
EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Men's Link Incorporated
Annual Report 2017-18



Chairman's Report – Michael Battenally

Members of Menslink, reflecting on 2018, the board members have continued to fulfil their 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.

As part of our commitment to good governance, the Board has continued to work with the CEO, Martin Fisk, monitoring policies, strategic planning, and immediate and longer-term financial management; maintaining a focus on strengthening the organisation.

The 2018 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 fundraising initiatives.

2018 Menslink Board

Board Member	Role(s)
Michael Battenally*	Board Chair
Kathleen O'Sullivan	Board Vice-Chair
Dion Cannell	Treasurer, member Audit & Risk Committee
Cathy Skippington*	Board Secretary, member Audit & Risk Comm.
Scott Winsor	Chair Audit & Risk Committee
Bronwyn Fagan	Member Audit & Risk Committee
Jim Rice	
Denis Sargent	
Mark Whithear	
Martin Fisk	CEO, Executive Officer (non-voting) to Board

** seeking re-election at 2018 AGM*

The central charter of this not-for-profit organisation is to contribute to the positive wellbeing of young men 10-25 years of age across the Canberra region. This past year Menslink has directly supported more than 600 young men, and reached over 9,000 more through our Raiders' *Silence is Deadly* campaign.

The 2018 year has seen the community access to services grow in concert with sustained and growing philanthropic community support. Leading the philanthropic community, our Principal Sponsors for 2017-18 were Capital Chemist, Icon Water, Lennock Volkswagen, Snow Foundation and Southern Plumbing. The ACT Government and ACT Policing partnership agreements also provided the baseline critical funding to deliver our core services.

The impact of services is often difficult to measure. However our regular six monthly surveys of parents and schools continued to identify the positive impacts we have on our young men, as highlighted in the CEO's Report.

Providing transparency to our funding partners that Menslink provides a value-for-money service proposition is a priority. Recurrent funding, grants and donations have maintained growth, ensuring a sound financial position as reported by our Treasurer, Dion Cannell.

The second Big Night Out (BNO) charity ball in March 2018 was an amazing celebration of Canberra's support for Menslink. Peter Munday is to be congratulated and thanked for leading the way with this fabulous community event, ably supported by other volunteers on the Fundraising Committee, Fiona Sanfrancesco, Ron Shepherd, Jim Rice and Todd Wright. Please join in our third BNO next year on March 29, 2019 – guaranteed to be 'bigger' than the previous one!

In 2018 one member of the board, Bronwyn Fagan will resign at the AGM due to a variety of demands on her time. Bronwyn brought high-level board experience and her legal acumen to the board. Her energy and commitment will be missed and on behalf of the Menslink community I thank Bronwyn (and her family) for her valued contribution at the board level.

As Menslink continues to grow, we will continue as a Board to seek new Directors that bring appropriate skills and diversity to the organisation, to ensure that we continue to be well governed and grow safely and sustainably into the future. Having said that, we are a democratically elected body and the opportunity for future board involvement is encouraged from all members.

It has been an honour to be in the Chair role again this year. I am thankful of the skilled contribution and teamwork of my fellow board members and, if elected to the Menslink 2019 board, will again seek to be endorsed as Chair.



Chair Michael Battenally, Mental Health Minister Shane Rattenbury and the team behind Kick2Kick4aCause

Outside of Menslink, as a school principal I know that our local schools in all sectors do a great work supporting the development of young Canberrans, yet the partnerships in play through Menslink programs open up doors to support and awareness that may not otherwise be available to our local young men and boys. This may be counselling or the mentoring programs after school hours and during holiday periods when a young man's life can hit very low points.

Bruce McCourt, Principal of Calwell High School, states in a testimonial, that "there are increasing numbers of boys and young men growing up without fathers as consistent, positive

role models in their lives.” He concludes, “The work you do (Menslink) is not easy but it is essential and goes to the very fabric of our Canberra community.”

Further to Bruce’s comments, the tragedy of suicide, and the impact of isolation, trauma, anger and mental illness are significant social and school community challenges across our nation. **This is not OK**, so we must continue to support innovative community-based programs to ensure our young people are safe and well. The reality is that as Canberra’s population and residential footprint expands, the ‘Menslink expansion’ challenge is to keep pace with demand on services and programs.

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.

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
Board Chair Menslink
19 November 2018

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



Mentors and mentees alike enjoying our annual summer camp

Treasurer's Report – Dion Cannell CA

On the back of a strong 2017 financial year, 2018 again exceeded our operational forecasts. The year on year positive budget variances reflect continued community and donor confidence in the work of Menslink. As per the report of our CEO, we are assisting more young guys than ever before and acknowledge this can only be achieved through the strong financial backing of our supporters.

I view continuous improvement in the financial position of Menslink necessary to finance our growth as we attempt to keep pace with the changing needs of local young guys. Whilst we reflect on 2018 as a year of much accomplishment, we recognise our work must continue and funding permitting, expand. We enter the new year with ambition of this required expansion and hope to assist an even greater number of young guys via our historically efficient cost model. To grow our organisation, whilst maintaining our low unit cost is quite an achievement and not so easily done. I commend and congratulate our CEO and his team on this result.

The audited balance sheet of Menslink reports net member funds of \$418,291 which is an increase of 62.3% on the prior year's balance. As highlighted earlier in my report, community support throughout the year was overwhelming and resulted in donations exceeding that of 2017 and totalling \$1,244,639. Through this generous financial support, Menslink reported an operating surplus for the 2018 financial year of \$160,655. I am pleased to be able to report cash reserves at 30 June 2018 equivalent to almost 5 months of average expenditure. Such a reserve is the result not only of community generosity but a focus by our staff on finding efficiencies in the way we operate.



ADFA Cadets raising money for us at the Handmade Markets

Our cash reserves at 30 June 2018 were inclusive of the Menslink Foundation, a newly established fund managed by the ACT Public Trustee and Guardian with a year-end balance of \$70,000. The Menslink Foundation provides diversification of our reserves and provides for the sole benefit of Menslink. I am sincerely grateful to our community for putting Menslink in a stable financial position - enabling and affording management the ability to achieve a healthy balance between ongoing fundraising and targeted new initiatives.

I would like to again thank Adrian King and his team at PwC for their continued provision of pro bono audit services to Menslink. Per the signed audit report, PwC found no significant issues during the course of their audit of the Association.

I congratulate and thank everyone who donated their time, dollars and efforts in helping Menslink show young guys that *Everything is Possible*.

CEO Report – Martin Fisk

The 2017-18 financial year was not just another year of significant growth for Menslink. That said, it represented the fifth straight year of 30% growth in direct client support and the fifth anniversary of our award-winning *Silence is Deadly* campaign.

This financial year also saw Menslink continue to innovate and evolve, as we responded to changing needs and demographics among the young men and families we serve:

- In response to requests from mums, backed up by police, educators and community services, we extended our services down to 10-12 year olds for the first time;
- In order to retain the “small community feel” of our mentoring program while meeting increased demand, we split our mentoring program into smaller groups or “crews” that provide a better environment for mentees to bond with a group of young and older men; and
- After a successful pilot last year, we rolled out our *PRIDE* small group program in another five schools, targeting young men who can’t or won’t access one:one support.

We have grown, innovated and strengthened our programs throughout the year, thanks to the great support from the ACT Government, our business sponsors and the community at large.



Mental Health Minister Shane Rattenbury announcing a two year, \$100,000 ACT Government grant to provide free counselling for 10-12 year olds

In summary this financial year, Menslink:

- Increased the number of young men receiving counselling support by 30%, representing more than a hundred additional clients, with a 37% increase in the number of counselling sessions provided;
- Increased the number of young men in our mentoring program by 16%, largely reflecting a higher retention rate and more mentors returning for a second match after their first has graduated from the program (key indicators of program quality);

- Delivered 77 *Silence is Deadly* presentations to 8,900 young men, a slight (7%) decrease on a record year in 2016-17;
- Took 40 high school students through our PRIDE program, teaching self-esteem, values, positive relationships and anger management skills in an eight-week program. This represented a four-fold increase from the previous year;
- Welcomed over five hundred guests to our 2017 Business Breakfast to hear former ACT Australian of the Year Alan Tongue talk about helping and inspiring others;
- Held our second *Big Night Out* fundraiser with over 450 supporters getting together for a terrific night, raising a record \$160,000 for our programs;
- Delivered our free support to young men for an average cost of \$1,269 per client, an increase of just over 2% from the previous year;
- Expanded our premises, doubling the number of counselling rooms and providing additional office space for staff; and
- Continued to invest in our systems and training to improve quality, efficiency and outcomes for staff, volunteers and our young men.



Discussing inter-generational family violence at the 2017 Business Breakfast

This year we have seen even more talented and dedicated people who want to do their bit to support our young guys and their families – staff, Board members, mentors, corporate sponsors, donors and everyone in our extended community who help out in so many ways – from speaking at events to helping out at events and collecting coins in buckets.

We were particularly grateful this year to our fundraising committee who organised a very successful (and record fundraising!) Big Night Out and to Mark Peatey from P² Advisory whose corporate tennis invitational raised over \$150,000 to kick start our 10-12 support programs.

I would also like to acknowledge the Community Services Directorate of the ACT Government, who have supported us since our inception sixteen 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

This year saw continued growth in the mentoring program, with both increased numbers of trained mentors and mentoring matches between mentor and mentee.

We finished the financial year with 63 active mentoring relationships, up 19% from 53 the previous year. This was yet again another record for Menslink and represented a 50% increase in five years.

We trained 36 new mentors, up from 31 the previous year and had a record 22 mentees (and their mentors) graduate from the program after two years, highlighting the strong retention rates within the program.

Unfortunately Linkup attendance was problematic during the year after two years of continuous improvement with low attendance on a few events dropping our average attendance down nearly 50% on the previous year.

On a positive note, more than half of all parents and grandparents surveyed by Menslink reported the program's beneficial impact on the young guy's confidence and self-esteem, happiness and general demeanour and attitude.

Program Highlights for the Year

For the fourth year in a row we sent a group of intrepid explorers into Namadgi National Park for the annual Menslink/Outward Bound "Wilderness Challenge". This small but determined group of young men & and one mentor did themselves and Menslink proud in overcoming adversity and challenge - not the least being a week without a phone! We would like to thank Zoe Routh from Inner Compass (and Outward Bound themselves) who yet again provided funding for this important initiative.

In November a group of 10 guys took on the Tough Mudder half course in Sydney. This was an incredibly exhilarating (and filthy) experience for all involved. Thank you to Northside Community for lending us their bus - it was very brave of you, given the dirt involved.

"My children and I are the victims of family violence and abuse. [My son] had only experienced violence, aggression and volatility – which had led him to believe (and model) that the only way to be was to be angry, rude and frightening if you wanted to get your way... He has since been matched with an amazing young man... I am so grateful and happy that my son is involved in the two-year mentorship program. It has changed our lives for the better and I cannot thank Menslink and my son's mentor enough."

Menslink Single Mum, Mentoring (2018)

"Little did I know when I fled our family home that the violence I was escaping would follow me in the form of my two adolescent sons. When in conflict or disagreement, the default position for my sons had become 'violence'. Our future of living 'violence free' was looking dim.

Acknowledging that we were on a rapid descent into further chaos and knowing I had to break the cycle, I sought support from Menslink. This decision has quite frankly saved OUR lives. I am so grateful for Menslink's part in my family's life. My daughter's chronic anxiety (caused by witnessing violence) has dramatically lessened as she is seeing that violent responses are fewer. I hope that [Menslink] get the recognition they so rightly deserve."

Menslink Single Mum, Counselling & Mentoring (2018)



One of our mentees scaling the heights and teaching his mentor a thing or two at a Menslink Linkup

The Summer Camp is always a highlight of the mentoring calendar. We again ventured to the Greenhills Centre at the Cotter for a weekend of controlled madness and welcomed former Wallaby, Pat McCabe for dinner and a chat around the campfire.

Pat endeared us with his humility and vulnerability in sharing some of the challenges he encountered during and post-playing days. He was also very patient, staying long into the evening to answer the large volume of questions fired his way.



High ropes on the ADFA Obstacle Course

Several of our young men got hands-on experience via April's Tidbinbilla Hut Project, run in conjunction with ACT Parks and Conservation Service and Conservation Volunteers Australia. The project was a unique opportunity to restore a site of historical significance and gained media coverage on TV and print media, rightfully portraying these young men in a positive light; something which unfortunately is not all that common.

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.

Our annual mentor retreat in Jindabyne was again a great opportunity for mentors and staff to relax and swap stories and advice from their mentoring journeys. We would like to

thank Colin and Andrew Marshall for generously donating their time and allowing us to use Rascal Lodge in Jindabyne for the retreat.

Program Developments

Given the increased growth in the program (more than 300% in ten years), we held an in-depth review of the program in November 2017, facilitated by former mentor and current Principal of Galilee School Tim McNevin. The review looked at how we could accommodate further growth without sacrificing quality, while at the same time fostering a greater sense of belonging and community for mentees and mentors alike.

As a result, we have split the program into independent "crews" of approximately 10 mentoring pairs, each led by a volunteer "Crew Captain". These crews operate independently, catching up every month. Twice a year they merge with the other crews in the mentoring program; at the Family BBQ day in autumn and the Summer Camp in December.



Mentor Carl showing us how it's done

By the end of the financial year we had two Crews in operation and are expanding them as required. Both Daniel Oyston and Mike Houston deserve a great deal of credit for helping us develop the crew approach and putting their hands up to be our first two crew captains.

Finally, we completely overhauled our Volunteer Mentor Manual, which outlines Menslink policies and requirements, particularly relating to safety and wellbeing. The new manual is both more comprehensive and clearer for mentors to use in guiding their mentoring activities.

Counselling Program

The counselling program delivered 1645 free counselling sessions to 548 young men and their families, compared with 1200 sessions and 422 young men in the previous year. This was both a record number of sessions and clients, highlighting both the need of our young men and their families, but also the strong track record developed by the counselling team.

Around 53% 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. This year we added our first private school to our outreach program, and extended our relationship with one large public school to provide a full day of dedicated counselling support each week.

We further expanded our counselling team early in the calendar year to meet increased demand and 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.

The most significant change to the counselling program was the extension of our age group down to 10 years of age. While we knew there would be demand, we were surprised at how many families needed support for their young guy in this age group. As at the 30th of June, we had provided free counselling to 81 young guys aged 10-12, representing nearly 15% of our total client base – a percentage which continues to grow.

Family and domestic violence continues to be a large part of what we do. Not only do we support young men traumatised by violence at home. A significant part of our work is teaching young men how to manage their strong emotions and anger and develop positive behaviours at home, at school and in their workplace. Family violence and anger management are some of our biggest presenting issues and often go together as young guys learn behaviours growing up.

Schools continue to rate the impact of Menslink's counselling on students highly. More than half of all schools rated Menslink as having a moderate to significant impact on all nine of our key result areas, with more than 80% rating us highly on important aspects such as class engagement, peer relationships, decision making, resilience and overall mental wellbeing.

"He [son] no longer dwells on suicide, he knows he has someone to talk to, someone who will 'show up' for him. He knows he is not alone! It [Menslink] is without doubt, the best thing that ever happened to and for him."

Menslink Single Mum, Counselling (2018)

"After years of frustration at the lack of age-suitable support services, within half an hour of speaking with a Menslink staff member, I felt I had been given some actual strategies to help my son."

"My son has since made some very positive steps to stop his violent behaviour towards me and I no longer feel alone in dealing with challenges his behaviour brings."

Menslink Single Mum, Counselling (2018)

"It will be Easter next week, which is where this all started 2 years ago. [My son] is a very changed person. I can't thank you both, and Menslink in general, for the support that you have provided to [my son] and me over the last two years. The entire process has been difficult, and I doubted sometimes whether he and we would get through it. He and we have, but could not have done it without you."

Menslink Single Mum, Counselling (2018)

"We often cringe when we get talks at school especially about mental health, most services just miss connecting with us in an authentic way. [The guys] spoke powerfully and everything they said just made so much sense."

"We need way more of this across all year groups because kids are struggling at all ages."

"I just wanted to thank you for the work that you guys do, it is important to give kids the right information but in a way that they can actually receive it."

Year Twelve student, Silence is Deadly (2018)

Education Program

Silence is Deadly campaign

During the financial year (spanning two educational years), we presented our key message to young men that *Silence is Deadly* to 8,924 male students in 77 sessions. These figures are down slightly from a record previous year (9572 students in 78 sessions), indicating fairly consistent demand for this program amongst schools in the ACT region.

Demand also remains strong outside the ACT with the program delivered to students again this year in Braidwood, Queanbeyan and Yass.

The campaign continued to evolve this year with a greater focus on mental fitness to assist young guys develop the resilience required to deal with life's challenges. This includes a multi-media presentation that encourages the audience to see seeking advice for emotional issues as no different to getting advice on how to fix a flat tire on a bike, repair a cracked phone screen or get a broken bone treated.

We also geared up for a younger audience for the first time, as we commenced roll out to Primary Schools (predominantly years five and six), with new materials and tailored (but consistent messaging). This financial year involved development and trialling, with a wider rollout underway in terms three and four 2018.

The Canberra Raiders remain an important and successful partner in Silence is Deadly, primarily through their collaboration with the video shown during each presentation, the advertising campaign and program materials. Their support is greatly appreciated as the players can assist in normalising help seeking behaviour which is critical for our young guys' wellbeing.



Canberra Raiders Josh Hodgson and Sia Soliola filming our 2018 Silence is Deadly ad campaign

The Silence is Deadly presentation team remains based on three Menslink staff members, augmented by a pool of volunteers whose personal stories add variety to the program. This enables the program to engage with and relate to a wide range of young men, be they sporty, academic, outgoing or reserved.



Hearing these stories and gaining the understanding that everyone, young and old, faces challenges in their lives and getting advice on how to deal with them constructively is a sign of strength, not weakness, plays a large role in the success of Silence is Deadly.

Major campaign supporter WIN Television reinforced the key messages of the campaign throughout the region by broadcasting just over *six thousand* Silence is Deadly advertisements across their regional networks. These ads are so important in reaching not only young men, but also their parents, partners, families and workmates and continue to be a source of referrals for young guys needing free support.

Feedback from schools continues to be strong, with over 90% of schools who responded to our six monthly impact surveys advising that male students were more likely or far more likely to seek help, and over 85% are more likely or far more likely to assist a friend in seeking professional help, even months after the talks.

The ANU Centre for Mental Health Research continued its independent study of the program in 2018 and will release its results later in 2018.

PRIDE Program

Following a successful pilot program and trials in 2017, PRIDE underwent a limited roll-out during 2018 with five schools receiving the program in the financial year, reaching forty students (up from two schools and nine students in the pilot).

PRIDE challenges young guys to think about the kind of person they want to be and the values they want to be known for. The program encourages participants' self-awareness and exposes them to valuable life skills to help them identify and cultivate constructive personal behaviours, while eliminating destructive ones.

PRIDE's modular nature has also enabled Menslink to deliver issue-specific presentations tailored to individual school requirements. These include sessions on bullying, anger management, masculinity, body image, relationships and positive coping.

Feedback from schools is very strong, with all schools requesting additional sessions and reporting a moderate or significant impact on class engagement, peer relationships, decision making and anger management.

"The program had a really significant impact on some of the students. There were a couple of boys in particular who really changed their relationship with staff, their peers and their decision making improved. This was really positive to see..."

The PRIDE Program fits in perfectly with our model of school-wide positive behaviour. We would like to run more of these programs as it has a big impact on individuals."

Student Services Executive, High School (2018)

"Over the time that we were involved in the PRIDE program, we participated in a wide range of discussions that explored life skills, decision making, risk taking, expectations, how we want to be seen by others, and how to verbally diffuse a situation. The thing I will carry with me the most will most likely be what we learnt about risk taking and self-image. We were told to choose a value to adhere to this term, and ideally for the rest of our lives. I chose integrity; I intend to continue displaying this value for as long as I can."

High School Student, PRIDE (2018)



Our stand at the 2018 Multi-cultural Festival

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.

Our flagship event, the Business Breakfast attracted another record crowd of over five hundred guests to hear from ACT Australian of the Year nominee, Alan Tongue. The 2017 Breakfast, our eleventh, also heard from one of our Menslink mums, who described the dramatic impact Menslink had, not just on her young sons, but also on her entire family in reducing the impact and trauma of intergenerational family violence in her home. There was not a dry eye in the room....



Michael Aichholzer and Alan Tongue

Over the course of the year, our staff and volunteers gave nearly fifty presentations to businesses, government agencies and community organisations, reaching thousands of people across Canberra and even nationally. We also gave over twenty radio and television interviews with many more print and online articles published highlighting the work we do.

This year we also supported our sponsors' own workplace mental health initiatives, providing a series of presentations to Icon Water and PWC staff. In addition, we provided training, expertise or simply volunteer time to other community organisations and initiatives, including ACTCOSS, the ACT Government Family Safety Hub and CYPS teams, Lifeline Canberra, MARSS, MIEACT, the National Male Suicide Conference and Vinnies.

Our presence at larger events, such as the National Multi-Cultural Festival, Raiders' home games and the Handmade Markets 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.



ThreeSides Marketing staff cooking up a storm at the ActewAGL Aussie Day BBQ

In January we also were lucky to be the charity partner for the ActewAGL Great Aussie Day BBQ, which saw our volunteers alongside ActewAGL staff cooking nearly five thousand sausages for hungry families on Australia Day!

We are very grateful to those organisations and all our volunteers for their ongoing support.

Now in its fifth year, our *Midweek* series of informal talks by high-profile Canberran men continued to prove popular, with crowds sometimes getting up to one hundred people.

We had a range of high profile speakers again this year – well known men willing to show their vulnerable side and demonstrate to the public the importance of relationships, being open and having role models and mentors in your life.

This year's speakers included former Raiders' captain Terry Campese, Menslink Ambassador and former Australian of the Year David Morrison AO, John Runko CEO of Independent Property Group, Joel Wilson Transgender man and advocate, Rod Cuddihy from Canberra FM, Soldier On Founder and CEO John Bale, 2CC's Tim Shaw, ABC Television's Craig Allen, Home Affairs' Secretary Michael Pezzullo and Paralympic Gold Medallist Scott Reardon. We thank each one of them for sharing their very personal stories and giving us all inspiration.



David Morrison AO giving a Midweek talk

Fundraising and corporate sponsorships

This year the Canberra community yet again showed their tremendous support for the work we do, as our own fundraising (through corporate sponsorships, private donations, events and fee for service activities) increased by nearly 50% from the previous year to nearly \$800,000.

We are also grateful to the ACT Government who increased their funding by around 21%, largely due to a grant from ACT Health for counselling support for 10-12 year olds. The ACT Government provided approximately 36% of our total income this year before fundraising costs.

Corporate sponsorships and donations exceeded all expectations this year; nearly doubling from the previous year as sponsors generously increased their patronage while a range of amazing business and sporting organisations made some substantial donations and contributions from their own fundraising events.



Menslink volunteer Annie with tennis great Wally Masur at the P2 Tennis Invitational

I would like to make special mention this year of three wonderful organisations that raised hundreds of thousands of dollars between them – money that allows us to expand and continue to provide free support to young men’s families.

- Mark Peatey’s P² Advisory Tennis Invitational in March this year got corporate teams from across Canberra to play in a friendly (but highly competitive!) and raise much needed capital (over \$150,000) for us to invest in our 10-12 year old programs.
- The amazing blokes behind Kick2Kick4aCause, especially Paul, Adam, Matt and Anthony did an amazing job assembling teams to kick footies for 24 hours straight, raising nearly \$55,000 for our Silence is Deadly campaign. Everyone who participated, male and female young and old, certainly showed their own resilience overnight in helping us build resilience and mental fitness amongst our young guys!
- Last but not least are the team, fans and supporters of the Canberra Brave Ice Hockey team. Through sausage sizzles, raffles and auction prizes, the Brave raised over \$13,000 for our young guys across Canberra.



CBR Brave cheque presentation with Sports Minister Berry

Our very own **Big Night Out** was again a tremendous success, exceeding our estimates for both attendees and fundraising. Four hundred and sixty guests were in for the *Time of their Life* at the Southern Cross Club, as they dressed in their finest seventies and eighties clothes and raised over \$160,000 (after costs).



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

We are so grateful to Peter Munday from Lennock Volkswagen who leads our fundraising committee and helped make the event such a success, along with other amazing volunteers Fiona Sanfrancesco, Ron Shepherd, Todd Wright, Jim Rice, Roni Belden, Marg Job and Anna Orlov. Staff member Catherine Rider-Aichholzer also did a terrific job in keeping everything running smoothly before, during and after the event – no mean feat! We thank them all for their incredible and ongoing contribution to our fundraising efforts.

During this financial year, we were very pleased to add Southern Plumbing Plus as a Principal Partner for the first time, while welcoming back the Snow Foundation who have committed three years of funding to assist our 10-12 year old extension.

Our six Principal Partners continue to lead the way in providing significant funding for our programs. Between them they contributed over 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 generous donations of specialist expertise and services. Together they provided over 10% of our total funding and much needed services for which we are very grateful. Major partners this year included the ACT Rugby Veterans Club, Bendigo Bank, Boorer Foundation, Canberra Raiders, Club Lime, Datacom, DDCS Lawyers, Geocon, Independent Property Group, Much More Than Money, Proximity Legal, PWC, Thinkplace, ThreeSides Marketing, Village Building 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 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, Clayton Utz, Clonakilla Wines, EY, Farrar Gesini Dunn, Gungahlin Eagles Rugby, Independent Liquor Retailers, Inner Compass, Konica Minolta, KPMG, McDonalds ACT, O'Neill & Brown Plumbing, RSM, and the University of Canberra.

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!

Operations and Governance

In response to ever-increasing client demand (especially from our extended age group), we expanded our premises in January this year, more than doubling the number of counselling rooms and providing additional space for staff.

We also upgraded our phone system, providing working phones to every staff member and an improved voice mail system should we be unable to answer the phones on time.



Aboriginal Artist (and PWC Consultant) Sarah Richards kindly donated her artwork to brighten our corridors

We continued to streamline and automate our processes wherever possible, linking our bank feeds to our accounting system, further enhancing our application and referral forms and trialling a cloud-based booking system for counselling appointments to reduce administration and “no show” appointments.

Staffing

I am constantly inspired and encouraged by our staff – going the extra mile to help a young man or a parent in need, making sure our volunteers and sponsors feel valued and supported and ensuring the organisation is well managed and run efficiently.

Early in 2018 we welcomed two new counsellors Grant Mackay and Albert Valdez; adding valuable expertise and more than 50% additional capacity to the team. In March we also welcomed Peter “Cookie” Davis to the Education Program. Peter came to us after a lengthy career in ACT Policing so knows firsthand the range of issues facing our young men, their schools and families. We are very pleased to have all three on board in front line jobs to support our young guys.



Caloola Farm provided the perfect backdrop for this year's staff retreat

In July last year, our Business Manager Rebecca Swan decided she would like to spend more time looking after her young son. She did a terrific job for us and we were sad to see her go – luckily for us though she continues to volunteer and support our work in many ways. Catherine Rider-Aichholzer, a volunteer of many years' standing, jumped in and filled the breach for us at short notice while we worked on a longer term administration plan. She not only managed our administration but ran both our Business Breakfast and Big Night Out events with aplomb. We are eternally grateful for the year she spent with us and everything she achieved in that time.

Towards the end of the financial year, we made the difficult decision to consolidate our two administrative roles into one full-time role, reducing total admin hours and costs by more than 15%. Accordingly, our long-serving Office Manager, Fiona Brammall left us at the end of June. Fiona gave us many years of loyal service and helped us grow from five staff to thirteen. Her bright and cheerful personality was a great asset, providing support to staff, volunteers and families alike. We were sad to see her go and very pleased to see her pick up a new job straight away. We wish her all the best for the future.

James Crocker also worked in our counselling team for a couple of months at the beginning of the year before returning to his previous employer in a more senior role.

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 \$23.7K to \$31.4K or just under 5% of our payroll.

I'd like to thank all our staff – both past and present - for another great year. The work we do and the young guys we support can often be challenging (we certainly had our fair share of challenging issues this year...), but you all do an amazing job for our young guys, their families and our whole community. Your dedication, kindness and insights always give me hope and inspiration for the future...



Menslink staff appreciating our partnership with the Raiders (and colourful shirts!). Missing are Fiona Brammall, Jordan Brown and Catherine Rider-Aichholzer

Volunteers

Yet again our Menslink volunteers – mentors, fundraisers and so many others – went the extra mile to help us help the next generation.

Over sixty volunteer role models supported their young guy week in week out – probably more than a hundred if you include the numbers who graduated during the year and the many more who continue to catch up informally with their young guy after leaving the Menslink “service.” These men – the youngest around 23 and the oldest now over 73 – are fantastic in the way they are there for their young guy (and each other!) through thick and thin. It’s a big commitment and we are very thankful they’ve stepped up to the plate.

Other volunteers have made such a difference during the years – helping out with events, in the office or lending their support to our campaigns and work. We’d particularly like to thank:

- Students from ADFA for helping out at the Business Breakfast, Handmade Markets and the Big Night Out;
- Students from Merici College, St Edmunds College and Canberra Grammar for helping out at the Big Night Out and the Multi-Cultural Festival;
- Staff at Datacom who ran many of their own fundraising events for us;

- The amazing Josh Dundas running from Clovelly to Canberra (the equivalent of an ultra-marathon every day for six days straight) – it was a real privilege running the last couple of kilometres with him and his many supporters from ANU;
- Former Raiders’ captain Alan Tongue who not only was our keynote speaker at the Business Breakfast but also helped cook for us at the ActewAGL Aussie Day Breakfast;



Josh Dundas and supporters running the last leg into Canberra

- ABC Radio Canberra’s Adam Shirley, who hosted the 2017 Business Breakfast, along with former presenters Genevieve Jacobs and Tim Gavel who “donated themselves” for our Big Night Out;
- Menslink Ambassador David Morrison AO who also donated himself and helped organise other events and speakers;
- Roni Belden who helped organise the nearly 100 auction items for our Big Night Out;
- Bri Croft who helped manage the Multi-Cultural Festival for us;
- 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; and
- Our Board of Directors – particularly Chair Michael Battenally – who dedicate their time and take on responsibility for the organisation. Not only is the organisation grateful, but I personally am very thankful for their advice, guidance and support over many years.

Five Year Cost Comparison

Menslink take our financial obligations very seriously and are very conscious of the trust placed in us by the ACT Government, our sponsors and donors. We not only aim for great outcomes for our young guys, but to achieve those outcomes at the lowest possible unit cost.

This year unit costs of direct support increased slightly 2% to \$1,269 per client. Five years ago, our unit cost was \$2,261, representing a 44% decrease in that time.

Our education costs increased both year-on-year and over the five year period, reflecting both the investment we've made in that time, as well as the fact that 2012-13 did not represent a full year of operations. Since 2013-14 (our first full year of operation), Silence is Deadly costs are down 22%. PRIDE costs are also high, reflecting two years of investment in that program, with unit costs forecast to reduce significantly in 2018-19 and beyond.

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	1 Yr Change (FY17-18)	5 Yr Change (FY13-18)
Silence is Deadly campaign								
Total number of sessions	30	52	61	52	78	77	-1%	157%
Total number of young men reached	3,904	7,044	7,926	6,633	9,572	8,924	-7%	129%
YOY growth		80%	13%	-16%	44%	-7%		
PRIDE Small Group Program								
Number of groups	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	5	150%	
Number of students	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	40	344%	
YOY growth						344%		
Mentoring								
Mentors trained	26	24	17	29	31	36	16%	38%
Number of active mentoring matches	42	47	42	45	53	63	19%	50%
Counselling								
Number of sessions	403	525	738	957	1,200	1,645	37%	308%
Number of clients	120	176	275	312	422	548	30%	357%
Total number of young men directly supported	162	223	317	357	475	611	29%	277%
YOY growth	43%	38%	42%	13%	33%	29%		
Total Expenditure (excludes fundraising costs)								
Expenses funded by ACT Govt Contract	302,679	320,697	340,352	360,624	377,132	449,600	19%	49%
Expenses funded from own sources	104,384	167,570	194,246	255,580	369,473	557,304	51%	434%
Total program expenditure	407,063	488,267	534,598	616,204	746,605	1,006,904	35%	147%
<i>* Own funding allocated across BOTH direct support and education programs from 2012</i>								
Unit cost of direct support								
Unit cost per young man (all direct support)	2,261	1,642	1,450	1,329	1,242	1,269	2%	-44%
Unit cost per young man (mentoring)	5,331	4,883	5,855	6,025	5,635	5,434	-4%	2%
Unit cost per young man (counselling)	1,187	777	778	652	690	790	15%	-33%
Unit cost per counselling session	354	260	290	212	243	263	8%	-26%
Unit cost PRIDE Program								
Unit cost per group	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	18,665	18,124	-3%	
Unit cost per attendee	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,148	2,266	-45%	
Unit cost Silence is Deadly campaign								
Unit cost per session	1,357	2,347	1,227	2,726	1,531	1,831	20%	35%
Unit cost per attendee	10	17	9	21	12	16	27%	51%

** Members should note we inadvertently overstated the number of young men attending Silence is Deadly sessions in last year's annual report. The reported figure of 11,900 should have been 9,572 and we apologise for the error (caused by double-counting one term's count).*

Future Outlook

The Board and staff are confident that Menslink made the correct decision in reducing our age down to ten years of age. Not only are there very few providers working with this age group, but we have a better opportunity to nip problem behaviours in the bud with this age group – preventing significant social and mental health issues down the track.

In the coming years, we'll be looking to consolidate our work with the 10-12 year old age bracket – providing the right services that need to be subtly different for the younger guys while keeping our core strength-based and solution-focused approach that is the heart of everything we do.

We remain committed to supporting client and program growth in the immediate Canberra region, without over-extending ourselves with geographic expansion.

Conscious that our current funding agreements with both Community Services and ACT Health conclude at the end of June 2019, we are working with both Directorates to not only continue our funding into the future, but to also fund a larger proportion of our projected growth, so that we can continue to provide services and support to those families in need.

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.