



National  
Asthma  
Council AUSTRALIA

# Annual Report 2018-19

# Chair's message

The National Asthma Council (NAC) has retained its purpose over the 30 years since its inception as the National Asthma Campaign: building capabilities for people to breathe well. We have continued our growth and remain the nation's trusted authority on asthma care, reaching and positively impacting people with asthma across Australia.

Retaining trust however requires continual evolution, and in the past 12 months the NAC has transformed to address both the current and future needs of people living with asthma and allergies. The NAC is ensuring that it remains sustainable and responsive.

At the board level we have three new Directors. Professor Amanda Barnard, Dr Sara Barnes and Professor Peter Wark joined our existing directors, Dr Stephen Hughes and Ms Julianne Badenoch. Our directors bring diversity in expertise and skills driving the NAC forward to develop contemporary programs and services.

I am pleased to report 2018/19 has been another strong year for NAC financially, with a surplus of \$110,000.

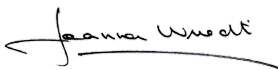
Sensitive Choice will continue to evolve to incorporate consumer education, understanding that people with asthma and their carers access asthma and broader health information in a variety of ways and through a variety of channels. We are proud of the blue butterfly, which is a valuable and reassuring tool that supports people to identify asthma and allergy-aware products.

I am thankful for the ongoing work provided by the country's leading asthma experts as we continue to develop and update our resources. Their dedication and commitment ensure Australia remains at the forefront of asthma care.

Currently, we're focusing on addressing inequalities in asthma outcomes through increased advocacy and collaboration with our strong network of partners and stakeholders.

Reflecting on the year that's been, I'd like to acknowledge the great work and commitment of our retired Board members Professor Bob Heddle, Professor Bastian Seidel and former Chair Dr Jonathan Burdon AM, and thank our current Board, staff and volunteers for their support and contribution to our success.

After five years as an independent director and now as the Chair of NAC, I look forward to building on 30 years of expertise and knowledge while maintaining NAC's reputation as the lead authority on asthma care.



**Dr Joanna Wriedt**  
Chair



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## Who we are

As the national authority for asthma knowledge, the National Asthma Council Australia works with a network of leading health professionals, and Australian and international organisations to set the standard for asthma care and reduce the health, social and economic impacts of asthma.

Our not-for-profit organisation consists of a collaboration of four member bodies: Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy, Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.



## CEO's message

Standards are also a key part of our Sensitive Choice program (page 6) whose activities increasingly promoted the rigorous process, which at the hands of our insightful independent advisory panel, underpins our product approvals.

What would NAC be without its supporters, including our Sensitive Choice partners, industry sponsors and government funders? More than financial, their support helps the NAC disseminate our messages across the asthma community and ensure people breathe well.

Thanks also go to the hundreds of people involved in our work, from health professionals and researchers to technical experts and people with asthma. Your contributions across our projects, programs and initiatives help the NAC remain the trusted authority in asthma.

And finally thank you to the NAC Board and staff, who drive this small organisation's oversized impact. I look forward to exploring our future and asking the hard questions to help improve health outcomes for Australians with asthma.

**Siobhan Brophy**  
Chief Executive Officer

Setting the standard for asthma care has always been at the core of the National Asthma Council's work, alongside embracing the challenge of the standard's mutability.

Over the past year we've continued to seize opportunities to ask what needs to be done to keep Australia at the forefront of asthma care by responding to advances in research, the latest thinking in psychosocial aspects of care, patient and practitioner behaviour, and new ways of approaching asthma.

With our world-leading work on thunderstorm asthma, in spring we once again provided clinical education and support to help avoid a repeat of the tragic event of 2016.

In early 2019 we ignited conversations and fresh thinking among health professionals and policy makers with the publication of our first white paper on innovative strategies for asthma.

This was followed closely by the publication of the Australian Asthma Handbook v2.0 – the eighth edition of the national treatment guidelines for asthma and a major reconsideration of paediatric asthma guidance (page 4). Always one step ahead, work is already underway on the next Handbook version, which looks closely at new therapies in mild asthma.

Through our Asthma Best-Practice Education Program we continued disseminating crucial asthma education and information to healthcare professionals while exceeding our delivery and evaluation targets (page 5). We also successfully piloted training in new forums and are working on rolling these out in the coming year.

In 2018/19 we continued work on our pivotal Rethink WAAP project (page 9), which not only addresses the poor uptake of written asthma action plans (WAAPs) but explores new ways to improve implementation of this gold standard tool of asthma self-management.

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# Setting the standard

## Australian Asthma Handbook

We launched a major update of the *Australian Asthma Handbook* in March 2019 – the most significant review of the national best-practice treatment guidelines for asthma management since 2014.

Encompassing crucial updates to paediatric, severe and acute asthma sections, as well as advice on asthma prevention, this vital resource was launched on 8 March at a widely publicised event at RACGP House in Melbourne.

The *Australian Asthma Handbook* is endorsed by the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine, Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association, the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, the Royal Australian College of General Physicians, the Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Released alongside the guidelines, a new edition of the consumer education resource, *My Asthma Guide*, was also translated into four different languages to reflect the changes and growing need for multilingual resources.

[asthmahandbook.org.au](http://asthmahandbook.org.au)

*Australian Asthma Handbook* Version 2.0 was developed by an multidisciplinary team of clinical experts, steered by the Guidelines Committee:

**Professor Amanda Barnard**  
(Chair), General practitioner

**Dr Ian Almond**  
General practitioner

**Ms Naomi Fenton**  
Nurse practitioner

**Dr Jenny Gowan**  
Accredited pharmacist

**Professor Adam Jaffé**  
Paediatric respiratory physician

**Professor Helen Reddel**  
Adult respiratory physician

**Associate Professor Janet Rimmer**  
Allergist and respiratory physician

**Professor Peter Wark**  
Adult respiratory physician



**250,000**  
visitors to  
Handbook  
website in  
12 months

**11%**  
increase in visitors  
from previous year

More than  
**one  
million**  
page views

**12%**  
increase in page views  
from previous year

**200+**  
media mentions of  
Version 2.0 update

**28**  
members  
of Handbook  
working group

**135,000**  
how-to video plays

**170,000+**  
resource downloads

## Evidence-based Resources

We provide a suite of evidence-based resources underpinned by *Australian Asthma Handbook* recommendations, which are available for free download from our website. Thousands of hard copies of our resources, including Written Asthma Action Plans, *My Asthma Guide* and the Asthma & COPD Medications Chart were also distributed nationally in 2018-19.

## Monoclonal antibody therapy for severe asthma

We released a new evidence-based resource for primary health care professionals in December, providing advice and information on cutting-edge treatment options for patients with severe asthma which is uncontrolled despite optimised standard treatment.

The paper was prepared in consultation with a multidisciplinary panel of experts including Professor Connie Katelaris, Professor Vanessa McDonald, Professor Helen Reddel, Ms Debbie Rigby, Dr Victoria Smith and Professor Peter Wark.

## Asthma Best Practice Workshops

We delivered free asthma and respiratory management education nationally through the Australian government supported Asthma Best Practice program.

Nearly 1,000 healthcare professionals attended one of our six workshops, which include spirometry courses and role-specific training for GPs, pharmacists, nurses and Aboriginal health workers.

A team of experts present our education workshops around the country and we are grateful for their efforts in promoting asthma management education.

Going forward we are on track to achieve our two-year targets for workshop delivery, with an independent evaluation report showing health professionals who participate in workshops highly value the experience.

### 54 workshops held around Australia

Almost **1000** attendees, including **50%** in rural areas

### Attendees reported strong learning outcomes in an independent evaluation report:

**89%** would recommend the workshop they attended to others and **88%** said it was a good investment of time

**98%** said the Primary Care Asthma Update met all learning outcomes

**97%** of Practice Nurse Seminar attendees said their knowledge or skills increased



**100%** who attended a Spirometry Training Course or Update said they were partially or entirely confident performing spirometry and differentiating between asthma and COPD

**100%** of Asthma Update for Pharmacist attendees said they had increased confidence in managing patients with asthma and linked chronic respiratory conditions

**In September 2018 we partnered with the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to provide thunderstorm asthma workshops, with over 150 health care professionals attending six training sessions in Melbourne. Of the attendees 98% said the training was relevant to their practice and met their learning needs.**

## Sensitive Choice

Sensitive Choice continues to build its profile and help people identify household and building products that are asthma and allergy aware. Our blue butterfly symbol is now found on hundreds of approved products and services – each one rigorously reviewed and approved by our Product Advisory Panel, which includes a respiratory physician, allergist, general practitioner, pharmacist, chemist and engineer.

In 2018-19 the program expanded its range of approved products with 75 additions and 12 new partner brands. We also hosted partner networking and education forums in both Sydney and Melbourne.

Throughout the year the Sensitive Choice team attended six trade shows, spreading the word to new audiences in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne and working with partner brands to share information about asthma and allergies and answer questions about their products.

Our new Community Service Announcement launched in November and aired on television channels around Australia including Channel 10, Foxtel, Channel 9 and WIN.

Other key awareness-raising initiatives included the launch of a Sensitive Choice Instagram page, teaming up with Channel 10's Healthy Homes Australia for a Sensitive Choice and approved products episode, and promotions and activations in Harvey Norman and David Jones as part of National Asthma Week from 1-7 September 2018.



[sensitivechoice.com](https://sensitivechoice.com)



12

new partners joined  
the program

75

new products  
were approved

6

trade shows in  
three states

1900

show bags  
handed out

75K

website visitors

250K

website pageviews

5900

social media  
followers

2000+

new email  
subscribers



# Awareness and Advocacy

## Deaths due to asthma

The release of asthma mortality statistics showed 441 asthma-related deaths in 2017, with women aged 55-64 most at risk. NAC launched a media campaign to raise awareness of risks and preventive actions, generating widespread coverage on TV, print and radio and via health industry media.

## #nationalasthmaweek 2018

Our National Asthma Week 2018 campaign focused on preparing consumers and health care professionals for thunderstorm asthma season.

It featured in radio and online media coverage, while our social media campaign shared tips helping consumers prepare for pollen season.

## GoShare video stories

We teamed up with Healthily to develop a series of first-person videos sharing insights and experiences into living with asthma.

The videos are available, alongside key resources, for health care professionals to recommend to their patients through the GoShare HealthCare digital platform.

## Nationalasthma.org.au

680,000 visitors  
1.6 million pageviews  
120,000 consumer fact sheet views



## Monthly newsletters

5800 subscribers receive our monthly asthma updates for health professionals and consumers.

## #DefineYourAsthma

We participated in the international Define Your Asthma Rights social media campaign, coordinated by the Global Allergy and Asthma Patient Platform, to raise awareness for severe asthma and the treatment patients need.

## Social media

The Asthma Experts & @asthmacouncilau  
11% follower increase  
320,000+ impressions

We established a National Asthma Council LinkedIn presence, sharing regular updates for health professionals

## #WorldAsthmaDay 2019

Our World Asthma Day campaign on 7 May focused on answering consumers' common asthma and allergy questions.

It was widely picked up by media, generating 270 stories across print, online and broadcast.

# Building Strong Relationships



## **General Practitioners Asthma Advisory Group**

Professor Amanda Barnard  
Dr David Batt  
Dr Ian Charlton  
Dr Steven Rudolph  
Dr Joel Ten  
Associate Professor Sanjiva Wijesinha  
Dr Russell Wiseman

## **Nurses Asthma Advisory Group**

Ms Charlotte Allen  
Ms Julianne Badenoch  
Ms Lisa Collison  
Ms Pauline Hughes  
Ms Elizabeth Leahy  
Ms Veronica Stevenson  
Ms Judi Wicking  
Ms Narelle Williamson  
Ms Katherine Wheatley

## **Pharmacists Asthma Advisory Group**

Professor Carol Armour  
Ms Helen Bowden  
Mr Kevin De Vries  
Mr Mark Feldschuh  
Ms Katie Hayes  
Mr Peter Holder  
Dr Stephen Hughes  
Ms Karalyn Huxhagen  
Ms Jiamin Liao  
Mr Joshua Perry  
Ms Toni Riley  
Associate Professor Bandana Saini  
Dr Kim Watkins  
Mr Marcus Weidinger

We are fortunate to work with a talented network of experts who help inform our initiatives.

In 2018 we revitalised our health professional advisory groups, which provide strategic policy and advocacy advice, recruiting new members for GP and pharmacist groups and launching a third group for nurses.

We established the Health Professionals Network, a community of over 140 health professionals who take part in feedback and advisory opportunities and who participate in initiatives such as the ground-breaking *Rethinking Written Asthma Action Plans* project.

Our consumer group, the National Asthma and Allergy Network, grew to more than 100 members who shared their input through surveys for key resources including *My Asthma Guide* and on written asthma action plans to name a few.

## **Sector Engagement**

We frequently work with key industry bodies through collaborations, conferences and working groups. Highlights in 2018-19 included presenting a panel discussion on the updated *Australian Asthma Handbook* at the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand 2019 Scientific Meeting (pictured).

Our Asthma and Respiratory Educator Marg Gordon took part in a panel discussion on updates in priority areas and presented on the *Australian Asthma Handbook* update at the Australian Primary Health Care Nurses Association 2019 conference.

In 2018-19, Ms Gordon also provided our unique expertise by participating in a Department of Health and Human Services asthma management workshop which sought to identify opportunities to improve asthma management in primary care and community settings. The NAC is currently working closely with NPS MedicineWise, contributing to the design and development of its 2020 asthma visiting program.



# Shaping Policy and Practice

## Rethinking Written Asthma Action Plans (WAAPs)

We continued work on the *Rethinking WAAP* project, which was developed in response to the National Asthma Strategy objective seeking to support effective self-management practices through the promotion, provision and implementation of asthma action plans.

The first stage of the project aimed to identify and understand patient and practitioner needs around WAAPs, and address gaps and opportunities through a 3-phased model which included a community survey, landscape scan, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

A series of interactive online forums were also held with stakeholders in June and July 2019, with findings and an *Action Plan for Action Plans* due to be published in the latter half of the year.

## Pharmacy Trial Program – Asthma and Rhinitis Control

We are one of eight organisations (and the Expert Advisory Group secretariat) involved in the ‘Getting asthma under control using the skills of the community pharmacist’ trial. The study addresses the need to improve outcomes for Australians at risk of uncontrolled asthma, by exploring the role of pharmacists in the delivery of asthma health care services.

Led by the Woolcock Institute of Medical Research, community pharmacies across Western Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania are participating in the study as part of the Pharmacy Trial Program, which is funded by the Australian Government under the Sixth Community Pharmacy Agreement.

We are looking forward to sharing the trial outcomes in 2020.

## Fostering asthma research

Each year we partner with the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand to present the Asthma and Airways Career Development Fellowship, worth \$60,000. In 2019 the Fellowship was awarded to Dr Kimberley Wang.

Kimberley’s curiosity about early origins underpinned her PhD research on cardiovascular disease, and after a move from Adelaide to Perth prompted a shift to respiratory studies, has guided her research through this fellowship.

Kimberley is building up a research group investigating in utero mechanisms for the development of asthma.

‘I can really understand the significance of the research, and today that still attracts me,’ she says.

‘This fellowship acknowledges my hard work and also indicates that people are interested in my research.’

We also extend our congratulations to Professor Jo Douglass, 2018 recipient of the Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy and NAC Asthma Research Award, and Cherry Thompson, 2019 recipient of the TSANZ and NAC Asthma Prize. These awards recognise excellence in asthma-related conference abstracts.



# Strong Governance & Culture

In December 2018, Dr Joanna Wriedt BSc (Hons), MSc, PhD, JD, GAICD stepped into the role of NAC Board Chair, following the retirement of outgoing Chair Dr Jonathan Burdon AM. Dr Wriedt is a longstanding independent NAC Director with qualifications in medical research and law.

We also welcomed three new Board Directors: Professor Amanda Barnard, Dr Sara Barnes and Professor Peter Wark.

## Meet our Board



**Dr Joanna Wriedt**

Lawyer, Independent Director,  
Chair of the Board of Directors



**Ms Julianne Badenoch**

Registered Nurse, Registered Midwife,  
Australian Primary Health Care Nurses  
Association Nominee Director



**Professor Amanda Barnard**

General Practitioner, Royal Australian  
College of General Practitioners  
Nominee Director



**Dr Sara Barnes**

Clinical Immunologist and Allergy  
Specialist, Australasian Society of Clinical  
Immunology and Allergy Nominee Director



**Dr Stephen Hughes**

Community Pharmacist, Pharmaceutical  
Society of Australia Nominee Director



**Professor Peter Wark**

Adult Respiratory Physician,  
Independent Director

We would like to acknowledge the work of our two Board subcommittees, the Governance Committee, which ensures the NAC's governance aligns with contemporary best practice, and the Finance Committee.

### **Governance Committee:**

Dr Joanna Wriedt (Chair), Ms Julianne Badenoch, Ms Siobhan Brophy,  
Ms Rhonda Cleveland, Ms Michaela Walsh

### **Finance Committee:**

Dr Stephen Hughes (Chair), Mr Peter Norman, Mr Alasdair Norton, Mr Robert Yeo

# Acknowledgements



The NAC carries out its work with support from a tireless network of health professionals who generously contribute their time and expertise. Thank you to all who helped inform our work in setting the standard for asthma care in Australia and ensuring that we continue to lead the field in helping people with asthma breathe better.

We would also like to thank Judi Wicking, who retired from NAC in November after more than 10 years as the manager of our health professional education initiatives. This year, Judi received the Rosemary Bryant Award, announced at the 2019 APNA Nurse Awards, in recognition of her significant contribution to the profession.

## National Asthma Council Australia Supporters

**Thank you to our sponsors and supporters for contributing to the National Asthma Council Australia's important work.**

**The NAC maintains strict editorial independence when developing any materials with external sponsorship.**

### GOVERNMENT



### CORPORATE





# Sensitive Choice Partners

We are grateful to our many Sensitive Choice partners for supporting our initiatives and for raising awareness of asthma and allergies in the community.

**Aaxis**

**AH Beard**

**Air Clean Filters**

**Asko**

**Ausclimate**

**Aware Environmental**

**Bambi**

**Beaulieu**

**Bekaert Deslee**

**Bissell**

**Bosch**

**Breville**

**Britex**

**CSR**

**Daikin**

**DeLonghi**

**Dowell**

**Dunlop Flooring**

**Dunlop Foams**

**Dyson**

**Ecostore**

**Euroflex**

**FESS**

**Gainsborough**

**Godfreys**

**Graphenstone**

**Homedics**

**Hydrokleen**

**Innovaair**

**Interface**

**Jaspa Herington**

**Karcher**

**King Living**

**Koh**

**MacMed**

**Mafi**

**Miele**

**Nikpol**

**Noirot**

**Numu-Roo**

**Panasonic**

**Philips**

**Plush**

**Protect-a-Bed**

**SEBO**

**Sharp**

**Taubmans**

**Tontine**

**WaterCo**

**Zenexus**