and recognises the impact Raiders' players have on young guys with their message that "it's not weak to speak".

### ***Parents and schools responded to our counselling quality and impact surveys with the following comments:***

*"The involvement of Menslink has provided our young men with excellent support and strategies to solve issues and concerns they may have. Those involved have frequently informed me that their Menslink counsellor has been very hopeful and if they could go back for another meeting."*

***High School Student Services staff***

*"...the students who have seen [the Menslink counsellor] have settled in their general well-being. The level of results has varied for each student but the number of interventions with each student from teaching staff has reduced dramatically after they commence counselling."*

***High School Student Services staff***

*"You made it so easy for [my son] to talk through his issues and you provided some really helpful things for him to think about. I can't thank you enough. Menslink is a fantastic organisation making help for young men easy and accessible! Can't rate you guys high enough. Thank you!"*

***Young man's mum***

### ***Schools provide feedback on the Silence is Deadly presentations:***

*"A huge thanks again for the presentation. I think we are very lucky Menslink exists and that these presentations are offered. The tone is perfect for these kids and the information hits them at a great time in their lives."*

***Martin Mullin, St Francis Xavier College***

*"The content of the presentation exceeded the expectations that I had for this year. Our young people respond really well to personal stories, especially if they relate to their own life experiences. Galilee has had the Silence is Deadly campaign presented each year for the past 3 years and every year it gets better."*

***Dean Warwick – Galilee School***

*"The topic is so relevant at this stage of development for young men. The personal stories add reality and the opportunity to ask questions that matter is also important. Using a Raiders video - especially here with so many of our students in sports and with Jack W being an ex-student - is also important to break the 'myth' that tough men keep quiet!"*

***Michael Hall – Erindale College***

This message has been central to the two main themes of the campaign this year – that getting advice on life’s problems is both normal and sensible, and that developing and maintaining mental fitness is a key element of building resilience against future life challenges.

Six presenters (both staff and volunteers) promoted Menslink’s message to students that it is normal to have problems, and it’s normal to get advice on how to deal with them. Importantly, they encouraged students to develop strategies to manage problems constructively by demonstrating how those techniques can lead to a happier and less stressful life. The presentation team has been bolstered this year with the addition of Dave Toussaint and Josh Tonna, both professional athletes in male-dominated sports with personal stories that resonate strongly with young guys.



*On set filming the Raiders video for 2017*

Major campaign supporter WIN Television reinforced the key messages of the campaign by broadcasting approximately six hundred *Silence is Deadly* advertisements throughout the region. Significantly, this has led to a number of young women contact us seeking support for their partner after seeing the advertisements on TV.

Feedback from schools continues to be strong, with over 90% of schools who responded to our impact surveys advising that male students were more likely or far more likely to seek help, even months after the talks. This year, the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research embarked on an independent study of the program and will release its findings later in 2018.

### *PRIDE Program*

Our newest program, PRIDE, was developed in response to demand from schools for a multi-engagement program that worked with small groups of at-risk young guys (around 6-10 at a time).

The program challenges young guys to think about their reputation and the values they want to be known for. It encourages participants’ self-awareness and exposes them to valuable life skills to help them identify and cultivate constructive personal behaviours, while eliminating destructive ones. Through these behaviours, they will develop skills to help them build and maintain healthy relationships and improve connectedness with their family, friends, school and community.

PRIDE was initially piloted in two schools this year with further schools requesting the program later in 2017 and 2018. Initial feedback on the program has been very positive from both participants and the schools themselves.

### ***Feedback on the pilot of our first PRIDE group program:***

*“I just wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you to you and your organisation for helping the young men of Lanyon HS.*

*We have several students who suffer from anxiety and depression. Your organisation has been an essential agency in equipping these young men with skills to deal with the issues in their life.*

*Time and time again I see the impact mental health has on learning. Kids who are stressed, anxious or depressed display maladaptive behaviours that not only impact their learning but unless taught otherwise impact the rest of their lives.*

*In countless interviews with Parents I have stressed the importance of seeking help when faced with these challenges as they are the foundations for an engaged and fulfilled life where they feel empowered and useful contributors. Your organisation is allowing this to happen.”*

***Ed Cuthbertson, Lanyon High***

## Advocacy and Community Awareness

This year Menslink staff and volunteers continued to raise awareness across Canberra and even nationally on key issues affecting young men and their families; particularly areas such as youth suicide, mental health issues and family violence.

Former Australian of the Year Rosie Batty had the sell-out crowd of over 500 guests in tears as she related the impact of family violence on her and her son Luke at the 2016 Business Breakfast. Our former mentee, Tyson, also had the crowd enthralled as he described the life-changing impact the mentoring program and his mentor Todd Wright had on him. Both Rosie's and Tyson's story were covered by both WIN and ABC TV news.



*Rosie Batty addressing the crowd and having a quiet moment talking to our mentee Tyson Dixie*

In public forums, the media and in private meetings with politicians and national stakeholders, Menslink continued to advocate for young men and the issues that affect them.

Over the course of the year, our staff and volunteers gave more than fifty presentations to businesses, education and health professionals, family violence conferences and other events, reaching more than three thousand people. Additionally, we gave around ten radio or television interviews with further print and social media coverage of our events or viewpoints.



*Victor the Viking helping raise funds and awareness for Menslink at a home game*

We also held thank you functions for our sponsors, significant donors and volunteers as part of our fifteen year celebrations and are hoping these thank you events will now become a part of the Menslink calendar.

Our presence at larger events, such as the National Multi-Cultural Festival, Raiders' home games, the Handmade Markets and the Big Boys Toys Expo give Menslink significant exposure amongst the general public, leading to increased awareness of the work we do and the issues faced by young men and their families. We are very grateful to those organisations for their ongoing support.





*Local Brumbies prop and Wallaby rep Ben Alexander talks to a relaxed crowd at our February Midweeker*

Now in its fourth year, our *Midweeker* series of informal talks by high-profile Canberran men continued to prove popular, with crowds sometimes exceeding sixty or seventy people.

Speakers this year included former Raider's captain Alan Tongue, City News Editor Ian Meikle AM, former Chief Minister Gary Humphries, Lach Searle, AIE founder John de Margheriti, Everyman's Greg Aldridge, Lennox's Peter Munday, adventurer Matt

Napier, Brumbies' Ben Alexander, RFS Chief Joe Murphy, local business icon John Mackay AM and War Memorial Director Brendan Nelson AO.

Menslink also continued to actively engage in collaborative forums throughout the year, including ACTCOSS, suicide prevention, family violence and restorative justice committees.

### **Fundraising and corporate sponsorships**

This year our fundraising achieved a very significant milestone. For the first time, general income from our own sources exceeded funding from the ACT Government, with Canberra organisations and individuals contributing over half a million dollars to support young men in their community.

Corporate sponsorship and support for our Business Breakfast increased more than 30% from last year, while individual donations nearly doubled; for which we are very grateful.

This year, thanks largely to Peter Munday, we held an incredibly successful evening fundraiser, the Menslink *Big Night Out*. Over three hundred and sixty people dressed up in their finest seventies fashions at the Southern Cross Club, raising nearly \$120,000 (after costs) which is an incredible result. Peter was ably assisted in the *Big Night Out* by Rebecca Swan, Ron Shepherd, Jim Rice, Todd Wright, Marg Job, Anna Bezos and Fiona Sanfrancesco and we thank them all for their incredible and ongoing contribution to our fundraising efforts.



*Guests enjoying themselves while making a difference at the Big Night Out!*



We were also grateful to receive a \$33,000 donation from the annual Luton Properties' Charity Ball, together with other local suicide prevention organisations Lifeline Canberra and OzHelp.

Our four Principal Partners for 2016-17 continued to lead the way in providing significant funding for our programs. Between them they contributed between 15-20% of our total income for the year. We cannot thank them enough for their continued support of Menslink.



Our Major Partners also provide strong support – either through direct funding or via generous donations of specialist expertise and services. The ACT Rugby Veterans Club, Bendigo Bank, Canberra Raiders, Club Lime, DDCS Lawyers, Geocon, Independent Property Group, Luton Properties, McDonalds ACT and Queanbeyan, Much More Than Money, Proximity Legal, PWC, the Snow Foundation, Southern Plumbing Plus, ThreeSides Marketing and WIN Television showed their support as Major Partners for the year. We really appreciate their ongoing support for our work.

Other corporate supporters this financial year include the ACT Business Chamber, ActewAGL, ADFA, Advantage Advertising, AGH Demolition & Asbestos Removals, Allbids, Aspen Medical, BAL Lawyers, BCA Certifiers, Bonsella Business Solutions, Burley Strength Gym, Canberra FM, Canberra Southern Cross Club, Cantlie Recruitment, Clonakilla Wines, EY, Farrar Gesini Dunn, Gungahlin Eagles Rugby, Inner Compass, KPMG, QT Hotel Canberra, Ricoh, RSM, Thinkplace, University of Canberra and the Village Building Company.

We cannot thank our corporate sponsors – both large and small – enough, as well as those dedicated individuals who help us raise money from the public or donate generously themselves. We could not operate without you!



*Staff from Capital Chemist Calwell helping out at the Multi-Cultural Festival*

## Operations and Governance

Our first full year at Holder went very well, as we fine-tuned our environment and expanded into a third room to accommodate planned expansion in our program teams.

We also continued our investment in IT systems to drive down costs and improve both quality and efficiencies in our operations. These included:

- A cloud-based customer-relationship-management (CRM) system to manage all aspects of our mentoring recruitment, screening, matching and management processes. We have subsequently adopted this system to manage counselling referrals as well.
- A new website, with simplified enquiry, referral and donation forms that make it easier for people to get in touch and interact with Menslink. These forms link directly with our CRM systems, eliminating rekeying of data and streamlining our “customer” service.

In further IT improvements, we migrated our MYOB accounting system to the cloud, providing online access for the first time to myself, our Treasurer and other admin staff. This has again streamlined our financial processes as well as increased transparency and accountability.

During the year, we replaced our ageing Toyota Ute with a second-hand Volkswagen Amarok from Lennox, so we now have a consistent set of modern, branded vehicles.

### Staffing

Our staff are the backbone of our organisation: they go the extra mile to help our young guys and their families, support our volunteers in any way they can, while making sure we are as efficient and effective as we possibly can be.

We had another year of very low staff turnover, recognising our strengths as a team-oriented workplace, with one resignation and one new hire during the year.

Wayne Pash, one of our counsellors, left us after around six months to devote more time to his studies and we wish him all the best as he continues to make a difference in the community. Matthew Taylor joined us in February this year as a counsellor, after a long association with Menslink while a youth worker at Amaroo School.



*Menslink staff outside our offices in Holder (missing Jordan and Rebecca)*

Menslink continued to invest in our team to ensure we provide the highest quality services possible to our young men, with our investment in staff training and support rising from \$17.6K to \$23.7K or nearly 5% of our payroll.



We held our annual planning retreat for all staff out at Ready Cut Cottage in Namadgi National Park again this year. Everyone got together to discuss the year that was and plan forward to 2017-18, while enjoying a roaring fire overnight and a bushwalk to Yankee Hat aboriginal site. Importantly, all staff got to explore and share their key values with each other, as we know that our personal values are the foundation of everything we do. We found, perhaps unsurprisingly, that we all shared fairly common values, including:

- Fairness;
- Compassion and support for others;
- Contribution to our community and making a difference; and
- Confidence in the potential of young men, regardless of where they are now.



*Gudgenby River in Namadgi National Park provided the perfect backdrop to our annual staff planning retreat*

I'd like to thank all our staff for the terrific effort they put in this year, not only supporting our young guys and our dedicated volunteers, but also me and the Board. You've made this year very enjoyable and allowed us to achieve some great things. Menslink and our community are the better for all your efforts.

## **Volunteers**

This year again proved that Menslink lives and breathes through our volunteers.

More than fifty volunteer men helped mentor young guys at various times during the year – probably many more if you count the men who continue to support their young guy even after they have graduated from the program. These men – true adult role models – went out of their way to provide companionship and guidance to our young guys. It can sometimes be challenging mentoring a young man in your spare time while juggling all your other commitments, but our mentors have yet again come through with flying colours.

Our volunteers also went the extra mile in helping us raise money and awareness amongst the Canberra community, with over a hundred volunteers getting together for Menslink at events across Canberra. We'd particularly like to thank:

- Students from ADFA for helping out at Big Boys Toys Expo 2016;
- Students from both St Edmunds and Merici Colleges for helping out at the Multi-Cultural Festival, the Big Night Out and the Business Breakfast this year;
- Staff from Southern Plumbing who not only helped at our events (like the Raiders charity match) but managed their own fundraiser for Menslink;
- Bec and other staff from ThreeSides who help out at so many of our events;
- Volunteers from Rotoract who ran a fantastic trivia night for Menslink in May;
- ABC Radio Canberra's Adam Shirley, who hosts our annual Business Breakfast;
- One of our mums Kelly Dundon who gave such heartfelt speeches at both a Midweeker and our Big Night Out fundraiser;
- Tim Sanders from KPMG who organised a staff fundraiser and was the star performer with his mentee collecting donations at the Raiders charity match;
- Briana Croft who makes such a big difference at every Multi-Cultural Festival; and
- The ever-stalwart Graham Hannaford who never failed to volunteer for almost every fundraiser and event and provided much needed leadership in our volunteer activities.



*Adam Shirley at our 2016 Business Breakfast*



*Briana and some of our volunteers enjoying a break from the rain at this year's Multi-Cultural Festival*



## Five Year Cost Comparison

Menslink take our financial obligations very seriously. Not only do we strive to deliver the best possible outcomes for our young men, we also aim to deliver value for money to our funders, sponsors and donors.

Last year we experienced growth in our client numbers of between 33% (direct support) and 79% (Silence is Deadly), yet expenses grew by only 21%. This delivered a unit cost reduction of between 9% and 32% respectively, highlighting continued efficiencies across our operations.

Over a five year period, unit costs over all programs have reduced by nearly 40%. While we cannot guarantee these trends will continue, we can assure both the ACT Government and all our funders that we will continue to invest your money wisely and efficiently for the betterment of our young men.

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	1 Yr Change (FY16-17)	5 Yr Change (FY12-17)
<b>Silence is Deadly campaign</b>								
Total number of sessions	n/a	30	52	61	52	79	52%	n/a
<b>Total number of young men reached</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>3,904</b>	<b>7,044</b>	<b>7,926</b>	<b>6,633</b>	<b>11,900</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Mentoring</b>								
Mentors trained	13	26	24	17	29	31	7%	138%
Number of mentoring matches	22	42	47	42	45	53	18%	141%
<b>Counselling</b>								
Number of sessions	240	403	525	738	957	1,200	25%	400%
Number of outsource sites (schools)	1	4	5	10	10	11	10%	1000%
Number of clients	91	120	176	275	312	422	35%	364%
<b>Total number of young men directly supported</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>320%</b>
<b>Total Expenditure (excludes fundraising costs)</b>								
Expenses funded by ACT Govt Contract	253,887	302,679	320,697	340,352	360,624	377,132	5%	49%
Expenses funded from own sources	37,837	104,384	167,570	194,246	255,580	369,473	45%	876%
<b>Total program expenditure</b>	<b>291,724</b>	<b>407,063</b>	<b>488,267</b>	<b>534,598</b>	<b>616,204</b>	<b>746,605</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>156%</b>
<b>Unit cost of direct support</b>								
Unit cost per young man (all direct support)	2,582	2,513	2,190	1,686	1,726	1,572	-9%	-39%
Unit cost per young man (mentoring)	7,956	4,846	4,675	5,091	4,793	4,930	3%	-38%
Unit cost per young man (counselling)	1,122	1,018	971	778	889	796	-10%	-29%
<b>Unit cost Silence is Deadly campaign</b>								
Unit cost per session	n/a	2,714	1,878	1,753	2,370	1,890	-20%	n/a
Unit cost per attendee	n/a	21	14	13	19	13	-32%	n/a

## Future Outlook

During this financial year, the Board and senior program staff spent quite some time in looking at where Menslink should focus in order to maximise outcomes for young men, while managing our resources effectively.

After discussions with parents, other community organisations, schools and ACT Policing, we decided to extend our programs to a younger age group – including ten year olds and up for the first time. We are very grateful to both ACT Policing and the Snow Foundation for answering our call to provide funding for this age group and are confident additional funding will become available shortly.

While we have had many requests to establish Menslink offices and/or services in regional towns and/or other capital cities, the Board has agreed with my assessment that our efforts and focus should remain in the Canberra region. Given our current growth rates in Canberra, further expansion could jeopardise our current good work.

We will continue to strive towards the following outcomes in our community:

- Young men in Canberra are not ashamed to ask for help and reach out to help those around them;
- Young men are given the support they need to build resilience and self-manage emotional challenges in their lives both now and in the future;
- There is less anti-social or destructive behaviour and more pro-social behaviour and relationships involving our clients (and young men more broadly), as reported by schools, families and ACT Policing;
- The community is actively engaged in supporting young men, through government, corporate, philanthropic and volunteering support of Menslink's vision, values & work; and
- Menslink has security of funding over the next three to five years.

## And Finally...

*On behalf of Menslink, our young men and their families, I would like to thank all of the people who contribute to the great work we do - our dedicated staff, our Board of Directors, our volunteers, our mentors and ambassadors. I would also like to thank the ACT Government and all of our principal, major and corporate supporters, as well as individual donors who fund our operations. Menslink would not exist without you all.*

*"The key issues for Years Five and Six in our school include serial behavioural problems, lack of trust and respect for adults and authority figures, verbal abuse and bullying, anger and aggression, isolation and loneliness.*

*Things that are happening at home include family violence and children witnessing drug use or illegal risky behaviours"*

**Jason Walmsley, Principal Conder Primary School**

*"My youngest son's emotional and psychological world was imploding. His anger and volatility increased and our home life was a chaotic battlefield. Even though he was achieving great things, he increasingly felt overwhelmed by his thoughts and fears. Before we knew it I was made aware of his thoughts of suicide, and..... he is in PRIMARY School!!!*

*Having had such a positive experience with Menslink [with my oldest son], I did not hesitate to enlist their support and counselling. Already, my son is feeling 'heard', his anger and behaviours are more manageable, he spends less time alone in his room and he desperately looks forward to being old enough to join the Mentoring Program."*

**Single mum**