

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Arthritis
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

emerge
act

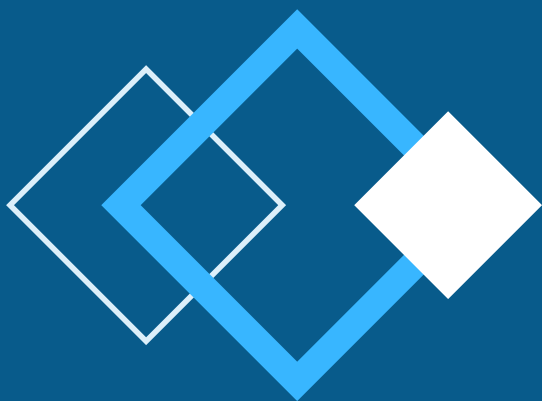
Pain Support
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the Annual Report for Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT. We are proud of the work we do in the community, supporting a wide range of people who are affected by chronic pain and/or debilitating fatigue.

Our Board, staff, and members work tirelessly together to ensure that people living with these conditions are neither invisible nor alone. Whilst our programs are individually tailored, they all contribute to ensuring people feel seen, nurtured and cared for. In a world dominated by always 'succeeding', we focus on understanding, making the most of every day and each other, walking alongside those having a hard time, and paying it forward.

We welcome your perusal of this report, and more importantly, if you are not yet connected to our services, we invite you to come and meet us and see how we could assist you.

Rebecca Davey
CEO



From the Chair

We have finally seen a bit more stability return into the world of non-government organisations and small business during 2024-2025. Whilst the cost of living continues to impact our members and in turn, the services that we operate to support the community, there seems to be consistency in approaches than in the last five years. We continue to see ever increasing members of the community who are needing support but have no means of meeting the costs of the care they require. But we are also seeing a community that is learning to prioritise and adjust to a new norm.

As a registered charity we remain vigilant to ensure our services not only meet the needs of our community, but they remain at cost price for those with no other supports, and that we provide as many no-cost options as we can.

At the time of writing this report our hydrotherapy program has moved into a new, and much waited for, era with the purpose-built South Canberra hydrotherapy pool finally opening. Whilst this report strictly relates to events of the 2024-2025 financial year, it is worth noting this milestone again after more than a decade of advocacy by our community to ensure this facility came to fruition. We will now be able to provide certainty of this program in the southern area of Canberra whilst being able to concentrate more on the need for further facilities across our great city.

You will also note this year for a number of reasons we changed our nomenclature to Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT. We do not want to diminish the work and the advocacy our members living with ME/CFS have undertaken over the past 40 plus years, however, we are seeing more and more people coming to us with Long COVID and other forms of debilitating fatigue. We also have a close relationship with Emerge Australia who are generally viewed as the Peak Consumer Body for ME/CFS and Long COVID and the change of name also reflects the understanding of this within the community.

This year we are presenting the outcomes against our strategic plan as part of this annual report. Our Board are members of our Foundation, and whilst our job is to set the strategic plan in consultation with our staff members, we also believe we should let you know how we are tracking.

A big thank you to our Board, all of whom volunteer to provide support to our wonderful Foundation, our hard-working staff, volunteers and of course to each and every one of our members who help us to be who we are.



OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Statement of purpose

To provide practical supports to those living with musculoskeletal issues, chronic pain and/or debilitating fatigue in the ACT and region to improve their wellbeing

Vision

People can live well despite having musculoskeletal issues, chronic pain and/or a debilitating fatigue condition.

Mission

To help people living with musculoskeletal issues, chronic pain and/or debilitating fatigue conditions.

Our Values

These guiding values govern how Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT pursues its mission:

Compassion - we believe our clients when they tell us they have these conditions

Caring - in how we deal with individuals

Respect - for the person living with the condition and the way they choose to manage their lives.

Inclusive - in providing community members with the opportunity to be involved and influence no matter their background



STRATEGIC PLAN

ANNUAL REVIEW

After years of being in survival mode, this year we returned to a more 'normal' feeling year and have been able to place more emphasis on our strategic direction. As a result we are providing more information in our annual report on the outcomes of our strategic directions. As CEO of Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT, I am proud to share the following key developments and reflections:

Governance

Our Board are all engaged members of the Foundation, representing all focus areas of our community. It's role is to provide strategic oversight, ensuring our mission, vision and values are upheld while guiding long-term direction. It establishes policies, monitors performance and ensures compliance with legal and ethical standards. Additionally, the Board holds management accountable for delivering results and safeguarding stakeholders' interests. Our Board members are all engaged in our programs in various ways and are service users, allowing them to have real, on the ground, understanding of our services and those who utilise them.

Community focus

This means we meet the needs of the community. The best part of being a part of a smaller non-government organisation is the ability to be able to make changes, put into place programs and meet needs without too many impediments. The main areas our strategic plan focuses on are responses as follows.

a. We increase the level of awareness of musculoskeletal health.

- We are funded to undertake education sessions in the community, to provide a website and provide information services. The reality is that we do this through.
- An advertising program that brings people to our services but also provides quality, scientifically proven information to assist people to make informed decisions about their musculoskeletal health.
- Providing informative emails to our membership numerous times each week, supporting their daily journey with their chronic health conditions whilst also providing links and tips for proactive ways to improve their musculoskeletal health.
- Providing education to allied health professionals, including university students, school students, as well as participating in various health based forums to increase the awareness of musculoskeletal health.
- Undertaking education sessions with community groups on a variety of topics that increase awareness of the importance of musculoskeletal health and chronic disease management.
- Marking specialist days in an annual calendar, including World Arthritis Day, World Osteoporosis Day, and the International Day of People Living with Disability.

b. We increase the level of awareness of living with chronic pain.

We do this through:

- marking National Pain Week (usually over a fortnight) with a range of educational talks that focus on the specifics of living with chronic pain conditions of any kind. This includes managing migraine, practical ways of treating and gaining relief from chronic pain, and managing the mental load of living with chronic pain
- undertaking an annual chronic pain self help program.

c. We increase the level of awareness of living with debilitating fatigue.

We do this through:

- undertaking a self help course that particularly focuses on the nuances of living with debilitating fatigue
- undertaking a focus month in May coinciding with World ME/CFS Day on 12 May, to increase the understanding in the community of the challenges of living with debilitating fatigue
- providing support to GP's and allied health professionals on the management and expectations of individuals who are living with debilitating fatigue.

d. We provide relevant services that meet the needs of service users.

We do this through:

- offering a lower cost allied health service that offers real, individualised support to members of the community living with chronic pain, debilitating fatigue and/or musculoskeletal issues
- providing support to people trying to navigate the NDIS and DSP for ongoing support
- listening to our community and do our best to adapt our services to meet their needs.

Quality Programs and Services

We participate in accreditation processes to ensure our programs meet national standards.

We participate in external and internal research to review our programs and services and to assess the effectiveness of the programs we offer.

We annually review our internal programs and services to ensure consistency with scientific research.

All programs are developed and delivered by trained health care providers and recognised peers with lived experience.

Partnerships and stakeholder relationships

We work closely with our peak body and affiliate partners, including Arthritis Australia and state and territory affiliates, Emerge Australia, Pain Australia, Chronic Pain Australia, Healthy Bones Australia, and JAFA (Juvenile Arthritis Foundation Australia).

We work closely with education and research partners, including the University of Canberra, ANU, Osteoarthritis Research Group (USyd) and ANZMUSC. These collaborations include providing clinical placements for allied health students, providing lectures, participating in research including through reference groups, and through hosting research projects through our programs.

We work closely with Canberra Health Services, in particular the Rheumatology Services, providing support to clients and staff in navigating community supports and services.

Program Snapshot

The extensive list of programs that are hosted at Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT are clearly outlined on our website www.arthritis painsupportemergeact.org.au and we recommend this for your perusal. As a snapshot of what has been delivered over the year:

Hydrotherapy: Sessions hosted

UCH - 1525
Calvary John James - 683
Aqua Harmony - 466
Calwell Aquatic Achievers - 204
A total of 25,966 individual attendances

Allied Health Statistics

Number of individual clients:
2172 Exercise Physiology clients
860 Physiotherapy clients
These clients utilised:
8975 Exercise Physiology appointments
1034 Physiotherapy appointments
Which included:
Yoga - 246 attendances
Strength & Balance - 2750 attendances
Pilates - 1189 attendances
Tai Chi - 876 attendances
GLAD - 764 attendances
Open Gym - 1081 attendances
Zoom Exercise - 150 free classes via zoom

Art Therapy/Counselling

50 persons received mental health support utilising these modalities

Individual Client Support

1358 individual's received individualised no cost support
470 new clients accessed support services

Community Education

A total of 58 education seminars were held including GLAD education individual presentations to community groups
National Pain Week Symposium
ME/CFS Awareness Month
Specialist presentations

Supporting those with debilitating fatigue

318 individualised support instances
44 people completed the 9 week self help course

Occupational Therapy

493 support services delivered

Supporting those with Chronic Pain

51 individuals with Chronic Pain (not arthritis specific) were supported by our RN's and Art Therapist/Counsellor



Treasurer's Report

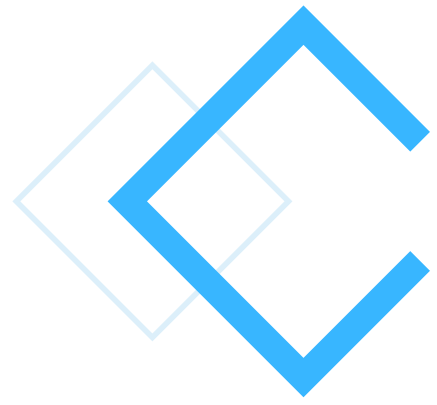
Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT is a not for profit organisation that provides low cost services. We continue to tread the fine line between reinvesting the money we earn into the services that help support those in our community who live with chronic pain and/or debilitating fatigue and ensuring financial sustainability to ensure that those services continue to be available.

This year has seen a stabilisation of our financial situation which allows us to continue to meet our strategic objectives, that is, meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable Canberrans. The staff of Arthritis, Pain Support & Emerge ACT and particularly the CEO, Rebecca Davey, are to be commended for their hard work and dedication, and Rebecca succeeded in securing sufficient additional funding to ensure the ongoing viability of the organisation. It must be noted that our fee for service suite of programs 'hold themselves' in terms of cost to the organisation. These programs are important as they offer a lower cost option for many in the community to access. In particular, exercise programs that assist them to remain active, healthy and socially connected. This has become our core business providing therapy programs that in turn allow our most vulnerable members of the community to remain in the community. It also has a real impact on reduction of hospital admissions, presentations to A&E, and dependence on pharmaceuticals. These are all outcomes we need to celebrate.

I would like to thank the regular donors to our organisation. The Shakespeare Family Trust has continued to support our community and these funds have a significant impact on the work we are able to do with people who cannot afford services. We'd also like to recognise the assistance the Snow Foundation has made directly to many of our clients on referral from our OT to access equipment they need to improve their quality of life. Thank you too, to the support of Nexis Accountants and to our Auditors Hardwickes for their assistance throughout the year.

I commend the annual financial reports to our membership.

Adam Cooper
Treasurer



Thank you

Thank you to the many supporters of our Foundation. In particular I'd like to thank Anna and Bob Earnshaw who are always there to support us when we need it. Anna continues to provide administration support and crucially this year has taken on supporting our craft group at Bruce. Anna we'd be lost without you.

To our donors, thank you so much for your generosity that allows us to help those who can't access the supports they need.

To Kevin Stone who has proofread every bit of our website (any existing mistakes are ours and not his!) and this report - thank you for understanding my inability to proof read!

To my amazing staff group - you are just the greatest bunch of human beings and you all help me to be a better person every day.

A special mention to the family of Helen Davies who passed away at the time of writing this report. Helen was a Board member and very active volunteer for many years until her health got the better of her. For many years Helen would deliver a large chunk of our community education on her own as a volunteer. The Foundation owes her a debt of gratitude. Personally, I thank her for persuading the Board to employ me - I hope I've done you justice Helen.

Finally to our Board who are made up of members of our Foundation. Thank you for being so good to work with. Boards can make or break a non-Government organisation. Every one of you bring us so much thought and expertise that we are what we are because of you.

Rebecca Davey - CEO