
EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE

Men's Link Incorporated
Annual Report 2018-19



Chairman's Report – Michael Battenally

Dear Members

This past twelve months has seen the ongoing relationship between Menslink, the funding partners and the community we service, flourish in many ways. Martin Fisk in his CEO report details the growth in service demand and delivery, and the strengthening financial position is well stated by our Treasurer, Dion Cannell.

The board performance centres on the commitment to sound governance in the not-for-profit sector. In 2019 the combined effort of the board has fulfilled this role, monitoring policies, strategic planning, and immediate and longer-term financial management; maintaining a focus on strengthening the organisation.

The 2019 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.

2019 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
Scott Winsor**	Member Audit & Risk Committee
Golnar Nekoe	Chair Audit & Risk Committee
Jim Rice*	
Denis Sargent**	
Mark Whithear**	
Martin Fisk	CEO, Executive Officer (non-voting) to Board

* seeking re-election at 2019 AGM

** not seeking re-election

Significantly underwriting the growth in demand for Menslink services across Canberra and the region is the ACT philanthropic community, driven by a powerful sense of corporate responsibility. Pillars of this community are our Principal Sponsors for 2018-2019, ACT Policing, Capital Chemist, Geocon, Icon Water, Lennock Volkswagen, The Snow Foundation, Southern Plumbing Plus, along with the team behind Kick2Kick4ACause. The ACT Government funding agreement also provides the expanding baseline of critical funding to deliver our core services.

2019 has been a great year for the Canberra Raiders on and off the field. Through the Silence is Deadly partnership the positive culture of the Raiders organisation continues to strengthen the message for young men to become caring and resilient brothers, fathers, partners and friends. WIN TV also plays a valuable role sharing this valued message through many viewing formats.

The Menslink message of cultural integrity has grown from strategic work with our board. In this past year Mensink has initiated the journey of our Reconciliation Action Plan. Awareness of our First Nation's people is now considered in the development of programs and the 'ways' the organisation embraces culture and country.

The third Big Night Out (BNO) charity ball in March 2019 was a celebration of Canberra's support for Menslink. Peter Munday OAM is to be congratulated again for leading the way with this marquee community event, supported by volunteers on the Fundraising Committee, Fiona Sanfrancesco, Ron Shepherd, Jim Rice and Todd Wright. Join the fourth BNO next year on March 27, 2020 – always with the Peter Munday promise to be 'bigger' than the previous one!

As an educator I am well aware that 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 beyond school hours and during holiday periods when a young man's life can hit very low points.

Again this year the impact of our programs and services continues to show very positive impacts. Parents, students and teachers continue to identify the positive impacts we have on our young men. From a school leader at St Edmund's College I share the following quote:

'It is easier to build strong children, then to repair broken men'.

This email shared with the Board came in response to the impact the PRIDE program has had on many young men at the college, where she says, "The raw and real personalities that are shared by the presenters allow students to 'connect' and 'engage' in a way that cannot be achieved when they are plugged into a device trying to access information on personal topics.....we are ever so appreciative of this service that helps improve the mental health and wellbeing of our boys."



Mentor Training June 2019

At this year's AGM we will have four vacated positions, previously held by Kathleen O'Sullivan, Denis Sargent, Scott Winsor and Mark Whithear. We thank Kathleen, Scott, Denis and Mark for their multiple terms on the Board, knowing their Board legacy has benefited from their professional and personal contribution to the Menslink community. We look forward to their continued involvement beyond the board role.

As we foster a strong board we are fortunate to have three very capable and experienced Menslink members who have expressed interest in joining the Board. They include:

- Justine Saunders APM, Deputy Commissioner Australian Border Force and former ACT Chief Police Officer;
- Bruce Papps CA, CEO Northside Community Services, ACTCOSS Treasurer, former PWC Partner and former mentor; and
- Daniel Oyston, marketing professional, former Director of Sponserv and current mentor.

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.

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 strength that lies in the role the board plays in supporting the sound function and development of the Menslink organisation. I also thank Martin Fisk as CEO and Jacinta Johnstone for her executive officer support to the Board.

In closing this Chair report I reflect on the tragedy of suicide, and the impact of isolation, trauma, anger and mental illness in our local community and across our nation. We all know someone, a family member, friend or ourselves who has seen the pain that this can bring. Prevention is a real thing that we can all contribute to and make a real difference. The scale of the 'difference' will be measured by the combination of personal awareness, involvement and sustained financial support.

On behalf of the Board directors, I would like to thank our CEO Martin Fisk and the Menslink staff for the amazing contribution their roles made in delivering another purposeful year for Menslink and those they support – young men and their families.



Michael Battenally addressing guests at the Business Breakfast

Michael Battenally
Board Chair Menslink
18 November 2019

Treasurer's Report – Dion Cannell CA

I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 30 June 2019.

Of note in this year's financial statements:

- Surplus for the year was \$296,111 representing an 84.4% increase on last year's surplus and a \$250,000 positive variance on budget for the year.
- Our financial position remains sound with positive net equity of \$714,402.
- Of the \$831,939 in total assets, \$773,569 or 93% is represented by cash or cash equivalents.
- Total income for the year increased from \$1,252,791 in 2018 to \$1,568,462 in 2019.
- Excluding interest income, growth in revenue on the prior year was 25%.

Upon detailed analysis, the result can largely be attributed to some amazing (unbudgeted) fundraising efforts from numerous supporters. In particular, I must mention the teams behind Kick2Kick4aCause and the Nugg Off who not only ran their events for yet another year, but also doubled and tripled the amounts raised. We appreciate the effort such events require from a committed few and are most grateful to have their support. With regard to cost savings, employment costs were down approximately \$52,000 due to challenges in finding additional staff to cater for increased services. I see this as a timing lag and hope to invest this money in 2020 via an increase in staff numbers.

The 2019 result has afforded Menslink the opportunity to plan and implement change focusing on the increasing need for our services. The 2020 year will see Menslink invest over \$100,000 in additional capacity, including four new counselling rooms, and our first counselling room sized to cater for family sessions. Additionally, we will purchase a nine-seater bus with trailer and various camping equipment. With reference to the outdoor experiences Menslink provides to mentees, the cost savings provided by these purchases will see these experiences offered to a significantly greater number of young guys through more frequent outdoor session.

As an organisation that relies heavily on the generosity of local private and corporate donors, we recognise the challenges in managing significant variances in donations received year on year whilst demand for services steadily increases. Our Board in consultation with our CEO continuously plan for years that may not be as strong, constantly looking at ways to ensure minimal disruption to those that rely upon us. The current level of reserves enables prudent financial planning with confidence and a continued focus on longevity for Menslink and generational change in our young guys.

We are yet again grateful to Adrian King and the team at PwC for the provision of a pro-bono audit service - yet another example of the generous community support that we continue to experience.

I am honoured to be part of an organisation with so many supporters committed to the wellbeing of young men. To all involved, I congratulate you on your commitment and thank you for the outcomes that are constantly achieved.

CEO Report – Martin Fisk

This year Menslink continued to do what it does best: support as many young men as we possibly can on a positive journey to a healthy adulthood. We achieved that across all of our programs – in schools, in homes, in community and at our offices in Holder.

Again we continued to see unprecedented demand from parents, schools and young men themselves for support and again, thanks to our ongoing partnership with the ACT Government and the business and philanthropic communities, we were able to meet that demand with every program experiencing high growth rates.

Importantly we strengthened and expanded our education and group programs in order to reach more young boys and men who need support and guidance but who, for whatever reason, are unwilling or unable to seek one:one support from us.

We were also heartened to receive a number of external endorsements of our work during the year, including:

- The University of Canberra’s Centre for Applied Psychology, in assessing the long term impact of our counselling and mentoring programs, found that “the impressive short-term benefits were not only maintained, but continued to improve during the follow-up period....it appears that young guys engaged with Menslink become sufficiently empowered to make ongoing positive changes, independently, in their own lives.”
- Our first national award, for *Significant Contribution to Improving Men’s Health and Well Being*, from the Australian Men’s Health Forum
- The 2018 ACT Mental Health Award for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention
- The 2018 ACT Violence Prevention Award for Community Sector (co-winner with Everyman Australia)

In summary this financial year, Menslink:

- Delivered over one hundred *Silence is Deadly* mental health presentations to over 10,000 young boys and men, including 35 primary schools. This represented a 13% increase in student numbers over 2017-18;
- Took nearly two hundred young boys and men on a journey of self-discovery in our *PRIDE* program, as they learnt about values, positive masculinity, relationships and anger management over eight weeks. This is more than four times the number from the previous year with more schools continuing to request additional sessions as they see tangible behavioural results in the classroom;
- Increased the number of young men receiving positive role modelling and guidance in our mentoring program by 38%; with nearly ninety young men in the program at June 2019;

- Delivered nearly two thousand free counselling sessions to 662 young men; an increase of approximately 20% on the previous year;
- Significantly improved our referral and booking processes, with new online systems and processes leading to a three-times improvement in our counselling conversion rate (the number of referrals that result in a young guy attending a counselling session in the same month);
- Together with the University of Canberra, developed standardised impact surveys to evaluate the personal and social improvements our programs have had on young men, such as relationships, anger management and anxiety;
- Welcomed over 540 guests to our Business Breakfast featuring Peter FitzSimons and 450 to our third Big Night Out;
- Continued to exercise cost restraint, with direct support (mentoring and counselling) unit costs falling by 1% to \$1,255 and education programs falling between 28% (Silence is Deadly) and 79% (PRIDE).

This year, as our community grows, we acknowledge the wonderful men, women and young people who put their hands up and help or donate to support young guys and their families: Staff members donating their own time and money to go the extra mile, our dedicated Board members overseeing our work, our volunteer mentors guiding their young guy, our corporate sponsors freely giving back, our individual donors large and small and all our volunteers who help raise money or awareness for our young guys. I'd particularly like to thank our senior team leaders Jacinta Johnstone, Rolf Einhaus and Peter Davis – they have led the organisation and made a very significant difference to Menslink and our community. We are truly grateful to everyone – you all embody the saying “it takes a village to raise a child.”

We were particularly grateful this year to our fundraising committee who organised our third hugely successful Big Night Out and to the amazing people behind Kick2Kick4aCause: between you, you raised over a quarter of a million dollars to support young men and our programs!

I would also like to acknowledge the ACT Government, who have supported us since our inception in 2002, providing funding for 42% of our total program costs this year, via the Community Services Directorate (counselling and mentoring for young men 12-25) and ACT Health (counselling for young men aged 10-12).

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.



Kick2Kick4aCause cheque presentation

Program Delivery for Young Men:

Mentoring Program

This year saw a record number of young guys in the program, with our highest year-on-year growth in over five years.

We finished the year with 87 young men aged 10-18 having a regular catch up with the mentor of their choice, up 38% from the previous year and more than four times the numbers of ten years ago.

We trained 50 new mentors, up from 36 the previous year, with some new training techniques allowing us to increase the numbers of trainees at each camp without diminishing quality.

26 mentees (and their mentors) graduated from the program after two years, which was another record for Menslink and highlights the strong retention rates within the program.

This year Linkup attendance improved, as we expanded and cemented our mentor crew system and introduced more rigour into Linkup design and planning (see program developments for more details)

Preliminary results from our new impact surveys also had the majority of parents (in some cases up to 90%) reporting positive impacts on peer and family relationships, confidence and self-esteem, anger management and stress and anxiety after twelve or eighteen months in the program.

I've noticed [the boys'] confidence and self-esteem grow stronger, their general happiness has increased, their peer relationships have improved, as have their relationships with family members. They take more responsibility for their actions, manage their emotions in a more mature way and realise they are actually stronger for allowing themselves to feel emotions (when previously been disassociated from them), their willingness to try new things has increased, and their general demeanour and attitude has improved.

I am forever grateful for this. It's one thing to go to psychologists, etc, but sometimes young males just need a hands on approach to life and guided by actions and witnessing of emotions in other males (like at camp speaker), for it to fully sink in.

Menslink Mum, Mentoring Program (2018)

"The hardest part of being in a relationship with someone who is suffering mental health issues is knowing how to address certain topics and support them in a way that is productive. It was such a big responsibility for me and to be able to share this with the wonderful people at Menslink was incredibly helpful.

The benefits of the anger management techniques he was taught seeped through into our relationship in the most positive way. The difference I see in my partner's ability to cope and respond to different adversities is due to the assistance that has been offered through the stupendous work of Menslink.

Menslink client's partner, Counselling (2019)



Rhys Summergreene speaking at our Summer Camp

Program Highlights for the Year

Our summer camp at the Greenhills Centre is always a special event, bringing together mentees and mentors for some fun, some challenge and some bonding around the campfire. This year was particularly special, as we welcomed the amazing Rhys Summergreene to talk about his life and the fact he was dying from cancer.

With only three months to live, Rhys freely gave us his time and inspired us all with his insights and positivity, telling us at the end of his speech “I suppose the main things I would like you to take from my story is to always find the silver lining in every scenario, be yourself, stay positive, don’t take in negativity, be resplendent and to never give up no matter what.”

Rhys received a standing ovation from all of us and a line of many mentors and mentees wanting to shake his hand or give him a hug at the end of his talk. Sadly, Rhys passed away early in January but will never be forgotten at Menslink.

For our fifth year now, a small group of mentees attended the annual Menslink/Outward Bound “Wilderness Challenge”. This small but determined group of young men led by Operations Manager Cookie Davis overcame adversity and challenges, learning that indeed “everything is possible!” We would like to thank Zoe Routh from Inner Compass and Greg and Margaret from the Boorer Foundation (as well as Outward Bound themselves) who yet again provided funding for this important initiative.

Other notable Linkups and events included:

- The annual “Captain’s Run” with the Canberra Raiders where the young guys get to see behind the scenes at Raiders’ training and learn first-hand about the values and ethos that drives our best sporting team. This is one of the highlights of the year for us and the Raiders have always made sure the day is about “being the best you can be” – a great lesson for our mentees (and mentors!);
- Menslink Kitchen Rules where our mentees compete to cook the best dish on a fixed budget – this is a fantastic opportunity for the young guys to learn new life skills in a fun environment and we’re very grateful to Canberra College for allowing us to use their commercial kitchen.
- ACT Policing’s alcohol and drug presentation, which allowed the young guys to ask open questions about this important topic at this critical time in their lives. Importantly, it also allowed the young blokes to see police in a non-confrontational way and we thank ACT Policing for their continued input and support.



Mentees hiking on the Wilderness Challenge

In November a group of 11 guys took on the Tough Mudder half course in Sydney. This was an incredibly exhilarating (and filthy) experience for all involved. Thank you again to Northside Community Services for lending us their bus - it was very brave of you, given the dirt involved.

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.



Views from the Mentor Retreat at Rascal Lodge

The annual mentor retreat was again very well attended and mentors and staff were able to relax and bond together and reflect on the highs and lows of their mentoring journey.

Our thanks as always go out to Colin and Andrew Marshall for generously donating their time and allowing us to use Rascal Lodge in Jindabyne for the retreat.

Program Developments

After a successful trial of the crew system last year, we expanded and embedded the crew approach into the program, with six crews of

approximately fifteen mentees each regularly catching up and running their own Linkups. Each crew is led by a captain, with new mentees and mentors joining each intake, so the crews maintain a fresh mix of new and older hands.

I would specifically like to thank our crew captains, each of whom spent many hours planning Linkups and supporting the mentors in their crews. Crew Captains for the year included Dave Bermingham, Rob Chilman, Matt Davis, Rick Davis, Jonathan Engel, Anthony Fitzgerald, Lachlan Graydon and Daniel Oyston.

You guys went the extra mile and we are very grateful. This year we also took steps to formalise Linkup design and planning, as we realised it wasn't enough just to rely on fun events and the mentor-mentee relationship.

A rolling two-year program of Linkups for each Crew revolves around our three pillars of Challenge (getting the young guys out of their comfort zone), Development (learning life skills) and Philanthropy (giving back to others in the community).



The Tough Mudder Crew

In another interesting development, we were approached by the Harden Regional Development Corporation to see if we could assist them in developing a youth mentoring program for their shire. Our mentoring staff then ran a two day workshop for them in May to impart the key concepts and practices for a successful mentoring program and we wish them all the best for the future.

Counselling Program

The counselling program delivered 1,949 free counselling sessions to 662 young men and their families, compared with 1,645 sessions and 548 young men in the previous year, with around 40-50% of sessions delivered at Menslink with the rest in thirteen schools across the Territory. Again this is a record number of both sessions and clients, up 18% and 21% respectively from the previous year or nearly four times the number five years ago.

Around 49% of our counselling sessions are conducted in schools, which is down very slightly from the previous year, reflecting both the high growth in referrals from parents (up three times in 12 months) and also capacity/funding constraints in being able to extend our in-school sessions.

Thirteen schools currently receive in-school counselling support, allowing us to support young guys who would otherwise not be able to get to Holder to access counselling support. These schools are in West Belconnen, North Gungahlin, South Tuggeranong and everywhere in between.

Despite a large increase in requests for support (online referrals went from 20 in July 2018 to 60 in June 2019), we were able to meet that increased demand and keep our wait time for clients low (around one week or less for urgent cases). A short waiting list is a critical feature of our service, with some young guys able to access same day or next day urgent support. For young men in crisis, a lengthy delay in getting support can be extremely demoralising and even discourage them getting any support at all.

Demand for support from pre-teens also grew by 50%, with 122 young guys aged 10-12 receiving free counselling support this year, up from 81 last year. 10-12 year olds are now consistently around 18-20% of our total counselling client base.

Family and domestic violence continues to be a large part of what we do. A review of our online referrals earlier this year revealed a significant 62% of young guys living at home had experienced family violence, with 8/10 of them also going on to use violence themselves. More worryingly, 67% of young guys living at home were using violence, which indicates to us a growing and not diminishing issue.

This year for the first time we not only surveyed schools on the impact of our counselling, but also extended the surveys to parents and young guys (over 18) themselves. Parents, schools and young men reported (amongst other results) positive or very positive impacts in the following areas:

- Family, peer and (school) staff relationships (60 – 67%)
- Engagement in class (69%)
- Confidence and self esteem (81%) and overall mental health and wellbeing (88%)
- Ability to control anger and aggression (76%) or stress and anxiety (75%)

"Last week I heard words that no parent ever wants to hear from their 16 year old son. Words of self harm, suicide, desperation and fear. Words I didn't know how to manage. I called Menslink and, while it's fair to say I was feeling a bit hysterical myself, they calmed me down and offered to meet immediately with my son.

They talked privately to begin with, I can't express the difference in my son or the relief I felt when I walked into the room after they had spoken. My son was visibly looking better, the hysteria was gone and he was smiling! On the drive home, he was a completely different child - he was feeling hopeful, he had a sense of direction and even self worth. But most importantly he was no longer talking about harming himself. I / we know there is more work to be done, but this is a positive start.

The face to face immediate support I feel, was life saving that day, I can not thank you enough, without Menslink I'm terrified to even think about what may have happened."

Menslink Mum, Counselling 2019

"Your approach to supporting these young men [involved in family violence] is admirable and raises many new discussions for those who have looked at these issues from a traditional stance. [You have] challenged my thinking - it is wonderful to see a positive approach to managing these young men and hearing of the success of your interventions. Thank you for raising my awareness of new approaches to this very significant area."

**Vanessa Brotto, Senior Manager Family Violence,
Victoria Police 2019**

University of Canberra Study into the Long-term Impacts of Mentoring and Counselling

In 2018, UC's Centre for Applied Psychology interviewed past clients of Menslink (both parents and young men themselves) to assess any lasting effect of our mentoring and counselling supports.

The report found that *"Substantial well-being benefits were evident, based on retrospective ratings and interview responses. Positive long-term changes in life satisfaction were reported for 94% of Menslink participants, with no reports of deterioration in life satisfaction despite the often very challenging circumstances faced by the young guys. The effects on relationship satisfaction were positive, but more nuanced: relationships improved for 79% of participants in the short-term, and for 52% in the long-term (with no long-term change for 27% and some deterioration for 21%)."*



Dr James Neill being interviewed by WIN News

The impressive short-term benefits were not only maintained, but continued to improve during the follow-up period. This ongoing improvement is notable because, more commonly, immediate gains from brief interventions tend to dissipate in the longer-term. So, the evidence indicating that Menslink participants experience post-intervention growth, on top of very substantial short-term benefits, is particularly noteworthy. It appears that young guys engaged with Menslink become sufficiently empowered to make ongoing positive changes, independently, in their own lives.

Reflecting on their experiences of Menslink services, 80% of participants and carers rated the services 7 out of 10 or higher for worthwhileness and 97% rated Menslink 7 out of 10 or higher for net promotion (i.e., were likely to recommend to others)."

"To be honest, I went into it a little sceptically. I would have expected a short-term gain, but of the 42 people we interviewed, not one had returned to their previous problematic behaviour, even years after going through the Menslink programme."

Dr James Neill, UC Centre of Applied Psychology 2018

Education Programs

Silence is Deadly campaign

During the financial year (spanning two educational years), we delivered 102 mental health and fitness presentations to 10,125 young men in primary schools, secondary schools and sporting clubs across the region.

While high school sessions were down slightly from the previous year, substantial demand from primary schools resulted in an overall increase of 32% in the number of sessions and 13% increase in the number of young men attending.

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

With permission from filmmaker, Sydney school student Nick Ward, this year we utilised the Tropfest short film, *Boys Don't Cry*, which really spoke to many of our audience, highlighting as it does the benefits of close relationships and seeking help and support from those around you.

Major supporters of our campaign, the Canberra Raiders and WIN Television, continued to provide extensive support for the program, with our *Silence is Deadly* television ad featuring the Raiders being shown 6,031 times across the WIN Network and reaching audiences who have not attended one of our school presentations.

100% of schools surveyed at the end of the financial year reported positive or very positive impacts both on students' willingness to seek support and their willingness to support others with over 90% reporting positive impacts on overall mental health and wellbeing.

PRIDE Program

The highly successful PRIDE Program consists of eight sessions of approximately one hour, generally delivered a week apart during school term. It consists of core modules around self-esteem, values, positive masculinity and strengthening respectful relationships, with optional modules including conflict de-escalation, risk-taking, body image, bullying or drugs and alcohol.

This year, we ran 14 groups, reaching a total of 187 students. Again reflecting the incredible demand for programs from primary schools across the Territory, we modified the program for a younger audience and delivered it to three primary schools (years five and six boys) with outstanding feedback from teachers and students alike.

PRIDE – like all our programs – draws heavily on the lived experience of male presenters who engage with students and share their stories of learning through adversity. This program also occasionally brings female presenters who talk through common teenage scenarios from a woman's perspective. For many young

"This [PRIDE] group really makes a difference. We are seeing the impact months after the program has been completed. There is a much greater understanding of what bullying is and a real commitment to not want to be a bully. The boys were inspired by the ideas that were presented and were willing to be challenged. The boys wanted to earn Michael's respect and were inspired by seeing a man so comfortable in expressing his emotions and being vulnerable. I had a number of parents contact me to tell me how much their boys enjoyed the program and the changes they were seeing at home. An amazing resource for schools !"

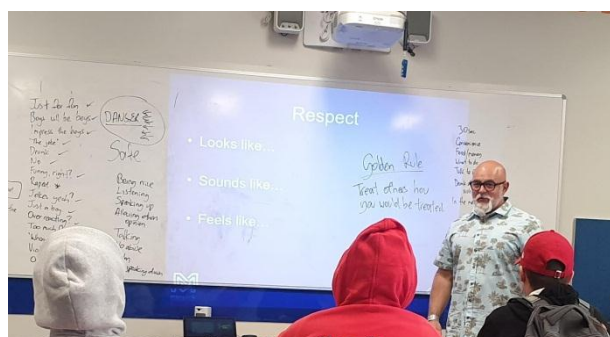
Social Worker, Primary School 2019

"The stories and information presented by the [Silence is Deadly] program fit with our well-being model. The students responded really well to the material and it is encouraging for the boys to see successful men talk about their struggles and where they have sought out support in the past."

Principal, Primary School 2019

"We have a very challenging group of children at my High School that have some serious struggles going on at home. A lot of our students really lack a positive male role model in their lives and with this program really got the wheels in their heads turning in so many positive ways. It allowed them to see things like bullying and how we treat women from another perspective. Highly recommend this program."

Youth Worker, High School 2019



Demonstrating respectful relationships in PRIDE

men it may be the first time they have been confronted with a different view from theirs, with a number of schools commenting on significant improvements in their male students' attitudes to female peers and staff.

Overall, 60% of schools reported a positive or very positive impact on students' anti-social behaviours and relationships with staff at school with 80% reporting more positive peer relationships. 80% reported positive impacts on self-esteem, anger management and overall mental health and wellbeing.

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 2018 Business Breakfast was again sold out, as 540 guests came to hear former Wallaby and author Peter FitzSimons deliver inspiring stories from his career and research. This year we were grateful to have the much-loved Genevieve Jacobs perform MC duties, replacing Adam Shirley whose radio commitments meant he was no longer able to assist.



Menslink CEO Martin Fisk with Dr Brendan Nelson AO, Peter FitzSimons AM, David Morrisson AO, Rosie Batty AO and Genevieve Jacobs at our 2018 Business Breakfast

During the year, Menslink staff and volunteers gave over seventy presentations to businesses, sporting clubs, community groups, government agencies and the general public, talking about issues as varied as masculinity, mental health, raising teenagers, family violence, violence in schools or the impact of social media. We additionally gave over twenty press interviews, with coverage on all major local television, radio, print and online media channels.

Menslink were also invited to speak at two national conferences – the National Men's Health Gathering in Sydney on the topic of pornography and the No To Violence conference in Melbourne discussing ways to break the intergenerational cycle of repeated family violence.



Some of our invaluable volunteers!

Continuing our tradition of assisting other charities, Menslink staff provided free training, expertise or simply volunteer time for a range of other community organisations, including ACTCOSS, Lifeline Canberra, MARSS, MIEACT, PANDSI, Toora Women, Vinnies and White Ribbon.

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.

This exposure of course leads to increased awareness of the work we do and the issues faced by young men and their families, encouraging them to seek help or get involved. We are very grateful to those organisations and all our volunteers for their ongoing support.

Our series of *Midweekers* talks by high-profile Canberran men continues to draw crowds and inspire audiences of all ages and genders. Since their inception in March 2013, we have held 69 *Midweekers* with outstanding stories that make us all think, cry and aim to do better in our own lives.

This year was no exception, with some outstanding speakers talking of the hardship in their lives and the people that made a difference to them. Continuing our tradition of hearing the “other side” of famous people, almost all our speakers related stories not previously known in the public domain, with one of them revealing a challenging story he had not even told his family.

We’d like to thank this year’s speakers for revealing their vulnerable sides and, in doing so, being great role models for the rest of us.



Peter Leahy AC addressing a Midweeker on leadership

Our speakers this year included Paralympic Gold Medallist Scott Reardon, the Australia Institute’s Richard Denniss, Peter Leahy AC, former Chief of Army and Chair of Soldier On, Raiders CEO Don Furner and Raiders Co-captain Josh Hodgson, Prof Deep Saini, former VC of the University of Canberra, Brendan Maher, former RUOK? CEO, morning radio hosts Nigel Johnson from MIX 106.3 and Adam Shirley from ABC Radio Canberra and Ben Henderson a champion mountain bike rider.

Unfortunately Rhys Summergreene passed away before he was able to speak at his scheduled Midweeker – an event

he was much looking forward to – but we were privileged to be able to read out the talk he gave at our summer camp to a packed out event in April.

Fundraising and corporate sponsorships

This year represented a huge milestone for Menslink, with fundraising (including corporate sponsorships, events, donations and fee for service activities) exceeding one million dollars (before costs) for the first time in history, a massive 36% increase from the previous year.

We cannot thank the Canberra community enough for helping us provide our potentially life-saving support services at no cost to a rapidly expanding client base. Hundreds more young men and their families were able to get the help they needed this year – when they needed it – due to the generosity of Canberrans and our local businesses and we cannot thank you enough.

The ACT Government continued their ongoing support and commitment for our work, providing just under 30% of our income this year or around 42% of our total program costs.

Corporate sponsorships and donations again continued to increase and supported the bulk of our growth, rising some 12% from the previous year, as generous companies and individuals got behind our cause.

I would like to make special mention this year of three amazing 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.

- The wonderful people behind Kick2Kick4aCause who came together for a 2nd year down at Deakin Oval. This year they exceeded all expectations, raising over \$100,000 for Menslink. Their resilience and generosity help inspire us to do the same for young guys. A huge thank you to Adam, Anthony, Dave, Hannah, John, Leo, Matt and two Pauls.
- The amazing fans and supporters behind the 2018 premiership winners Canberra Brave Ice Hockey team. Their passion for their team and the broader community raised nearly twenty thousand dollars for Menslink this year and we are very grateful to the team and everyone behind the Brave community.
- In what started as a few guys in the construction industry wondering who could eat thirty nuggets the fastest (yes, it's a thing!), the annual *Nugg Off* grew to a major event this year, attracting lots of competitors and raising over \$15,000 for Menslink. A big thank you goes to Brendan Rocha, Kristoff Penc and Joseph Mammoliti who turned junk food into a major fundraising event down at the Public Bar in Manuka!



Local politicians supporting Kick2Kick4aCause

This year our third **Big Night Out** was again a tremendous success; with four hundred and fifty guests and over one hundred auction items combining to raise a record \$183,000 after costs, an increase of 14% from the previous year's record. Our eclectic dancers, our wonderful MC, a great covers band in the Exhibitionists and of course Killer Queen all combined to make this night one to remember!



Our third Big Night Out at the Realm Hotel was a huge success!

We are so grateful to Peter Munday OAM 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. A big thank you also goes to Chenoeh Miller who organised our entertainment and of course to the amazing Jacinta “Miss Sparkles” Johnstone who pulled everything together before, during and after the event. We thank them all for their incredible and ongoing contribution to our fundraising efforts.

During this financial year, we were very pleased to add Geocon as a Principal Partner for the first time, as they increased their commitment after having supported us as a Major Partner for many years.

Our seven 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, or even more if you consider how much they bid on items at the Big Night Out! 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 Veterans Rugby Club, Allbids, Bendigo Bank, Boorer Foundation, Canberra Raiders, CBR Brave, Datacom, DDCS Lawyers, Elite Event Technology, Independent Property Group, Much More Than Money, Peter Blackshaw Manuka, Proximity Legal, PWC, Southside Physio, Thinkplace, ThreeSides Marketing, Village Building Co, Viva Leisure (Club Lime) 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, Advantage Advertising, AGH Demolition & Asbestos Removals, Airmaster, Apis Consulting, Aspen Medical, Aulich Legal, BAL Lawyers, BCA Certifiers, Bayldon Ag, Bonsella Business Solutions, Burley Strength Gym, Canberra FM, Canberra Southern Cross Club, Canberra Weekly, Cantlie Recruitment, Clayton Utz, Clonakilla Wines, EY, Gungahlin Eagles Rugby, Independent Liquor Retailers, Inner Compass, Intravision, John James Foundation, Konica Minolta, KPMG, RSM, St John's Ambulance 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

During the year we made some significant improvements to our client booking systems and processes; particularly for counselling clients. A new online booking system allows existing clients to book or reschedule appointments with their counsellor and receive SMS and email reminders of upcoming appointments. Additionally, we hired an intake officer so that all appointments could be centrally managed.

The results have been impressive: our counselling conversion rate (the percentage of young men who attend a counselling session in the same month as the initial online referral) jumped from 26% in July 2018 to 61% by the end of the financial year. Additionally, the number of no-show counselling appointments dropped 30% year on year.

We upgraded our IT and email security systems and improved our banking processes to protect against the ever-present and increasing threat of online fraud. In addition, we increased and expanded our insurance coverage to protect the organisation in the event of mishap and misadventure.

Finally, we created a new role of Operations Manager, overseeing both Mentoring and Education programs, promoting Peter Davis into that role.



Menslink staff and Board Members with Deputy Chief Minister Yvette Berry at the ACT Violence Prevention Awards 2018

Staffing

This year our dedicated staff continued to go the extra mile to support our young men and their parents – either directly in schools, in the community or at Menslink; or indirectly by making sure our volunteers, donors and sponsors feel valued, supported and engaged and that Menslink is well run and managed.

During the financial year we welcomed four new staff members to our growing team. Jonathan Engel joined the mentoring team in July specifically looking after mentee intakes and supplementing the team in case managing a growing number of mentoring relationships. Jacinta Johnstone also joined in August as our Business Manager and quickly made her mark, managing all our fundraising events, social media and streamlining our administration and financial processes.

In 2019, Roni Beldon joined the team as our intake officer, where she combines her customer service skills with her practical experience as a mum of two young men who were former clients of Menslink. David Segal also joined us at the end of the year as a counsellor after a successful placement as part of his Graduate Diploma of Counselling.



Menslink Staff smiling for the camera! Missing are Roni Belden & David Segal

Sadly, Grant Mackay left us in April 2019 after just over twelve months with Menslink for a job more closely aligned with his specialist expertise of sexual assault trauma counselling.

Menslink continue to attract and retain high calibre people – not only skilled and experienced at their jobs – but also with very high levels of empathy and emotional intelligence; critical attributes in an organisation which consistently cares about our clients and our community.

It's great to see that 70% of our current employees started their journey with Menslink as volunteers – a good sign of the healthy, supportive and inviting workplace environment we have here at Menslink.

Investment in our staff is critical if we're to ensure we provide the best possible outcomes for our young guys and their families, so this year we again increased our expenditure on staff training and support both in dollar and percentage terms.

This financial year our investment in training and support increased to \$42.1K or 5.5% of payroll; up from \$31.4K or just under 5% the previous year.

This year we also introduced a new initiative where staff are given paid time each week that they can use on approved mental health activities, like gym sessions or meditation etc.



Jacinta having a moment's reflection at our staff planning retreat

We believe, particularly for front line workers, that these investments are vitally important in keeping a mentally fit and healthy workforce able to support young guys in need.

I'd like to thank all our staff – both past and present - for another great year. Every year I look back on this amazing team and am so grateful for all the work they put in and the investment they've made in Menslink and the future of our young guys their families and our community. Thank you so much for the great and impactful work you do each and every day.



Menslink staff and volunteers at the Raiders Charity Match

Volunteers

The more than one hundred volunteers who work tirelessly for Menslink and our young guys are the lifeblood of our organisation – they are role model mentors for our young guys, work tirelessly to help raise funds for Menslink and govern the organisation by being on the Board. Without them we would not be able to do what we do.

Our mentors of course do a terrific job. They sign up for a two year commitment not really knowing what's ahead but they commit to standing by their mentee through thick and thin – such an important role given the turbulence that can often be a big part of their lives. Other volunteers have also done a terrific job – helping us out whenever we've needed extra hands or support.

We'd particularly like to thank:

- Students from Merici College, St Edmunds College and Canberra Grammar for helping out at the Big Night Out and the Multi-Cultural Festival;
- Former Wallaby and writer Peter FitzSimons who was our keynote speaker at the 2018 Business Breakfast;
- Genevieve Jacobs and Daniel Gibson who hosted our Business Breakfast and Big Night Out events;
- Menslink Ambassador David Morrison AO who also donated time, gave speeches and assisted us in many ways throughout the year;
- Rosie Batty AO who donated her time throughout the year to support Menslink;
- 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;
- Jim Rice who, in addition to serving on the Board (for over seventeen years!) and fundraising committee, also supported us at events and fundraisers during the year; 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.



Mentors "enjoying" a cold bushwalk at our annual retreat

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, as we continued to expand our programs while keeping a lid on costs, we reduced unit costs across the board, but especially in our education programs.

Year	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	1 Yr Change (FY17-18)	5 Yr Change (FY13-14)
Silence is Deadly campaign								
Total number of sessions	52	61	52	78	77	102	32%	96%
Total number of young men reached	7,044	7,926	6,633	9,572	8,924	10,125	13%	44%
YOY growth	80%	13%	-16%	44%	-7%	13%		
PRIDE Small Group Program								
Number of groups	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	5	14	180%	
Number of students	n/a	n/a	n/a	9	40	187	368%	
YOY growth					344%	368%		
Mentoring								
Mentors trained	24	17	29	31	36	50	39%	108%
Number of active mentoring matches	47	42	45	53	63	87	38%	85%
Counselling								
Number of sessions	525	738	957	1,200	1,645	1,949	18%	271%
Number of outsource sites (schools)	5	10	10	11	12	12	0%	140%
Number of clients	176	275	312	422	548	662	21%	276%
Total number of young men directly supported	223	317	357	475	611	749	23%	236%
YOY growth	38%	42%	13%	33%	29%	23%		
Total Expenditure (excludes fundraising costs)								
Expenses funded by ACT Govt Contract	320,697	340,352	360,624	377,132	449,600	477,533	6%	49%
Expenses funded from own sources	167,570	194,246	255,580	369,473	557,304	665,700	19%	297%
Total program expenditure	488,267	534,598	616,204	746,605	1,006,904	1,143,233	14%	134%
Unit cost of direct support								
Unit cost per young man (all direct support)	1,642	1,450	1,329	1,242	1,269	1,255	-1%	-24%
Unit cost per young man (mentoring)	4,883	5,855	6,025	5,635	5,434	3,982	-27%	-18%
Unit cost per young man (counselling)	777	778	652	690	790	896	13%	15%
Unit cost per counselling session	260	290	212	243	263	304	16%	17%
Unit cost PRIDE Program								
Unit cost per group	n/a	n/a	n/a	18,665	18,124	6,288	-65%	
Unit cost per attendee	n/a	n/a	n/a	4,148	2,266	471	-79%	
Unit cost Silence is Deadly campaign								
Unit cost per session	2,347	1,227	2,726	1,531	1,831	1,132	-38%	-52%
Unit cost per attendee	17	9	21	12	16	11	-28%	-34%

Future Outlook

In the coming 2019-2020 financial year, we are making significant investments into improving program outcomes and efficiency. These include:

- Purchase of a nine-seater van, trailer and camping equipment so we can take groups of young guys out into the bush for two or three day wilderness experiences; building connections and resilience, while also giving them a sense of adventure away from their screens;
- Development of a CRM system to manage and track all our clients and their interactions with Menslink, replacing our existing plethora of systems and spreadsheets that have outgrown their capacity; and
- Expansion of our premises, accommodating a further four counselling rooms including a larger facility able to be used for families (for both counselling and mentoring programs).

We are very grateful to the Boorer and John James Foundations as well as Lennox Volkswagen who have helped fund these investments.



Cooling off at Summer Camp

In coming years we will continue to innovate and expand our programs to provide the best possible support to the young men of the Canberra region.

Our approach provides early support and services to young guys before issues in their lives become overwhelming or anti-social or problematic behaviours become entrenched.

We will continue to invest where we can to meet the growing demand from ACT schools, parents and the young guys themselves.

Conscious that our current funding agreements with both ACT Health and Community Services conclude in June 2020 and 2021 respectively, we are working with both Directorates to continue our funding into the future and provide increased capacity to meet demand and avoid more costly crisis interventions in the justice or acute mental health systems.

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 mentors, volunteers 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.



Mentor training out at Innabunya