



**National Asthma Council Australia
Annual Report 2014/15**

Annual Report

Vision

The impact of asthma is minimised. This will happen when our community and stakeholders recognise the importance of asthma, its social, economic and health implications, and act on these.

Mission

As the lead national authority for asthma, we:

- set standards for asthma care by developing and disseminating the treatment guidelines
- educate a wide range of health professionals who treat people with asthma
- create and distribute best practice resources to people with asthma and their carers/family members
- continually improve asthma management in Australia through health promotion and advocacy to government

The National Asthma Council Australia (NAC), a not-for-profit organisation, is a collaboration of:

- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
- Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy

Corporate Goals

Our corporate goals are:

- to enhance clinical care by GPs, specialists, asthma educators, primary health care nurses and allied health professionals
- to optimise self-management by those with asthma and their carers/family members
- to continue the positioning of the NAC as a national leader on asthma management
- to assure the NAC's effectiveness and sustainability.

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Chairman's Message



I was honoured to be elected Chairman of the National Asthma Council Australia (NAC) at our Annual General Meeting in November last year. My predecessor, Assoc. Prof. Noela Whitby AM, retired after the maximum period of nine years on the Board allowable under the NAC Constitution. My fellow Directors all join me in thanking Noela for her excellent contribution to the NAC. It is not possible to list all the achievements made by the NAC under her wise leadership but the culminating event was the launch of the 7th edition of the treatment guidelines for asthma, the Australian Asthma Handbook, produced not for the first time as a website, but for the first time as an innovative stand-alone website with many state of the art interactive capabilities. With this, as with many other aspects of our work, Noela made sure we kept the interests of GPs and primary care first and foremost, the coalface of asthma treatment.

My own association with the NAC began many years ago with co-option to various working parties and consultation in my own areas of expertise. In 2013, I was honoured to be invited to be the first independent Director to join the Board after the Constitution was changed to enable the appointment of directors other than those representing our member bodies. This change reflected Noela's leadership in recognising the need to increase the skills base of the Board. Following directly in her footsteps, we saw the release early this year of Version 1.1 of the Australian Asthma Handbook. This version reflected the availability of new asthma medications and our wish to clarify some of the points made in Version 1.0. We have also released a new Quick Reference Guide for Version 1.1 in hard copy.

One of the most interesting matters to have been raised this year has been the opening of discussions with Asthma Australia about developing a closer working relationship with the potential for a future amalgamation. From my own experience in leading a substantial commercial merger, I know that such a major venture must be approached with careful deliberation, attention to due diligence, close consideration of governance issues, mutual respect and a clear focus on the benefit any such amalgamation would bring to people with asthma and the health professionals who treat them. Looking back some years, it is interesting to recall that, in 2003, an important part of my final message as President of the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand, was stating that Australia had too many respiratory organisations. I noted that each developed from real areas of need and were doing excellent work but, at the same time, had potential overlaps and duplication of function, not to mention the competition for funding. It is, therefore, very appropriate, in my new role as Chairman of the NAC to be revisiting this issue, albeit with an asthma focus. My fellow Directors and I are giving much thought to the need

to resolve these issues. We are determined to reach a sensible conclusion.

We were very pleased to receive funding from the Australian Government Department of Health to develop an up-to-date National Asthma Strategy. This will be the fifth one and we are pleased to be undertaking this in partnership with Asthma Australia. We will be drawing on all asthma groups and ensuring that the broader asthma community is consulted. A particularly productive workshop was held in May involving all major stakeholders as we prepared the public consultation draft. Later in 2015, the Strategy will commence the process for consideration and endorsement by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council in 2016.

Asthma continues to be a problem in Australia. Progress has been made in a number of important areas including reduced deaths, particularly in the young, fewer hospital admissions and fewer unnecessary GP attendances. However, recent studies show that many people with asthma still do not adhere to their important long term preventer medication, do not know how to use their inhalers and are over-dependent on reliever medication. The National Asthma Strategy, backed up by the Australian Asthma Handbook, will be an important guide to assist us to develop implementation plans and interventions to take asthma management to the next stage of advancement.

I should also like to report that we find ourselves in good financial health, thanks to prudent financial management and the support we gain from the pharmaceutical industry, our Sensitive Choice partners and the Australian Government Department of Health's program funding.

One of the great strengths in the not for profit field, in which the NAC operates, is the willingness and capacity of many people to volunteer their services for committees, provision of medical expertise and governance advice, and just being available to help. I would like to extend my personal and the NAC's thanks to our many volunteers – my fellow Directors, Finance Committee, GP Asthma Group, Pharmacists' Asthma Group, Product Advisory Panel, Guidelines Committee and the many experts who join our ad hoc Expert Panels to advise on resource production or course content.

Finally, but not least, I wish to thank our CEO, Kristine Whorlow, and her team for their excellent and dedicated support to the NAC and its work over the past twelve months. They are the silent achievers that make the NAC the outstanding organisation that it is today.



Dr Jonathan Burdon AM
MBBS, MD, M Hlth and Med Law, FRACP, FCCP,
FACLM, FAICD
Chairman

Chief Executive Officer's Message



The core business of the NAC is producing the Australian Asthma Handbook, the national treatment guidelines for asthma which we have been doing since 1990. In March 2015, we produced Version 1.1 which reflected a new asthma medicine on the market and minor adjustments in response to reader

feedback since the launch of the Handbook twelve months earlier. This was accompanied by national distribution of the Quick Reference Guide Version 1.1 to primary care health professionals. Having the Handbook as a website may create the impression that it is therefore easier to update the guidelines. In reality, that is only true for the simplest corrections. Any changes made have to be consistent throughout the Handbook, and we have to make sure that the Handbook is not updated too often in case it seems inconsistent to users. We are developing a flexible policy for updates, planning to update different sections each time a new major version is produced along with including new evidence and new medicines.

Guideline implementation is an ongoing challenge and our Asthma Best Practice Program, funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, enables us to conduct our asthma and spirometry workshops across Australia, largely conducted through Medicare Locals. With each revision of the Handbook, all materials are revised and our over one hundred presenters briefed. With this program and the many workshops we conduct at primary care health professional conferences, we aim to implement the guidelines, an ongoing and very busy part of our work. Demand for workshops is high and evaluation indicates consistently good results. This primary care education program is an essential active element of our work, a major and necessary ongoing strategy for guideline implementation.

The NAC has worked actively with the media since its inception in the late 1980s. In 1998, we created the Asthma Media Awards, now acknowledging and rewarding excellence in asthma and allergy journalism and to encourage responsible reporting of these issues. In 2014, we included a category for social media. There was a wide range of entries covering all categories. Asthma has had so much good and informative coverage over the years that

we are delighted to be able to acknowledge and support good journalism.

Over the past year we have continued to maintain the asthma media presence. A major and unexpected media event was the surprise and welcome announcement in October, at the Parliamentary Friends of Asthma function, by the Minister for Health, of funding to enable us to develop the National Asthma Strategy 2016-20 which we are doing in partnership with Asthma Australia.

We continued to distribute regular media releases on a wide range of topics of interest to the general, medical and regional media, and media monitoring showed good coverage rates. We also maintain the NAC as a repository of experts so that we can respond promptly to any breaking asthma stories or asthma research. We thank the busy health professionals around Australia who are always ready to respond on our behalf.

Like nearly all organisations, we increasingly are involved in social media and now have Facebook, twitter and Google + accounts for the NAC and for our Sensitive Choice program. We have sought some excellent strategic advice on our presence which we balance with the amount of time such social media presence requires. An interesting new area started was our asthma blog, which involves regular posts from our own communications team and occasional external bloggers and links back to the information on our website.

The NAC had decided it wanted to invest in asthma research so when the opportunity arose, the NAC was very pleased to be able to invest in the Thoracic Society's Asthma and Airways Career Development Fellowship, which was offered for the second time in 2015. It is a small way to recognize the many researchers who generously share their research with the NAC and act as spokespeople.

I would like to thank the NAC's Board, staff, committees and the many dedicated health professionals, always willing to assist the asthma cause.

Kristine Whorlow
Chief Executive Officer

Special Feature



Media Awards

The NAC honoured leading journalists and acknowledged the significant role the Australian media play in asthma and allergy education at the presentation of the 2014 Excellence in Asthma and Allergy Reporting Awards on 4 September in Melbourne during National Asthma Week.

The Awards were created in 1998 to acknowledge and reward excellence in asthma journalism, and to encourage responsible reporting of issues relating to asthma treatment, management and education.

Now 16 years later, the Awards' scope has been expanded to acknowledge excellence in allergy reporting and, for the first time, to include an award for the best piece in social media. The Awards attracted a wide range of entries across categories in traditional, social and broadcast media.

The top award this year was given to Sean Parnell, Health Editor at The Australian for his article, 'Breathing Easy – a smarter way to treat asthma.' The piece demonstrated how those with asthma, and their family members, are being empowered to effectively manage the condition through education and up-to-date asthma action plans, to enable a happy and active life with asthma.



Category winners were:

- Overall Winner – Sean Parnell for his article, 'Breathing Easy' published in *The Australian*
- Best Print Article – Sean Parnell for his article, 'Breathing Easy' published in *The Australian*
- Best Television Segment – Emily Rice for her story, 'Dust might', aired on Nine News Melbourne
- Best Radio Segment – Mechelle Wilson for her segment, 'Asthma Awareness for the Aboriginal Community', aired on 100.9 FM Noongar Radio
- Best Health Industry Piece – Leanne Philpott for her article, 'Breathe Easy', published in *Post Script* magazine for pharmacy assistants
- Best Social Media Piece – Zoe Perl for her blog, 'Is asthma stopping you from exercising?', on Australia Wide First Aid



Sean Parnell, Zoe Perl, Emily Rice, Mechelle Wilson, Leanne Philpott

Special commendations were also awarded to the following journalists:

- Print article – Louise Williams for her article 'Just one bite: ticks and allergies', published in the *Sydney Morning Herald*
- Radio segment – James Valentine & Laura McAuliffe for their segment 'World Asthma Day' aired on ABC Radio Sydney; and Neil Campbell & Tim Bennett for their segment 'World Asthma Day' aired on 2WEB Outback Radio
- Television segment – Karen O'Sullivan for her story, 'Allergy vaccine hope', aired on Channel 7 News

The gala dinner was a great success with more than 60 journalists, supporters and stakeholders joining the NAC Board and staff at the event.

Much positive feedback was received regarding our good work with the media, how well the event was run as well as first-rate remarks regarding our MC, Emmy Award-winning NBC journalist Sara James.



MC Sarah James

We were fortunate to have the following members comprise the Judging Panel, who generously gave their time and expertise:

- Mr Rob Anderson, founding Sensitive Choice partner with his company Pool & Spa Poppits
- Mr Simon Appel OAM, pharmacist and NAC Pharmacists Asthma Group member
- Dr Jonathan Burdon AM, respiratory physician and NAC Chairman
- A/Prof Ian Charlton, general practitioner and NAC GP Asthma Group member
- Ms Kathy Hope, person with asthma and former nurse (and former NAC communications project manager)
- A/Prof Sheryl van Nunen, allergist
- Dr Joanna Wriedt, lawyer and NAC director



Members of the Judging Panel

Some of the award winners and finalists have explored further asthma stories with the NAC. The winner of the new social media category, Zoe Perl, has published several asthma articles on her blog and is providing regular guest contributions on the new NAC blog.



Ongoing Activities



Asthma & Respiratory Education Program

Our Asthma Best Practice for Health Professionals program, now in its fourth iteration, provides education and training for primary healthcare practitioners to increase best-practice management of asthma and linked chronic respiratory conditions. The program is part of the Department of Health's wider Asthma Management Program, funded by the Department of Health from July 2013 to June 2016.

The program continued to be in high demand throughout Australia. The workshops were primarily hosted by Medicare Locals with requests from other primary health care organisations received on occasion. Following the Australian Asthma Handbook v1.1 update early in 2015, all presentations were modified in line with the new recommendations. Presenters received regular newsletters informing them of updates and other aspects of the program. We sincerely thank the team of expert presenters for their enthusiasm and commitment to the program.

"I had no idea I was going to learn so much, I was very impressed with all the information and extra material provided. I will definitely recommend this to other colleagues and friends"

Nurse, Vic

Workshop types

The program offers seven workshop types, delivered face-to-face by our team of experienced health professional presenters using standardised material adapted for local needs.

Primary Care Asthma Update (2hrs) – best-practice essentials for all primary care health professionals

Asthma & Respiratory Management Seminar for Practice Nurses (6hrs) – role-specific education for practice nurses, now with an optional extra module on nurse-led clinics

Spirometry Training Course (6 hrs) – comprehensive, hands-on spirometry training for GPs and practice nurses

Spirometry Training Update (2.5hrs) – refresher spirometry training for previously trained GPs and practice nurses

Asthma and Spirometry Update for Aboriginal Health Workers and Practitioners (4 hrs) – role-specific education for Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal health practitioners

Asthma Update for Pharmacists (2.5 hrs) – an overview of best-practice asthma management tailored for pharmacists, including a practical session on device use

Practitioner Asthma Communication and Education (PACE) (6 hrs) – an interactive seminar for general practitioners on effective communication and management of asthma patients.

“I enjoyed the practical approach of the course. Overall the course was very informative”

GP, TAS

Implementation update

The schedule of training activities were rolled-out as planned, hosted by Medical Locals, some primary health care providers, peak professional bodies and Aboriginal Medical/Health Services.

From July 2014 to the end of June 2015 the NAC trained in excess of 2000 health professionals in 144 workshops, with more than 50% of the workshops being conducted in rural and remote areas. These figures are in line with achieving the required targets.

“Excellent workshop. Should be presented to all pharmacists to provide an update and refresh skills”

Pharmacist, NSW

Going forward, the NAC will continue to promote close working relationships with the newly formed Primary Health Networks and other primary health care providers, following the closure of the Medicare Locals at the end of June 2015, ensuring delivery targets for each workshop are met.

Professional development recognition

Our workshops have received professional development recognition from a range of relevant professional associations including:

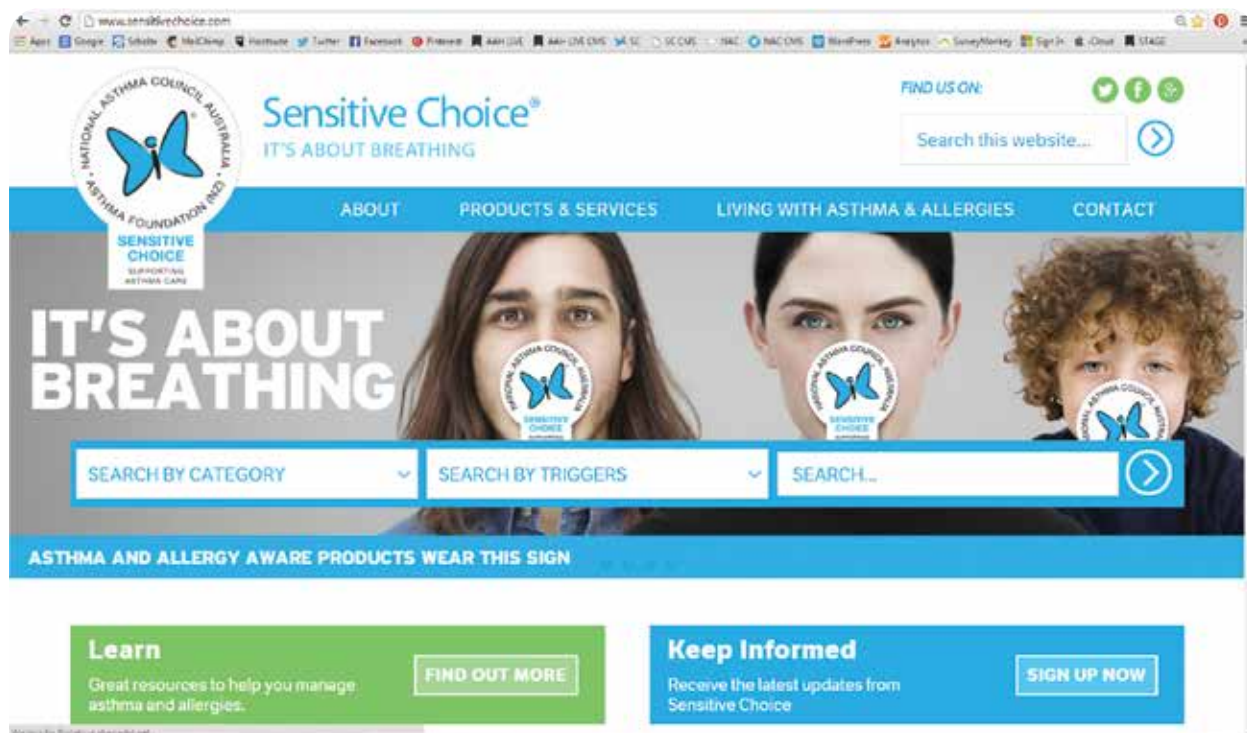
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine
- Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- Australian College of Nursing
- Australian Pharmacy Council (via the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia)

“What an excellent education package. Participant resources were brilliant and presenters were very knowledgeable”

Host, NSW



Marg Gordon (left) and Judi Wicking presenting to participants at a workshop in Alice Springs



Sensitive Choice

The Sensitive Choice program continues to be a useful source of information for consumers with asthma and allergies interested in products that may be a better choice, as well as an important source of funds for the NAC.

The program allows partners to use the Sensitive Choice logo on products and services that have been assessed by our independent Product Advisory Panel as being potentially better for people with asthma and allergies.

Partners pay a licence fee and assist with communicating asthma and allergy messages to consumers.

We are most grateful to the members of the Panel, who freely give their time and expertise.

Sensitive Choice revenue reflects business conditions, with difficult conditions flowing through to partners cutting marketing expenditure. This has been the trend for recent years, somewhat off-set by the acquisition of some new partners. Over the year, revenue has remained fairly stable.

We continue to partner with the Asthma Foundation in New Zealand and appreciate their support for the program.

We also acknowledge the support of our partners, a number of whom have been with the program since its inception.

Campaign launch

The information campaign "It's about breathing" was launched in September 2014 aiming to increase consumer awareness of the Program and the hundreds of household products and services available that could make life easier for the 2.3 million Australians with asthma, and the one-in-three who suffers from allergies. The campaign exposure included television community service announcements and advertising outdoors and on public transport.

TV

Kristine Whorlow, CEO and Siobhan Brophy, Communications Manager took part in a panel discussion in August 2014 on the TV program 'Look at Property', offering viewers the opportunity to learn about the Sensitive Choice program and partners' products and services. Adam Trumble, Partnerships Manager, also shared information about the program which aired separately.

Archicentre, building design and inspection experts, interviewed Kristine Whorlow in July 2014 about ways to make your home asthma and allergy friendly with the Sensitive Choice program's range of products and services.

Healthy Homes TV featured program partner Hydroxypure's chlorine-free pool sanitisation in March 2015. Also, Kristine Whorlow was interviewed in January 2015 in a segment highlighting asthma triggers in the home and featuring program partner *Plush* sofas and its Breatheclear treatment technology.



Kristine Whorlow chats to host Walt Collins of 'Healthy Homes TV'

Partner forum

Held in Sydney in October 2014, the Forum was an excellent opportunity for Partners to network, share campaign details and discuss joint marketing initiatives. The delegation heard from guest speaker Gary McCloud of ValvelQ3 who gave a round-up of the new 'It's about breathing' campaign. Alison Sainsbury, digital communications specialist from CSR Bradford shared her expert knowledge on successful social media and Assoc. Professor Sheryl van Nunan helped all to better understand the nature of allergies in Australia.

TOA Paint Thailand

TOA Paint joined as the Program's first international partner beyond Australia and New Zealand. They conducted a media launch in September 2014 in Bangkok and invited Chairman Dr Jonathan Burdon AM to present some asthma statistics. The event was attended by a large media presence with the launch being followed by TV commercials.

Website

A brand new Sensitive Choice website (sensitivechoice.com) was launched in September 2014, not only refreshing the site's appearance in line with the new 'It's about breathing' campaign, but also optimising it for mobile use and simplifying the site's navigation.

As the primary communications tool for the program, significant time was invested in optimising the site's content and how it interacts with search engines and our burgeoning social media presences.

The improvements were focussed on educating users to think more about their allergy triggers and encourage them to explore the site based on their trigger rather than with a specific product or service in mind.

We continued to closely monitor visitors' reach and interaction with the new site, taking into account the expected dip in traffic that often follows a redevelopment. Analysis of usage since the launch highlighted a 15% increase in the average number of pages being viewed and a 40% increase in average session duration, indicating stronger engagement with the site's content, the primary aim of the redevelopment.

Websites and apps

NAC website

The NAC website (nationalasthma.org.au) continued to provide reliable, useful information for people with asthma and health professionals, both in Australia and overseas. We had over 300,000 unique users to the site from more than 220 countries around the world over this period, an increase of 30% compared with last year. Even though our flagship publication, the Australian Asthma Handbook, has moved to its own website the popularity of the website and other resources continues to grow steadily. The most popular pages were still the asthma action plan library (which have been translated into 5 community languages), the first aid for asthma chart and the How-To videos showing correct inhaler technique.

Mobile technology

The increase in the number of people accessing online information via mobile devices including phones and tablets was evident across both the NAC and Handbook websites. The drop in desktop users was replaced with an equivalent increase in mobile users (which continued to grow each month) resulting in increased focus on the mobile optimisation of our websites.

Asthma Buddy

Asthma Buddy, our free asthma management app, is based on our latest evidence-based written asthma action plan template. The app provides an easy to use, take anywhere version of the patient's action plan and is available for download by iPhone and Android users.

The end of the financial year saw more than 6,000 downloads from 46 countries and territories around the world. Reviews of the app have been positive, with users finding it to be a useful asthma management tool.

"Great app for helping to manage your asthma – it's tricky to remember everything, especially when you have preventer and reliever meds. Also helps with what symptoms to look for. Haven't used emergency contact but this could be very handy too, especially for children."

Melinda

Kids with Asthma website

The Kids with Asthma website has been a valuable resource to parents of children with asthma. Drawing on that experience, the NAC began work on developing a new social hub for parents, with a view to it being launched in late 2015. The new online community will provide access to reliable, credible asthma information and resources as well as an opportunity for parents to interact with each other. It will include a new Kids and Parents area on the NAC website and Facebook presence.

e-Newsletters

We continued to distribute two email newsletters – one for people with asthma and the other for health professionals. Both mailing lists have experienced healthy growth, particularly in the health professionals list with a subscription form now added to the Australian Asthma Handbook website.

Considering how full the average inbox is these days, we are pleased this growth has been accompanied by ongoing interest in the newsletter content, shown by the significant number of people opening the email to read it in full and also the proportion clicking on links for related information.

Social media

An important focus for the NAC Communications team over 2014/15 has been enhancement of our six main ongoing social media presences.



Including Facebook, twitter and Google+ for both NAC and Sensitive Choice, each channel was managed in accordance with its respective audience and communication style. For example, the NAC twitter feed had a news focus targeting stakeholders (e.g. health journalists, Medicare Locals, health professional organisations) with our media releases, interesting studies from current journals and stories able to be linked-back to the Australian Asthma Handbook.

The main focus of the NAC Facebook page was on people with asthma, providing general asthma advice from our resources and media releases, plus sharing the latest research and interesting news stories. In contrast, the Sensitive Choice Facebook page had a more relaxed feel, with partner promotions and competitions with a greater emphasis on allergies alongside asthma.

While organic growth in social media engagement has been steady, more paid options figures explored at the end of the 2014/15 period were very promising and resulted in an overall engagement increase.

Asthma blog

The NAC asthma blog was launched early in April 2015 involving regular posts from the NAC team and occasional external bloggers. Weekly posts covered issues from 'being an asthma mum' to 'choosing the right doctor' and 'the trials of flying with a respiratory condition'.

Early signs indicated the asthma blog was achieving its objective of bridging the gap between our burgeoning social media presences and the array of content across our websites, an important step in educating our audiences as to where to find the content they need.

Media relations

Over the past year the NAC has continued to maintain a large share of voice in the media in asthma treatment and management.

The NAC's media work consisted of regular news releases on a range of topics of interest to the asthma community, including people with asthma and their carers, health professionals, patient support organisations and the health industry, as well as special initiatives such as the Excellence in Asthma and Allergy Reporting Awards.



Newsletter May 2015

A total of 16 news releases were issued throughout the reporting period. Especially pleasing was the coverage generated by our "Back to School" release around asthma management and the importance of an up-to-date asthma management plan.

The Media Awards were a highlight of the 2014/2015 media relations activities, attracting a record number of entries across categories. Through the Awards, the NAC honoured leading journalists and acknowledged the significant role that the Australian media plays in asthma education.

Our Chairman, CEO and other expert spokespersons were called upon regularly throughout the year to provide comment and perspective for a range of journalists reporting on asthma and allergy related issues and information. Two items with strong media interest during the year were the release of the 2014 Global Asthma Report, which found Australia's asthma rate to be one of the world's highest, and the release of an article in the Medical Journal Australia by Professor Peter van Asperen, co-chair of the Australian Asthma Handbook paediatric working group, concerning medication prescribing and protocols in relation to children with asthma.

Emphasis continued to be placed on gaining online coverage, given the popularity of health-related websites, news sites and blogs. Media relations activity included building stronger ties with key health journalists by following and engaging with them on twitter.

Australian Asthma Handbook version 1.1

Fulfilling its commitment to remain at the forefront of asthma guidance in Australia by becoming a more readily updated online resource, Version 1.1 of the Australian Asthma Handbook was published in April 2015, just one year after its initial launch.

Version 1.1 constituted a minor update of the Australian Asthma Handbook Version 1.0. The limited scope of the review took into account:

- addition of new asthma medicines to the PBS (fluticasone furoate/vilanterol; Breo Ellipta); and
- user feedback following publication of Version 1.0, including clarifications and corrections.

Development continued to be overseen by the Guidelines Committee with amendments to existing recommendations and the development of new recommendations being subjected to the same rigorous standards as the original version.

Building on the Handbook's ground-breaking online publication format, the update also included new website features such as a printable and tablet-friendly version of the complete Handbook and interactive flowchart figures

The Australian Asthma Handbook continues to be endorsed by:

- The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- The Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
- The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand

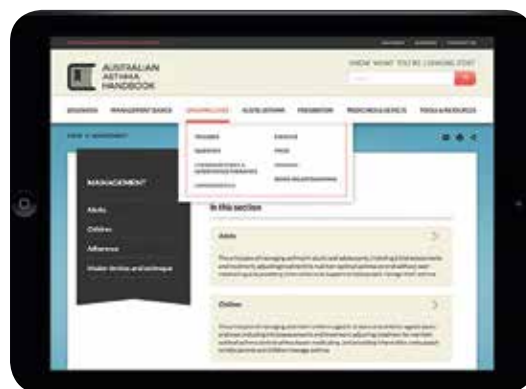
The NAC would like to acknowledge the support of the sponsors of Version 1.1 of the Handbook, Mundipharma Australia and Novartis Australia.

AIMIA awards 2014 finalist

The Handbook's innovative purpose-built website (www.asthmahandbook.org.au) was honoured in the 2014 Australian Interactive Media Industry Association (AIMIA) awards, the most prestigious awards in Australia's digital industry. It was one of only three finalists in the 'Best Website or Online Services – Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals' category. The ABC's Active Memory website was the eventual winner over the CSIRO and NAC.

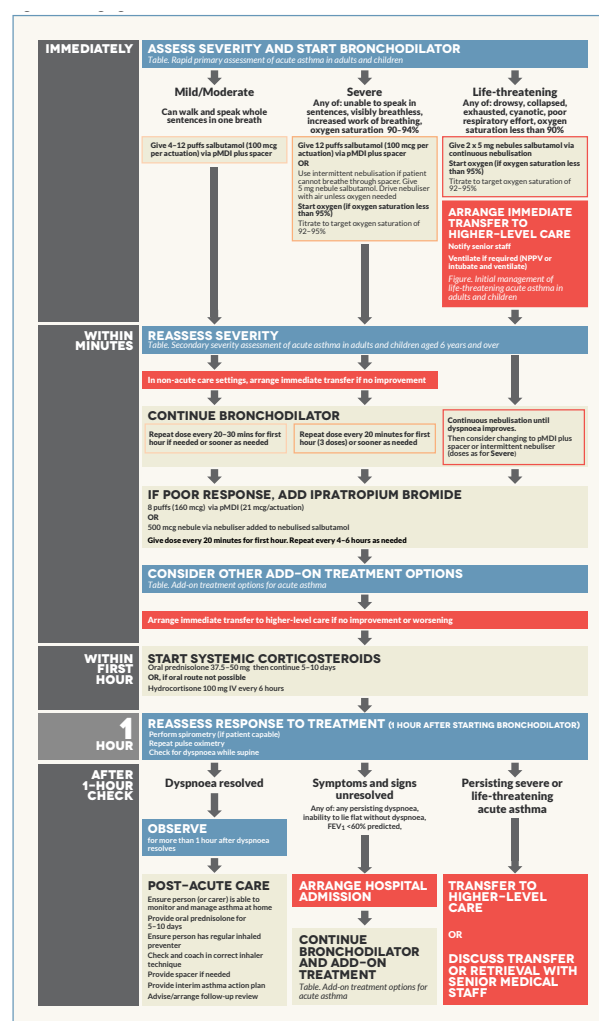


A stepped approach to adjusting asthma medication in adults



Website statistics

The Handbook attracted nearly 70,000 unique visitors from over 180 countries over this period. Nearly 40% of these visitors were returning visitors and spent, on average, more than five minutes on the site indicating strong and ongoing engagement with the site's content. The Quick Reference Guide remained popular, with more than 10,000 downloads of the PDF version (in addition to the 58,000 distributed in hard copy). The interactive key figures and tables continued to be the most popular pages.



Acute Management Flow Chart

Activity Highlights



Asthma awareness and advocacy

World Asthma Day

World Asthma Day fell on 5 May with the theme '*It's time to control asthma*'. Focussing on encouraging people to take a look at their asthma management, the NAC challenged those with asthma to consider questions like: How well is your asthma going? Have you become used to putting up with symptoms? Are you avoiding activities that may make you breathless? When was the last thorough review of your asthma with a GP?

The NAC also reinforced the view that you don't always need to be unwell to see your GP.

National Asthma Week

The national campaign '*Asthma: Take Control*' was run through the month of September and urged those affected by asthma to follow advice given by their healthcare professional to optimise their own health outcomes. On 2 September, celebrity ambassador with asthma and pop artist Kimbra performed and spoke about her asthma experience at Melbourne's Federation Square, which also featured a temporary art installation comprising giant inflatable lungs, calling for people to show a 'commitment' in improving their lung health. The campaign was developed in partnership with Asthma Australia and the NAC and sponsored by GSK.



Kimbra shows her 'commitment'

Mortality statistics

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released in March 2015 revealed that more than 57% of asthma deaths occurred in people aged 75 and over.

In total, 389 deaths were recorded in 2013, affecting 248 females and 141 males. Overall the asthma death toll dropped by five people, compared with 2012 data.

Our media messages encouraged women over 75 years to be vigilant as this data also found that women in this age group were two to three times more likely to die from asthma compared to their male counterparts.

NSW Child Death Review

Generating significant interest during this period was the NSW Ombudsman's Child Death Review Team's annual report. The report examined the deaths of 567 children registered in NSW in 2013.

The report also included a review of asthma deaths in children over a 10-year period. Over 2004–2013, 20 children died from asthma, with half dying between 2011–2013. For two-thirds of the children, the Team found there was scope to improve their asthma care.

The report garnered significant media interest, particularly in NSW. CEO Kristine Whorlow and staff member Natalie Bourne (mother of a child with asthma) appeared in a news item for Channel 10 that was screened nationally.

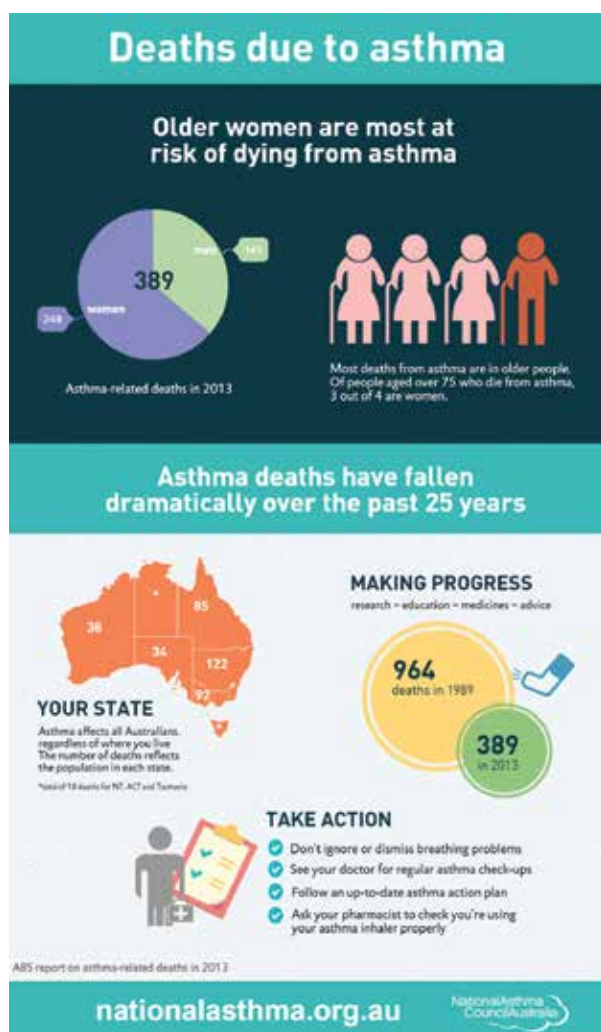
Parliamentary Friends of Asthma

Since we founded the Parliamentary Friends of Asthma in 1999, this bipartisan group has served as an excellent vehicle for Members and Senators of the Australian Parliament to stay informed about asthma in Australia.

In October 2014, we and Asthma Australia co-hosted a luncheon at Parliament House, Canberra, for some 100 Members of Parliament, Senators and their advisors as well as representatives of the NAC, Asthma Australia, NPS MedicineWise, the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia.

Co-convenors Mr Tony Passin MP and Ms Jill Hall MP spoke of the importance of addressing asthma effectively, while Associate Professor Mark Hurwitz, respiratory physician, gave an update on current treatment and statistics for asthma in Australia.

We were delighted that the then Minister for Health, the Hon. Peter Dutton MP, took the opportunity to announce funding of \$200,000 to the NAC for the development of a new National Asthma Strategy.



Left to right: Mr Mark Brooke, CEO Asthma Australia, Mr Tony Passin MP, PFOA Co-convenor, Ms Kristine Whorlow, CEO, NAC and the Hon. Peter Dutton MP, Minister for Health



Senator Catryna Bilyk, PFOA Co-convenor, Assoc. Prof. Noela Whitby AM Chairman, NAC, Mr Terry Evans, President, Asthma Australia

National Asthma Strategy

NATIONAL ASTHMA STRATEGY 2016-2020

We are pleased to be coordinating the development of the National Asthma Strategy 2016-2020, in partnership with Asthma Australia and with funding from the Australian Government Department of Health.

The Strategy is our national plan for reducing the impact of asthma on individuals, the community and the economy – taking Australia to the next stage of improvement in asthma health outcomes and research endeavours.

A wide range of people and organisations are involved in the consultation process, including people with asthma, key respiratory organisations, health professional bodies, other relevant organisations and the Federal, State and Territory Governments. The Asthma Foundations of each state and territory are involved individually as well as through their national coordinating body, Asthma Australia.

The principal Advisory Group consists of representatives of nine key stakeholder organisations.

Development of the Strategy is taking place throughout 2015. The process involves:

- Scoping work including audits of previous Australian and international strategies
- Preliminary stakeholder survey, open to all
- Development of draft strategy outline with the Advisory Group
- Targeted consultation with the wider stakeholder network using the outline as a basis
- Pulling together the consultation feedback to develop a draft strategy
- Public consultation on the draft strategy
- Fine-tuning and finalisation of the publication

A highlight of the process has been the Stakeholder Roundtable, held during the targeted consultation phase in May 2015. The Roundtable involved more than 40 people representing a range of organisations from across the health and respiratory spheres, with our Australian Government Department of Health sponsors also taking part. It was a very positive day, and we are grateful to all those who participated so openly and constructively in the discussions.

In late 2015, we will ask the Australian Government Minister of Health to present the final draft of the National Asthma Strategy to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council for endorsement, with a view to publication in 2016.

Health system reform

We play a leading role in advocacy for asthma, aiming to improve health outcomes through change at the system and policy level.

The Australian Government's current focus on review and reform within the health system has brought new opportunities for engagement in this area. We have participated in many briefings and consultation activities, highlighting the needs of people with asthma and the health professionals who treat them. We have been particularly interested in the Healthier Medicare review activities and look forward to seeing the outcomes in due course.

We are a key stakeholder organisation in the development of the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions. This Framework will provide the overarching national policy direction for the National Asthma Strategy.

Education resources

Asthma and COPD Medications Chart update

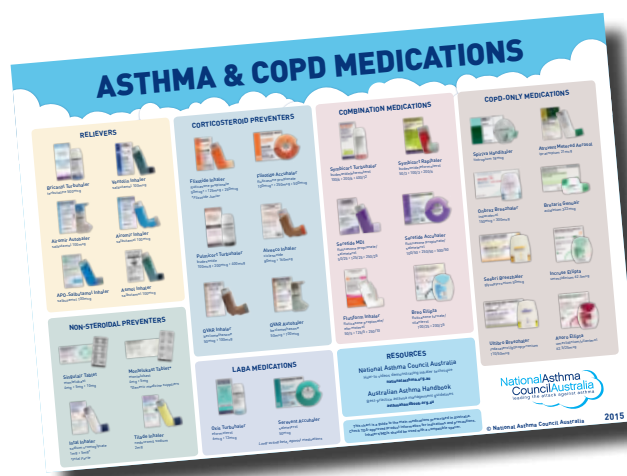
In March 2015 we published our updated Asthma and COPD Medications wall chart. This popular resource shows the main asthma and COPD medications available in Australia and is a handy education tool to help with identification and explanation of different treatments.

Over 100,000 printed copies of the wall chart have been distributed since it was first developed in 2005, along with more than 40,000 copies downloaded from our website.

The updated version reflects the recent developments in respiratory medicine, with almost one-third of the included medications having come onto the market within the past 2 years.

Within 3 months of the revised wall chart being published, more than 7,000 copies were downloaded from our website. There are currently 20,000 print copies also being distributed to general practitioners, pharmacies and other health professionals.

Publication of the revised wall chart was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Novartis.



Written Asthma Action Plan update

In June 2015 we made some minor amendments to our Written Asthma Action Plan, ensuring it aligned with the latest version of the Australian Asthma Handbook. Updating the plan included additional information about the use of adrenaline autoinjectors (e.g. EpiPen) in an acute asthma emergency. The asthma action plan was then made available as a printed Z-card as well as a PDF download from our website.

This project was supported by an unrestricted educational grant from GSK.

Spirometry Users and Buyers Guide

Updated with the latest product details, the revised Spirometer Users' and Buyers' Guide was published in May 2015 and provided a summary of the specifications, features and suppliers of the main spirometers on the Australian market. General information was also included on the measurement and application of spirometry in the primary care clinical setting.

The guide was prepared by Associate Professor David P. Johns in consultation with Associate Professor Debbie Burton and Dr Maureen P. Swanney

Endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Respiratory Science and The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand, the guide is available to download from our website.

Conferences

GPCE and PNCE

We continued our regular presence at the General Practitioners Conference and Exhibition (GPCE) and the Practice Nurses Clinical Education (PNCE) events presenting at each conference. The conferences were held in Perth – July 2014, Brisbane – September 2014, Melbourne – November 2014 and Sydney – May 2015.

At each GPCE, in 2014, we presented a series of 1 hour workshops titled 'Spirometry: Diagnosing asthma & COPD in General Practice'. The workshops covered correct performance of the test, spirometry interpretation including differential diagnosis of asthma and COPD and quality assurance of equipment. Presenters included Respiratory Scientists Sharon Lagan in Perth, Andrew Southwell in Brisbane and Anne Adikari, Mahesh Dharmakumara and Danny Brazzale in Melbourne.

We also presented a seminar titled 'Difficult Asthma: How to manage in General Practice' at each GPCE in 2014. The presentation covered latest recommendations on managing high risk and difficult to control asthma from the Australian Asthma Handbook, as well as specialist treatment options. Presenters included Dr Quentin Summers, Head of Respiratory in Perth, Dr Rachel Thomson, Respiratory & Sleep Physician in Brisbane and Professor Jo Douglass, Allergist/Immunologist in Melbourne.

At each PNCE in 2014, we presented a series of 1 hour seminars titled 'Australian Asthma Handbook 2014'. The

seminars covered the new online format of the Handbook, a summary of the key changes to treatment recommendations and new asthma medications available. Each seminar was presented by one of our expert Asthma Educators which included Claire Franklin in Perth, Rhona MacDonald in Brisbane and Bernadette Flanagan in Melbourne.

At the GPCE in Sydney in May 2015, we presented three 1 hour workshops titled 'Importance of proper inhaler device techniques in Asthma'. The workshops were presented by nurse practitioner Naomi Fenton and covered different medications, when and why to use different devices and included some demonstrations. We also presented three 1 hour workshops titled 'Trouble shooting Difficult Asthma – a new online learning module for general practice'. The interactive workshop, sponsored through an unrestricted educational grant from Novartis, gave attendees a first look at our new online learning modules covering how to diagnose and manage difficult asthma in general practice. Presenters included Assoc Prof. Janet Rimmer, Assoc. Prof. Ian Charlton and Dr John Fardy.

APNA

Our partnership with Australian Primary Healthcare Nurses Association (APNA) continues to flourish. Our joint activities included an 'Asthma Management in General Practice' webinar in June 2015 presented by Marg Gordon and Judi Wicking, both experienced asthma educators working in general practice. A 1-hour online learning module on asthma management fundamentals was developed for practice nurses as part of APNA's series funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. Both APNA's modules are hosted on their online platform and are also accessible from the NAC website.

The NAC was invited to present at the APNA National Conference, held on the Gold Coast in May 2015. We presented a full-day Spirometry Training Course which provided comprehensive training in application, measurement and interpretation.

We also presented at APNA's continuing Education Workshops during 2014 in Melbourne, Perth, Hobart, Adelaide, Brisbane, Townsville and Shepparton. The NAC presented a 1.5hr seminar titled 'Asthma Management – What's New?' which provided an overview of what is meant by 'good asthma', medications and devices used for asthma, Written Asthma Action Plans and emergency management of asthma.

PAC 2014

The NAC participated in the Pharmacy Australia Congress 2014 (PAC) which was held in Canberra in October 2014. Dr Jenny Gowan presented a workshop titled 'Asthma Update for Pharmacist' which provided an overview of best practice asthma management and device use.

TSANZ Annual Scientific Meeting 2015

As a long-standing partner of The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ), the NAC has regular involvement with the TSANZ Annual Scientific Meeting. Judi Wicking attended as the NAC's ambassador.

Australasian Asthma Conference

The NAC was pleased to be a Conference partner with Asthma Australia at the 2015 'Connecting Asthma Care' Australasian conference held in Brisbane in May. NAC representatives spoke on several different topics: Chairman, Dr Jonathan Burdon AM, took part in a panel discussion entitled 'National Asthma Strategy or National Lung Health Strategy. What do we recommend to the Ministers of Health?' CEO Kristine Whorlow also featured as part of a panel discussion 'If I had \$50M to invest in a National Asthma Program, my top four initiatives would be ...'. Judi Wicking spoke on the "Latest advice from the Australian Asthma Handbook", presenting information including the new key messages on asthma best practice in Australia.

Asthma awards

The NAC funds annual awards to encourage research into asthma. Offered via our stakeholder bodies, the awards focus on asthma research presented at each organisation's annual/biennial scientific meeting or conference.

The 2014 ASCIA and NAC Asthma Research Award recipient was Ms Melisa Lau from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne, for her presentation 'Farm exposure in early life modifies the association between TLR6 polymorphisms on asthma'.

The 2014 and 2015 TSANZ and NAC Asthma prizes were both awarded in this financial year. The 2014 winner was Ms Courtney Kidd, Student Researcher at Lung Institute of Western Australia, for her presentation 'Aberrant splicing of histone modification genes affects asthma pathogenesis and severity'.

The 2015 prize was awarded to Mr Zhixuan (Ken) Loh, School of Biomedical Sciences, University of Queensland, for his presentation 'Interferon regulatory factor 7 protects against pneumovirus-induced airway smooth muscle growth in early life'.

Asthma and Airways Career Development Fellowship 2015

The NAC has joined with TSANZ to support the Asthma and Airways Career Development Fellowship. The aim of this PhD Fellowship is to enable mid-career investigators to establish themselves as independent, self-directed researchers and foster the development of research in respiratory medicine in Australia and New Zealand. The fellowship is to the value of \$60,000 for one year.

The 2015 recipient was Associate Professor Brad Zhang from the University of Western Australia. His research topic is "To compare genome-wide transcriptional and methylation profiles in CD4+ cells in 'newly arrived' and 'long term' Chinese immigrants living in Western environments".

Associate Professor Zhang's Fellowship was announced at the TSANZ Annual Scientific Meeting in March 2015.



Jessica Groom with AMLA Workshop participants

We are very pleased to contribute to respiratory research in this way and to assist with the career development of an emerging respiratory expert. This is a small way in which the NAC can acknowledge the ongoing assistance of the many respiratory experts who provide advice and expertise to us for our resources and educational programs for primary care health professionals and people with asthma.

International activities IPCRG Singapore

The International Primary Care Respiratory Group (IPCRG), of which the NAC is a founding member, held its fourth scientific meeting in Singapore in May 2014, entitled 'Teamwork who cares: The value of multidisciplinary care for patients, clinicians and healthcare systems'. It was run back to back with the IPCRG's first Respiratory Research School.

This was the first IPCRG meeting outside Europe, North America and Australia and signifies the growing global interest in the IPCRG with its membership from so many countries round the world, including many countries in Asia. The NAC's CEO attended in her role as IPCRG Treasurer and a number of other Australians were there as well – practising GPs with a special interest in respiratory, academics and young researchers.

GARD Meeting 2014

In August, the CEO attended the annual meeting of the Global Alliance against Respiratory Disease in Salvador, Brazil, attended by representatives of 30 low, middle and high countries – Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Japan, Turkey, Norway, France, Portugal, South Africa, Lithuania, Canada, USA, Syria, Paraguay, Georgia, Iran, Switzerland, UK, Greece, Argentina, Finland, Italy, Poland, Kyrgyzstan, Romania, Zambia, Uruguay and Germany. She spoke on 'Coaching Primary Care Practitioners for Best Practice in Asthma'.

NATIONAL ASTHMA COUNCIL AUSTRALIA 2014 HIGHLIGHTS

Our informative websites provided asthma and allergy resources to



390,000

people from 208 countries around the world

We re-set the standard for asthma care with the new Australian Asthma Handbook



48,000 unique visitors to the guidelines website

60,000 copies distributed of the Quick Reference Guide



4,300

Health professionals trained in best-practice asthma management

Distributed thousands of patient resources



67,000

Written Asthma Action Plans



5,000

Downloads of Asthma Buddy our free app



34,000

First Aid for Asthma Charts



55 Sensitive Choice program partners and a brand new mobile friendly website



Exposed millions of Australians to asthma awareness messages including national media coverage of World Asthma Day and National Asthma Week



A national network of more than 400 leading asthma experts made our work possible with their contributions



And the future

We have secured Australian Government funding for a new National Asthma Strategy, our focus for 2015

National Asthma Council Australia

sensitivechoice.com

astmahandbook.org.au

nationalasthma.org.au

Our People



Board

Chairman

- Assoc. Prof. Noela Whitby AM
General Practitioner
(to Nov 2014)
- Dr Jonathan Burdon AM
Respiratory Physician
(from Nov 2014)

Directors

- Ms Julianne Badenoch
Practice nurse
Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association
representative
- Dr Jonathan Burdon AM
Respiratory Physician
Independent Director
- Mr Stephen Hughes
Community pharmacist
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia representative
- Assoc. Prof. Janet Rimmer
Respiratory physician and allergist
Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology
and Allergy representative
- Clinical Professor Bastian Seidel
General practitioner
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
representative (from Nov 2014)
- Assoc. Prof Noela Whitby AM
General practitioner
The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
representative (to Nov 2014)
- Dr Joanna Wriedt
PhD JD(Law) GAICD
Independent Director

Finance Committee

- Mr Stephen Hughes
- Mr Peter Norman
- Mr Alasdair Norton
- Mr Robert Yeo



*Australian Asthma Handbook
Guidelines Committee*

Asthma Handbook Guidelines Committee

The Asthma Handbook Guidelines Committee steers development of the Handbook.

- Prof. Amanda Barnard
general practitioner (Chair)
- Ms Naomi Fenton
nurse practitioner
- Dr Jenny Gowan
pharmacist
- Dr Gary Kilov
general practitioner
- Assoc. Prof. Helen Reddel
respiratory physician
- Assoc. Prof. Janet Rimmer
respiratory physician and allergist
- Prof. Peter van Asperen
paediatric respiratory physician
- Assoc. Prof. Peter Wark
respiratory physician

General Practitioners' Asthma Group

The General Practitioners' Asthma Group works to coordinate the expertise, enthusiasm and skills of general practitioners who have a special interest in the management of asthma.

- Dr Kerry Hancock (Chair)
- Prof. Amanda Barnard
- Dr David Batt
- Assoc. Prof. Ian Charlton
- Assoc. Prof. H. John Fardy
- Dr Steven Rudolph
- Dr Victoria Smith
- Assoc. Prof. Noela Whitby AM
- Assoc. Prof. Sanjiva Wijesinha
- Dr Russell Wiseman

Pharmacists' Asthma Group

The Pharmacists' Asthma Group works to coordinate the expertise, enthusiasm and skills of community and hospital pharmacists who have a special interest in the management of asthma.

- Mr Marcus Weidinger (Chair)
- Mr Simon Appel OAM
- Prof. Carol Armour
- Mr Kingsley Coulthard
- Mr Mark Feldschuh
- Mr Peter Holder
- Mr Stephen Hughes
- Ms Karalyn Huxhagen
- Mr Grant Kardachi
- Mr Kevin Morgan
- Ms Toni Riley
- Dr Bandana Saini
- Mr Kevin De Vries (ex-officio)
- Ms Anna Ezzy (ex-officio)

Sensitive Choice Product Advisory Panel

The Sensitive Choice Product Advisory Panel considers products and services for acceptance into the Sensitive Choice program. It is supported by Mr John Wills, Chief Executive, Asthma Foundation (NZ), and Ms Kristine Whorlow, Chief Executive Officer, NAC.

The Panel consists of the following experts:

- Engineer (Chair)
- Respiratory physician
- Allergist
- General practitioner
- Pharmacist
- Industrial chemist

Staff

- Ms Kristine Whorlow, Chief Executive Officer
- Ms Siobhan Brophy, Communications Manager
- Ms Rhonda Cleveland, Operations Manager
- Mr Adam Trumble, Partnerships Manager
- Ms Judi Wicking, Program Manager
- Ms Melissa Bell, Marketing Coordinator
- Ms Natalie Bourne, Administration Officer
- Ms Jessica Groom, Project Officer
- Ms Leanne Koster, Online Communications Officer
- Ms Milena Mijas, Project Officer
- Mr Mark Olszewski, Communications Project Officer
- Ms Rebecca Percoco, Administration Officer
Sensitive Choice
- Ms Senka Perera, Executive Assistant

Supporters



Acknowledgments

The NAC is able to carry out our important work thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and supporters. The Australian Government Department of Health continues to provide invaluable backing for our Asthma and Respiratory Education Program under the Department's Asthma Management Program 2013–2016.

We thank the Department for their ongoing support of the NAC and asthma management more widely.

Our sponsors from the pharmaceutical industry are important allies in spreading the best-practice respiratory management message. We were able to develop many of our latest resources as a result of unrestricted educational grants from these companies and we look forward to their continued support.

We are also grateful to our many Sensitive Choice® Partners who continue to raise awareness of asthma in the community and support our important educational activities.

Finally, we extend our thanks to the many tireless health professionals who help us in all facets of our work. You truly are the cornerstone of the NAC.

National Asthma Council Supporters

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Corporate Sponsors



Sensitive Choice Partners



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AUSTRALIAN
ASTHMA
HANDBOOK

astmahandbook.org.au



Best practice, evidence-based asthma guidance for primary care professionals, now published as an innovative, easy-to-use and searchable website

- More than 500 clear and practical recommendations
- The best evidence gathered using a rigorous methodology
- Extensive links to related resources and cited references
- Practice considerations for all primary care health professionals
- Endorsed by the RACGP, APNA and TSANZ
- Companion guide for patients, *My Asthma Handbook*



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www.nationalasthma.org.au