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**EVERYTHING  
IS POSSIBLE**

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Men's Link Incorporated  
Annual Report 2013-14



## Chairman's Report – Peter Clarke

It is my pleasure to report on the performance of Menslink during the financial year that has just ended (1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014). The 2014 financial year was another year of growth for Menslink. As you will hear from the CEO, we increased the mentor training throughput, conducted an increasing number of *Silence is Deadly* presentations and employed a second counsellor. Funding and grant money also grew on the back of a very successful business breakfast at the start of the financial year. So, as you will see from the financial statements and the Treasurer's Report, we ended the year in good financial shape.

The board and management have also continued to improve governance and risk management, although we still have some work to do before we are fully satisfied with this aspect of our organisation.

We had a few changes to the board during the year.

Mackenzie Clare resigned on 28 February (as he foreshadowed at the last AGM) to take up full time employment with Menslink. Mac has been a highly valued member of the board whose experience in the sector and wise counsel have served us well. While we miss Mac at board level, we know he's making a terrific contribution on the ground with the counselling program and in assisting Martin on other Menslink issues.

Glenn Cullen agreed to step into Mac's position and he has been a valuable member of the board for the latter part of the year. Glenn's experience of Menslink and his wealth of knowledge in the sector have helped guide the board through its decisions. Glenn has indicated that he will not be standing for election at the AGM so we wish him well and feel sure that we'll see him continue his long association with Menslink.

Owing to the pressures of other work and almost constant travel away from the ACT, Phil Gouldson resigned on 6 July. He only served for twenty months but the board quickly came to recognise the common sense and no nonsense approach that always underpinned Phil's advice.

We were pleased to announce in June that His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Ret'd) agreed to be our Patron.

On behalf of all the members and our clients, I thank our committed band of volunteers who give so generously of their time to enable Menslink to do what it does so well. I also thank our sponsors and funding partners without whom we could not survive as an organisation, and others who support us by providing *pro bono* services: PWC for their audit function, Talk Affects for debriefing support and DLA Piper and Proximity for legal advice. Finally and on behalf of my fellow directors, I would like to thank our CEO 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.



**Board Summary:**

<b>Director’s Attendance at Board Meetings</b>	
<b>Director</b>	<b>Attended</b>
Peter Clarke (Chairman)	6
Jim Rice (Vice Chair)	6
Simon Wallace (Treasurer)	4
Jenny Henderson (Secretary)	7
Glenn Cullen (Board member)	1
Phil Gouldson (Board member)	2
Wendy Addison (Board member)	5
Martin Fisk (CEO non-voting)	5
Rolf Einhaus (as representative of CEO in his absence)	1

## Treasurer's Report – Simon Wallace

Menslink recorded a solid financial result in the 2013-14 financial year with a profit of \$1,539. An unqualified audit opinion has been provided from external auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Business activity has continued to grow in the current year with large increases to both revenue and expenses. This reflects greater activities and investment in Menslink undertaken during the financial year. The key areas of financial performance to note are:

- Higher revenues and program related expenses from the Silence is Deadly program;
- Increased revenue mainly from increased corporate sponsorship and donations; and
- Increase in employee expenses which reflects an additional counsellor, higher annual leave provision and staff development;

Retained earnings increased by \$1,539 to \$84,185 which reflects profit for the current year.

Liquidity has decreased to \$111,842 (from \$131,904) mainly due to incurring grants expenditure which was received in the prior year. This has resulted in a decrease in unexpended grant funds. Menslink is in a strong financial position to meet its debts with a current ratio of 2.5.

Attached to this report are the audited financial statements.

## CEO Report – Martin Fisk

The 2013-14 financial year saw steady growth in our major programs, as well as some investments in supporting infrastructure and systems to support the safety and wellbeing of our young men, their families, our staff and volunteers.

This year we also embedded the *Silence is Deadly* educational campaign into our operations, after a successful introduction in secondary schools last financial year.

In summary this year, we have:

- Increased the number of young men supported through mentoring and counselling by between 10 and 25% respectively;
- Increased the number of outreach counselling locations we serve – from five to six schools, as well as the Alexander Maconochie Centre;
- Took the *Silence is Deadly* educational campaign to nearly seven thousand male secondary school students across thirty nine schools in the region;
- Further invested in IT and office improvements to accommodate our expanding team and reduce operating costs; and
- Significantly increased our public awareness and fundraising campaigns so that even more Canberrans are aware of the work we do and the support we provide young men.

We are now in an excellent position to support more young men to a higher standard than ever before; helping them to make the right choices in their lives, enhance much-needed social skills and avoid the many negative outcomes that can befall them in today's world.

During the year, we were also delighted that the Governor-General His Excellency General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd) accepted our request to become our patron.

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

### Program Delivery for Young Men:

#### *Mentoring*

This financial year forty seven (47) mentoring relationships were maintained and actively case-managed by the team, up from forty two the previous year. This was predominantly due to higher retention rates during the year, reflecting improved case management processes which provide early-warning to staff in the event of mentoring relationship difficulties.

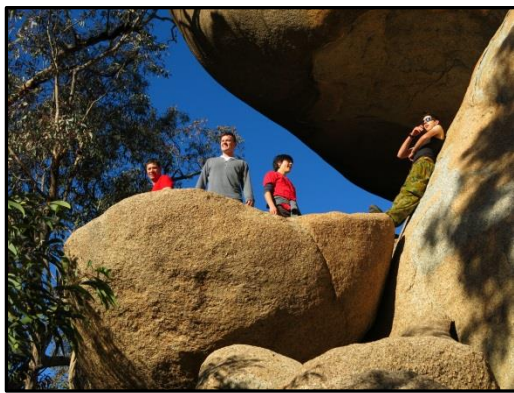
Both winter and summer camps were well-attended with between 35 and 50 attendees and held at Birrigai and Camp Longbeach respectively. We were unfortunately unable to

*"I feel thankful for my son's mentor and their friendship every day. I think his mentor's personal skill as a mentor was immense and I just wanted you to know that whatever balance he found between giving advice or just leaving things alone, it was perfect. I was able to let the mentor know if I was worrying, and I always trusted he would know whether to say anything or not to my son. Just knowing that his mentor was there, aware and supportive was a tremendous help to me as well as my son."*

**Sue, single mother of current mentee**

get a speaker for our winter camp, but cricketer and businessman Cade Brown enthralled the young men in December, telling them he had missed his first game of grade cricket ever to talk to them about overcoming adversity and life's challenges.

In addition to the camps, we continued to improve the variety and structure of our monthly Linkup activities. Linkups are very important facets in building the sense of community for both young and older men, and providing group activities that get young men together. This year, Linkups included movie nights, trivia nights, a car-maintenance workshop, a games night, BBQ's, The Amazing Race, a cartooning workshop, ten-pin bowling, the ADFA Over-water Obstacle Course and Laser-Tag. These activities gave both our young guys and their mentors the opportunity to engage in quality bonding time while having a bit of fun along the way. The Link-ups are also a great opportunity for marginalised young men to socialise with peers in a safe, non-school environment.



*Bushwalking at Birrigai on our winter camp*

Throughout the year, we overhauled our training manuals and procedures, with a greater focus on addressing the national youth mentoring benchmarks, as well as bringing in material from other successful programs. With regards to our mentor training we have moved away from the rock & water system used in years gone by towards a more practical-based approach.

This approach has been very well received by new mentors. Importantly, our mentor training now includes specific modules to help mentors deal with specific groups of young men, such as young men on the autism spectrum, young men suffering mental health issues as well as young men from indigenous or culturally diverse backgrounds.

Also through the year, we reviewed and enhanced our youth protection policies and procedures. Safety is a critical aspect of what we do, and it is important that we review our practices regularly. We believe that our practices are of the highest possible standard, while still allowing young men to experience a normal, trusting one:one relationship with their adult mentor. We presented these policies to the Australian Youth Mentoring Network biannual conference in June, where they were well received by the international audience. We are committed to a continual review and enhancement process of these (and our other policies and procedures) to ensure they are the best they possibly can be.

### *Counselling*

The counselling program delivered 394 hours of individual counselling to 151 young men and their families, compared with 366 hours and 120 young men in the previous year. This slight increase of nearly 8% in counselling hours corresponded to a decision we took in January 2014 to bring on a second part-time counsellor, increasing available hours by some 20%.

With two counsellors on the team, we were also able to expand our outreach program and, by the end of the financial year, were able to provide counselling in six schools around Canberra, up from five the previous year.

The school outreach program is a critical part of our counselling approach – it enables us to see young men in a location that suits them: most students find it difficult to get to our offices, particularly if their parents are reluctant to have them receive counselling in the first place.

Of course we continue to provide weekly counselling sessions to young detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre, with the emphasis on assisting them to cope with life upon their release, helping them to not re-offend and thereby stay out of detention.

### *Silence is Deadly campaign*

In 2013, we completed the school year with the Canberra Raiders assisting us in taking the campaign to a further 5,000 male students across twenty seven (27) schools. The first half of the 2014 school year saw us partner with the Brumbies to deliver seventeen sessions to twelve (12) schools and around 1,800 students.

At the end of the 2013 school year, we conducted a formal survey of schools participating in the program (both public and private) and received very positive feedback. Key results from the schools surveyed showed that:

- The average increase in male students seeking help in each school was 133%, with some schools reporting a more than five-fold increase in help-seeking behaviour;
- Approximately 300 extra students sought help over the year – young men who previously may have suffered in silence, with subsequent consequences for themselves, their schooling, their families and the community;
- 93% of schools thought the campaign had a significant or moderate improvement on attitudes of male students towards counselling, with over 80% stating students would be more likely or far more likely to seek help for themselves or a friend.

Importantly, over 92% of schools who participated in the 2014 campaign requested additional sessions in 2015, with an additional five schools asking us to present sessions this year for the first time.

*“Menslink has allowed our students an opportunity to link with a strong male advisor, to seek support in an open and inclusive environment, and as a result, to reconnect to school and learning. [The Menslink counsellor] has the ability to advocate for students and support them in a holistic manner. Many of our student population would have been lost without him, and his support, this year.”*

**Rebecca Owen, Melrose High**

*“The Menslink counsellor has become a vital cog in our student support team. This service has had a major positive impact on our students and the boys have been able to adopt very successful strategies and coping mechanisms to allow them to tackle their day to day challenges.”*

**Gary Rolfe, UC High Kaleen**





*Brumbies Senior Player Clyde Rathbone talks at the Silence is Deadly Launch at Melba High School*

With our agreement with the Raiders ceasing at the end of the 2013 season, we were pleased to then enter into an agreement with Brumbies Rugby where their club and players would support the 2014 campaign. The agreement with the Brumbies continues through to the end of 2015.

Federal and Territory funding for the Silence is Deadly campaign ceased in 2013. We were very pleased to receive significant funding support for the 2014 campaign from partners ACT Policing and the Snow Foundation.

### **Advocacy and Community Awareness**

In addition to our *Silence is Deadly* campaign, Menslink reached out to more people in our community than ever before; advocating on behalf of young men, recruiting volunteers, reaching out to families (especially single mums) and raising funds.

We actively promoted Menslink to young men, parents, schools, government, business and community groups. Through presentations, exhibitions and the media, we reached thousands of people who otherwise would never have heard of Menslink.

Importantly last year, we partnered with KPMG to deliver Australia's first economic costing of male suicide, which estimated the cost to the Australian economy of male suicide at \$1.482 billion in 2012, or \$21 million in the ACT alone. This extensive report, developed on a pro bono basis by KPMG Australia, added to the research available to suicide prevention campaigners nationally, and was an important contribution to that field.

Our business breakfast in August each year continued to expand, with approximately 290 attendees gathering at the National Press Club, up from 220 in 2012.



*Senior Raiders player David Shillington addresses the 2013 Business Breakfast*

As mentioned previously, we welcomed significant support from both ACT Policing and the Snow Foundation, with ACT Rugby Veterans, bankmecu, Brumbies Rugby, National Driving Academy and WIN Television joining Actew Water and Capital Chemist as major supporters of Menslink programs.

Other corporate supporters this financial year included the ACT Chamber of Commerce, ActewAGL, Canberra Raiders, Canberra Southern Cross Club, Clonakilla Wines, Cricket ACT, PWC, Ricoh, Thinkplace, Threesides Marketing and the Village Building Company.



This year, Menslink was fortunate enough to participate in two major fundraising and awareness events – the National Multicultural Festival in February and a Brumbies home match. Both events raised a substantial amount of money but perhaps more importantly, raised awareness amongst the community about important services we provide to young men and their families.



*MLA and volunteer mentor Chris Bourke addresses the May Midweek*

Throughout the year, we continued our successful *Midweek series* of informal talks by high-profile Canberran men. The financial year included talks by a range of Federal and local politicians, current and former professional athletes, senior public servants and business people. The *Midweekers* attracted between thirty and a hundred attendees and provided a way for us to engage with the local community while also promoting the work we do.

During the year, Menslink continued to engage with the community sector and government, including organising the annual men's suicide prevention conference in June, together with ACT Health, ACT Policing, Lifeline, Marymead, the Mental Health Community Coalition, Ozhelp and Supportlink. This year marked the last conference in this series, with planning now underway on the best ways we can together support men's mental health and suicide prevention in our local community.

## **Operations and Governance**

To accommodate our expanded counselling team, Menslink made some structural changes to our downstairs area, reducing the size of the counselling room and converting the lobby area to an office for our two counsellors.

We also made some changes to our IT systems this year; purchasing re-furnished desktop computers to reduce annual leasing costs associated with our previous computers. We also migrated our website and email accounts across to Google Apps, again reducing ongoing costs and increasing security.

We also updated our Policy and Procedures manual, adding a drug and alcohol policy and creating a new section to cover policies governing our *Silence is Deadly* program. A specific Client Abuse Protection section was also added as previously mentioned.

## **Staffing**

In January this year, we increased capacity in our counselling program by welcoming Rolf Einhaus to the team. Not only did this provide additional capacity to the program, but consolidated a stronger team environment for the counselling program, which provides a higher quality service and more options for clients and their families.

During the year both Finn Liddy, our previous counsellor, and Rob Regent, who worked with Ben in our mentoring program, both left us for bigger and better things; Finn moved down to

Bateman's Bay with his family while Rob became the ACT State Manager for the Special Olympics, where he had volunteered for many years. We wish them both the very best in their careers and locations.

Mackenzie Clare formally resigned from the Board during 2014 in order to take up the permanent position of Counselling Program Manager. His experience and wisdom have been a real asset both to the Counselling Program and Menslink more broadly.

Volunteer Shane Horsburgh also joined the staff as a casual presenter for our *Silence is Deadly* sessions in 2014. During this time, he continued as a mentor in a volunteer capacity.

We again invested significantly in staff development, increasing expenditure from \$7.5K to \$12.5K year on year as our staff and workload complexity increased.

### Volunteers

This year our volunteering team got stronger. Forty seven mentors were active at the end of the financial year, providing invaluable guidance and time to the young men we serve.

A number of experienced mentors also stepped up, providing additional resources for training and guiding new volunteers, as well as undertaking a number of speaking engagements for us to promote our service.

Apart from mentoring, volunteers also assisted us raise funds, promote our service, helped out in the office and spoke to school groups as part of our *Silence is Deadly* campaign.

*"What I did not expect by joining Menslink was the personal satisfaction I received out of being a mentor, nor the kinship I've found through being associated with a bunch of guys who have a common purpose in doing good for others. I have gained friends who have supported me through difficult times, some of whom will be lifelong friends. I will also remain a lifelong supported of Menslink and the work it does in the local community"*

**Michael, current mentor**



*Menslink volunteers at this year's National Multi Cultural Festival*

## Future Outlook

Menslink now supports young men across our region in three ways:

- Encouraging them to speak up and get help, or to encourage their mates to get help, through one-off educational sessions in schools and other community groups;
- Providing intensive but short-term counselling to help them get through stressful life events with the least amount of harm to themselves or those around them; and
- Longer term mentoring support from positive male role models, especially for young men who are socially isolated or for the 21-24% of all male teenagers who no longer live with their father.

In this coming year (2014-15), we want to build on our strengthening foundations and further expand our services to young men. In particular, we will seek to:

- Continue a re-invigorated *Silence is Deadly* program in schools and community groups throughout 2014, 2015 and beyond;
- Consolidate our funding so that we can continue to provide counselling at (now) ten schools and in the AMC, as well as Menslink's own offices
- Extend our mentoring program by leveraging our experienced mentors to increase our annual intake to over thirty (ie 50-60 young men being mentored at any given time);
- Continue to campaign and advocate actively to our community on behalf of young men.

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