2024-25

ANNUAL REPORT

Arthritis AUSTRALIA

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Cover artwork: Burning Steps, Healing Path by Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai Artist Thomas 'Marksey' Marks Commissioned by Arthritis Australia 2025

1. A message from our Chair

Kaylene Hubbard
Arthritis Australia Chair

I reflect on the last year for Arthritis Australia with great pride. This year marks a significant milestone as we celebrate 75 years since the formation of our organisation, reaffirming our commitment to research, advocacy, and support for all Australians living with arthritis.

As we close the financial year 2024-25, I would like to acknowledge the leadership of our outgoing CEO, Jonathan Smithers, whose nearly five-year tenure has guided Arthritis Australia through a period of remarkable change and progress. We thank Jonathan for his dedication and vision, and welcome Louise Hardy, Director of Policy and Advocacy, as interim CEO to lead us into our next stage of growth and influence.

Our Strategic Plan (2024–2029) continues to guide our efforts, balancing ambitious projects with the essential foundations of governance and financial sustainability. The Board has worked closely with management to ensure our resources are focused where we can be most effective, and that our voice as a national peak body is heard at the highest levels of government and valued by the Australians we serve.

This year, we completed and acquitted three major grants under the National Strategic Action Plans for Arthritis. These projects, managed in partnership with our Affiliated State and Territory Organisations, have received extensions from the Federal Government - recognition of Arthritis Australia as a trusted partner delivering excellent outcomes for consumers. Our advocacy reach continues to expand, including evidence at the Senate enquiry into the cost of living and the launch of updated national projections for arthritis conditions to 2040.

We have completed our suite of consumer information websites with the launch of MyOA (incorporating MyJointPain), joining MyRA, MyPSA, and MyAS. This achievement, made possible with the expertise of Professor David Hunter, ensures that Australians with arthritis have access to reliable, medically overseen, and consumer-moderated resources. A comprehensive review of hundreds of resources was also completed, reinforcing our commitment to being the single point of truth for consumers.

Our National Research Program continues to thrive, with grants delivered to researchers and ongoing collaboration with Research Australia to embed consumer involvement in musculoskeletal research. The appointment of a Research and Consumer Engagement Manager has allowed us to dedicate increased resources to implementation. The grant application process has been streamlined, and our advocacy for increased sector funding is now focused on partnership with the new government.

Recognising the importance of long-term financial sustainability, we have implemented a new fundraising strategy and appointed a Philanthropy Manager. This marks a strategic shift, demonstrating our commitment to supporting research and empowering consumers now and into the future.

We continue to engage with a wide variety of organisations and individuals, embedding Arthritis Australia as a thought leader and peak body. This year saw our largest event ever: a Parliamentary Summit in Canberra, attended by nearly 100 participants from politics, consumer groups, and clinical leaders, generating ideas for continued advocacy and support.

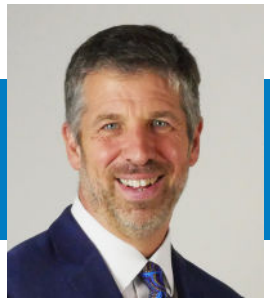
These achievements are testament to the commitment and hard work of our staff, Board, Committee members, volunteers, and partners - including our state and territory Affiliates, the Australian Rheumatology Association, and our generous sponsors and supporters.

Our priorities for the coming year include:

- Furthering our response and implementation plan of the recommendations in the ‘Impactful Arthritis Research Report’
- Focusing on provision of information resources to empower Australians with arthritis
- Continuing to advocate for the needs of people with arthritis

Together, we remain committed to our mission of Freedom from Arthritis.

2. A message from our CEO



Jonathan Smithers
Arthritis Australia CEO

I write this report shortly after the end of our financial year 2024-25. By the time of its publication in our annual report I will have moved on to a new position. Nearly five years have passed since I joined Arthritis Australia, in the midst of the pandemic. Much change and great progress has occurred since then both in the organisation and externally too.

I would like to recognise, at the outset, that the progress we have made would not have been possible without the unwavering support and vision of the Board, at the time of my appointment Chaired by Kristine Riethmiller and, during the last three years, by Kaylene Hubbard. Equally by my colleagues with whom it has been a privilege to work, each dedicated to ensuring that Arthritis Australia can truly fulfil its purpose and mission.

As to our work in the last year, in my previous report I mentioned the launch of the Board Strategy 2024 – 2029. The organisation has used this as a template to focus our efforts on the areas where we can be most effective, and to dedicate the resources accordingly. The Strategy is a mixture of projects, ambitions and the essential foundations for sustainable day-to-day existence of the charity - those enabling functions including governance and finance without which, the strategy and mission cannot be delivered.

Grant funding
We have continued our success in winning Commonwealth grants, from the National Strategic Action Plan for Arthritis to Quality Use of Medicines, demonstrating that Arthritis Australia is a trusted partner to Government, has delivered, and will continue to deliver excellent outcomes for arthritis consumers.

Consumer Information Resources
This year saw the completion of our suite of consumer information resources websites with the launch of MyOA, incorporating MyJointPain. This complements the existing MyRA, MyPSA and MyAS websites.

We were also able to complete a review of the many hundreds of detailed resources available for consumers with all types of arthritis. This was a huge task undertaken over several years but essential to ensure that Arthritis Australia can be the single point of truth for consumers, in the knowledge that each of the resources is overseen by medical experts and moderated by consumers.

Research
I have heard it said that a selfless act is to plant a tree which will not achieve maturity during one's lifetime. Similarly, I have always been impressed by consumers who advocate for more research, understanding that research carried out now may not help them but wanting to ensure that the next generation of consumers will reap the benefits of continued research into the causes of and treatment for arthritis.

Again, this year we have worked with Research Australia to understand evolving and best practice in the inclusion of consumer experience and expertise for research projects and studies. Our existing National Research Program, made possible by generous donations from many benefactors, particularly the Australian Rheumatology Association Research Fund, has been updated to streamline applications as part of a wider review to ensure that

maximum benefit can be gained for consumers from the many excellent research and training projects which we are able to fund.

We have recently commenced a new project with Research Australia to ensure that our advocacy for increased funding in the sector is properly focused as we move forward with the new government.

Fundraising
Our Board have long recognised that long-term financial sustainability and growth can only be facilitated by sustainable income. The ability to ensure this within the framework of a charity operating in a federated model has had some challenges but I am delighted that these have been overcome facilitating our commitment to raise funds primarily for research and to support the organisation in so doing.

Having developed a fundraising strategy last year, we have followed the pathway laid out and now appointed a Philanthropy Manager. This marks a change in strategic direction for Arthritis Australia but demonstrates a real commitment to making real progress properly to support consumers both now and in the future.

Stakeholder engagement
As in previous years we have continued to speak with a wide variety of organisations and individuals who can assist with our mission, continuing to embed Arthritis Australia as a thought leader and the peak body for arthritis in Australia. I have served as a director of the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance, and my colleague, Louise Hardy, is now a director of the Consumers Health Forum of Australia. Both Louise and I are regular speakers and panellists on forums within the health sector which has greatly increased our communications reach and widened knowledge of the organisation.

Arthritis Australia's Parliamentary Summit in Canberra which took place in August 2024 brought together diverse stakeholders across the sector to drive practical reforms. .

The Future
As I depart from the helm, Arthritis Australia commences its celebrations to mark 75 years since the formation of our organisation. From its first AGM in 1950, both the organisation and the health system have changed unrecognisably but the original aims, to research on behalf of, to advocate for and to support consumers still remain and will continue to inform our work, driving towards our mission of Freedom from Arthritis.

Arthritis Australia delegation met with parliamentarians including Shadow Health Minister the Hon Senator Anne Ruston, Senator Louise Pratt to discuss what needs to be done to provide better care for arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

Parliamentary Summit - Assistant Minister Ged Kearney

Arthritis Australia delegation met with Senator Jordon Steele-John

3. About us

Providing information and support to people living with arthritis.

Arthritis Australia is Australia's leading national arthritis charity. We work in collaboration with affiliated arthritis organisations in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia to deliver information and support to people living with more than 100 types of arthritis.

Our vision is to achieve ***freedom from arthritis*** for the more than four million Australians of all ages who currently live with arthritis and for the many more who will develop these conditions in the future.

To achieve our vision, our key strategies are to provide information and support to people affected by arthritis, to fund research into better care and potential cures, and to advocate for policy and programs to ensure people with arthritis get the treatment, care and support they need.

We also work in partnership with peak health organisations, the Federal Government and national corporations to support collective goals and to seek funding to sustain our organisational purpose and activity.

Consumer support

We provide comprehensive information resources to help people live well with arthritis, and through affiliated organisations deliver these resources, education and support services.

Research

We are the leading non-government funders of arthritis research in Australia and work in partnership with the university and medical sector to support and advocate for increased funding for research into arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

Advocacy

We advocate to the government and industry for policies, programs and funding for initiatives to ensure everyone facing the challenge of arthritis gets the care and support they need to live their best possible life.

Sustainability

To help fund and support our activities to achieve our organisational vision, we develop partnerships with national organisations with aligned values.

National partnerships

We work collaboratively with affiliated arthritis organisations and other peak health organisations to develop and deliver national programs and to support our common goals of improving the health and wellbeing of people living with arthritis.

4. Highlights

$207,000

value of projects that support affiliates

$914,000

in funding for research and training

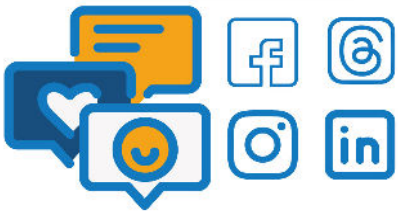
812,359

visitors across our six websites

7,830

calls to the Arthritis Infoline

36,209



social media followers

100

attendees at our first interactive summit

5. Consumer support

Helping people live well with arthritis through information and support.

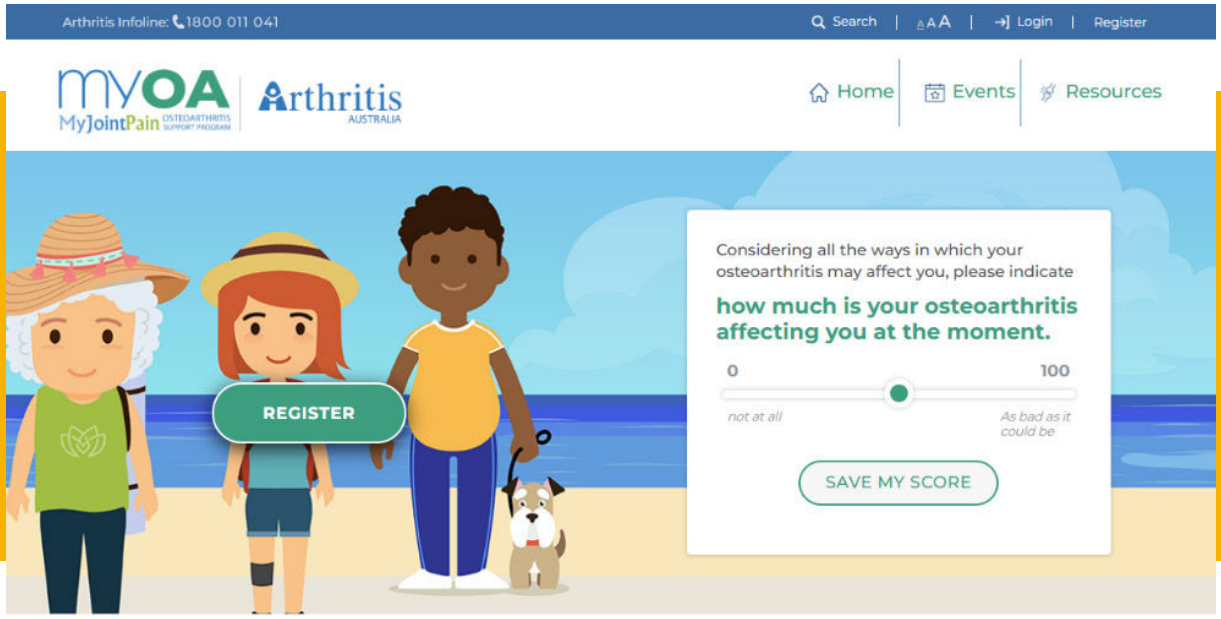
Providing information and support is an important part of improving the lives of people living with arthritis, and their carers and family. We continue to work with consumers and healthcare providers to deliver tailored support, specific to individual needs.

This year we have launched a new Gout Hub that features a comprehensive suite of new resources designed to help people living with gout better understand their condition and manage their care. We also launched MyOA, a revamped My Joint Pain that enhances navigation while continuing to provide trusted information to support people living with osteoarthritis and joint pain.

MyOA

Arthritis Australia launched MyOA in December 2024. The website transitions My Joint Pain to a new platform, offering enhanced support for osteoarthritis and joint pain management.

MyOA is the fourth website dedicated to a specific condition, along with MyRA, MyPsA and MyAS. Built on the same architecture as its predecessors, MyOA is uniquely tailored to meet the needs of people living with osteoarthritis. By registering to the website, users can access recommended resources that align with their current stage in the OA journey.



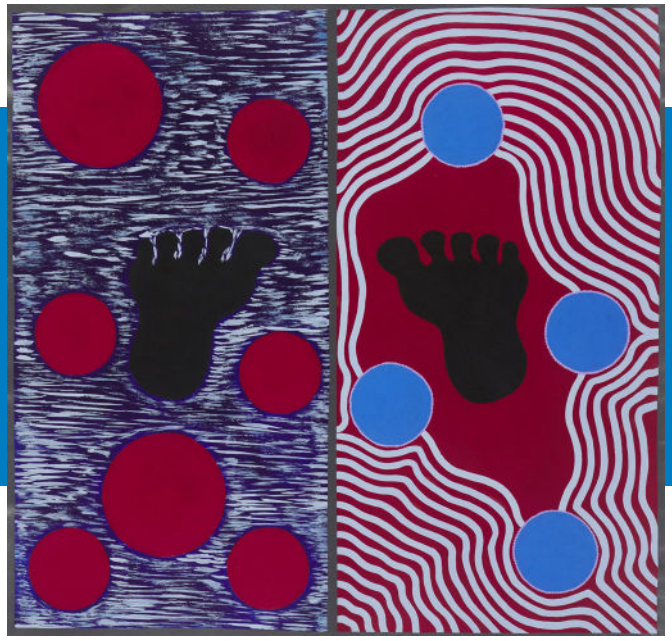
New MyOA website

Gout Hub

Arthritis Australia, in partnership with the Quality Use of Medicines Alliance and funded by the Australian Government, has launched a suite of new resources to support people living with gout. These resources include:

- Updated fact sheets: *What About Gout?* And *Gout and Diet*
- Updated *Taking Control of your Gout* booklet
- *Gout Explained* animation
- Two video series: *My Gout Journey*, featuring consumers sharing their journey with gout, and *Let's Talk About Gout*, featuring both consumers and health professionals answering questions, providing insights and debunking myths about gout.
- Community toolkits tailored to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Pasifika communities.
- Translated resources to support multicultural communities affected by gout.

As part of the Gout Hub project, Arthritis Australia commissioned 'Burning Steps, Healing Path' by Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai Artist Thomas 'Marksey' Marks. In this striking new piece, Marskey depicts "two black feet" to symbolise Indigenous



'Burning Steps, Healing Path' by Wotjobaluk/Gunaikurnai Artist Thomas 'Marksey' Marks. 2025

Australians affected by Gout, a condition caused by high levels of uric acid in the blood. His limited but impactful colour palette adds depth and meaning to the artwork. "Red is the primary colour we usually associate with pain. Three of the symptoms regarding Gout are redness, heat and swelling. Blue is the colour connected to healing once you have been diagnosed and prescribed medication to treat gout." The artwork features in the community toolkits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

New fact sheet Gout and Diet has been translated and tailored to a number of different communities

Arthritis Australia digital footprint

Arthritis Australia achieved remarkable digital growth throughout 2024-2025, reaching new levels of community connection and online engagement. The main website attracted 515,754 users, with above average on-page engagement time, 943,789 page views and 119,891 resource downloads.

The MySites network- including MyOA/ MyJointPain, MyRA, MyAS, MyPsA and Moving with Arthritis - continues to expand its audience and strengthen engagement, delivering trusted, evidence-based resources to help people manage their condition. During the year, these sites were migrated from externally hosted servers to an Arthritis Australia-owned and operated environment managed by Friendlyware. This transition established ownership while enhancing reliability, data security, and system performance, ensuring our ability to action and schedule upgrades to maintain long-term stability and scalability.

Across social media, Arthritis Australia's community grew to 36,209 followers, reflecting strong engagement through shares, comments, and direct interaction. Our main newsletter email audience maintained an active subscriber base of 18,252, achieving an open rate of 52%, reinforcing the high value audiences place on Arthritis Australia's updates and health information.

Arthritis Australia's digital growth this year has strengthened the organisation's core strategic pillars by deepening consumer access to evidence-based information, enhancing national reach, and building a resilient digital infrastructure. The expansion and consolidation of platforms have improved operational efficiency and ensured long-term stability, enabling Arthritis Australia to connect, convert and engage with stakeholders, supports and consumers - across all operating streams and campaigns.

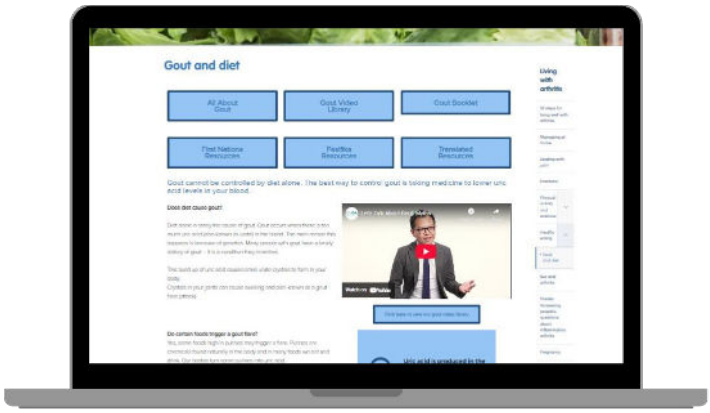
Arthritis Australia digital channels

Our Facebook community is 28,800 followers strong across the nation and remains an important source of real-time consumer insight and inforation sharing.

Our Instagram page is our best performing social platform with more than 4,000 followers.

More than 18,000 people actively subscribe to our monthly newsletter

Our growing LinkedIn community has a following of more than 1,300 people.



6. Advocacy

Speaking up for arthritis

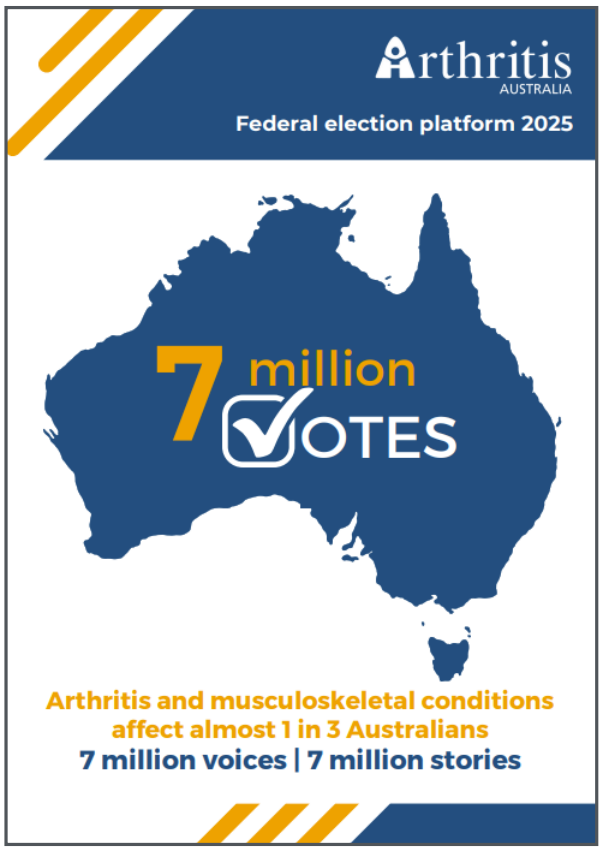
Arthritis Australia continues to lead strong national advocacy for improved consumer support and research investment, while advancing the implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan for Arthritis

Federal funding for arthritis

Arthritis Australia was one of only a few disease group peak organisations to receive funding in the 2024 Mid Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, with $750,000 announced for health professional education and consumer resources, followed by a further commitment of over half a million dollars in the 2025 Pre-election Fiscal Outlook.

7 million votes – Arthritis Australia's federal election campaign

We launched our election platform in late 2024, advocating for increased research funding, action on out-of-pocket costs, and funding for improved models of care and allied health access.



Federal election campaign platform

724 people living with or caring for someone living with arthritis or a musculoskeletal condition took part in our campaign, emailing their MP asking for better care, support and research, and sharing many responses from their elected representatives.

On average every federal MP in the country heard from 4-5 constituents living with arthritis and/or MSK, and senators would have received an average of 90 emails each.

The Australian Labor Party, the Coalition and the Australian Greens provided formal responses to our election platform addressing their health policy commitments and the need for better care for our community.

Post election, we have been engaging with the new parliament to ensure arthritis and MSK is a national priority.

Parliamentary Summit Senator Helen Polley, Dragon Claw representative

Parliamentary Summit Panelists (L-R): Associate Professor Jane Desborough, Professor Rachelle Buchbinder, Ms Jo Root, Karen Middleton, Professor David Hunter

Arthritis Australia Chair Kaylene Hubbard with Assistant Minister Ged Kearney

Professor David Hunter and Senator Anne Ruston

Parliamentary Summit Discussions

Arthritis NT Ruth Garden and Luke Gosling MP

Parliamentary Summit

Arthritis Australia's first Parliamentary Summit on Better Care for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Conditions on 22 August was attended by over 90 consumers, clinicians, researchers, industry, peak groups, parliamentarians and policymakers who gathered to address the pressing challenge of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

With escalating health system and out-of-pocket costs, it's crucial that we fund and incentivise the cost-effective care that we know works.

The summit highlighted the urgent need for action to transform healthcare for the 7+ million Australians living with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions. Expert and lived experience presentations provided in-depth insights into the importance of investing in these conditions to help individuals live healthier lives while also producing significant savings for the health system.

We were honoured to have the Hon Assistant Minister Ged Kearney, the Hon Senator Anne Ruston, and Senator Louise Pratt speak to the key issues affecting the 7+ million Australians living with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions. Facilitated by Karen Middleton, our panel of experts and lived experience speakers, including Prof David Hunter, Prof Rachelle Buchbinder, Ms Jo Root, and Assoc Prof Jane Desborough, provided key insights into what can be done to help people live healthier, more fulfilling lives while also producing significant savings for the health system.

We also received significant radio media coverage including from ABC and 2GB.

Advocacy for better care

Arthritis Australia has continued to work with a coalition of groups advocating for reforms to elective surgery in response to ongoing long wait times for joint replacements in the public system, including the Orthopaedic Association, Consumers Health Forum, Australian Patients Association, MSK Australia and Painaustralia. Arthritis Australia has advocated strongly for the national rollout of pre-surgery clinical programs to provide multidisciplinary care to people on joint replacement waitlists.

Grant funded projects

Three grants were first awarded to Arthritis Australia by the Department of Health in 2020 under the Chronic Conditions Prevention and Management funding scheme, to implement the National Strategic Action Plan for Arthritis.

December 2024 saw the successful launch and promotion of the ATLAS e-Learning modules for the management of osetoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. These have received international recognition at major conferences, with interest in implementation in a number of countries and an impactful research program including a series of publications.

In 2024-25 Arthritis Australia was awarded significant funding to continue Action Plan grant activities, in partnership with our state and territory affiliates throughout 2025 and 2026, including further promotion and quality improvements to the National Arthritis Infoline, delivery of JIA kids camps, and the enhancement and broader uptake of consumer information resources.

We have also continued a substantial program of work with the Quality Use of Medicines Alliance to empower consumers with gout to better manage their condition.

ATLAS e-Learning modules for the management of osetoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis

7. Accessible Design Division

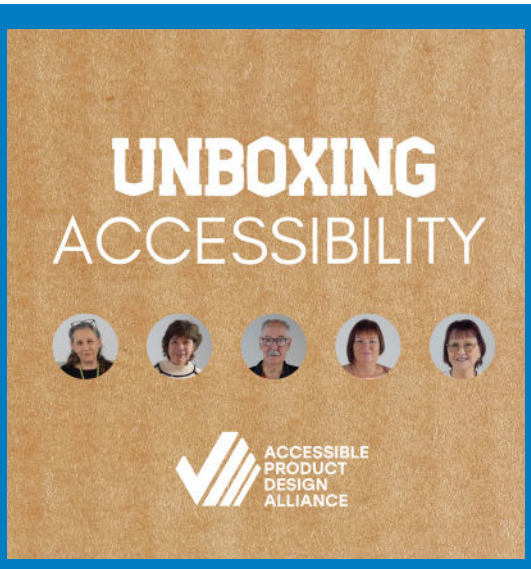
Championing accessibility in packaging and product by advocating to government and industry.

Accessibility is a core activity of Arthritis Australia. In the past year, our Accessible Design Division has been working side-by-side with consumers, industry leaders and partners to make everyday life easier for people living with arthritis. From advocating and educating for better food packaging to medication design, we are driving lasting changes that help people live more independently and with dignity.

Accessible Product Design Alliance - Unboxing Accessibility Campaign: Real Stories, Real Change

Arthritis Australia continues to proudly lead the Accessible Product Design Alliance, representing 11 not-for-profit health consumer organisations across Australia and New Zealand. This year, our focus turned to the Unboxing Accessibility Campaign, a bold new initiative designed to capture and share real-life product experiences from people living with disabilities. Hard to use products and hard to open packaging can be a barrier to independence and make people feel disabled.
Five consumers living with diverse conditions that impact hand strength and dexterity, including arthritis, cerebral palsy, stroke, Young-onset Parkinson's disease (YOPD), chronic pain and muscular dystrophy shared their personal experiences as they tried different products and packaging examples. Their stories gave authentic, first-hand insights into everyday barriers and potential improvements -highlighting the benefits of our Easy to Open Certified products.

The video series, now featured on the Arthritis Australia website, received strong industry and consumer engagement, including over 3,000 views in its first month on social media. These visual case studies also became educational tools, reaching future designers in university lectures and packaging professionals through the Australasian Institute of Packaging's State of Industry series. By showcasing the real-world impact of hard-to-open products, the campaign drives awareness and change towards more inclusive design.



Unboxing Accessibility Campaign - Consumers Tony and Sandi share their experiences opening different packaging

AIP conference attendee using our arthritis simulation gloves

Boundless Beauty Summit

Educating Future Designers and Industry

Australasian Institute of Packaging Conference

This year the Accessible Design Division presented at the Australasian Institute of Packaging's (AIP) conference, educating attendees about the impact of inaccessible packaging and practical steps toward accessible design. Joined by Storm Menzies from the Accessible Product Design Alliance, who lives with cerebral palsy, the session showcased real consumer barriers and engaged the audience with arthritis simulation gloves to demonstrate the challenges of hard-to-open packaging. Footage from the Unboxing Accessibility campaign reinforced these issues across a variety of products.

The session generated strong audience engagement, underscoring both the importance of industry-wide attention to accessible design and the commercial opportunities it offers.

University of Melbourne

We remain active in shaping the next generation of packaging professionals. The Accessible Design Division educated Master of Food and Packaging Innovation students at the University of Melbourne on the importance of accessibility, ensuring that future designers embed accessibility from the outset of their careers. Our Unboxing Accessibility series was again a great tool in illustrating the lived experience of consumers facing packaging barriers, bringing first-hand stories directly into the classroom.

Boundless Beauty Summit

The inaugural Boundless Beauty Summit was held by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, to help drive national change in how accessibility is understood and prioritised within Australia's beauty industry. This event brought together leaders across innovation and lived experience together to challenge the industry to make accessibility a core feature within packaging and product design, not just a secondary consideration. We shared our accessible design expertise as a panellist at the event to ensured that diverse consumer needs were recognised at a national level and hope new collaborations occur to drive inclusive innovation.

Australasian Packaging Innovation Design Award's (PIDA) judging

The Accessible Design Division served as a judge for the Australasian Packaging Innovation Design Awards (PIDA) Accessibility Special Award, which recognises pioneering advancements in accessible packaging. This role underscores our commitment to driving innovation that meets diverse consumer needs and enhances usability. By ensuring award winners meet our community's needs, we continue to shape a more inclusive packaging future.

Medicine packaging

Hard-to-open medicine packaging remains one of the most frequently reported consumer packaging challenges. This year we had the opportunity to present to Medicines Australia's Regulatory Affairs Working Group. The meeting was attended by 11 of the major pharmaceutical companies and allowed us to advocate for medicine packaging to be both accessible to our community and child-resistant for safety reasons. Sharing real consumer experiences, we highlighted how inaccessible packaging can affect medication adherence, independence and safety, with many individuals resorting to dangerous methods such as using tools like knives to try and access their medication. We will continue to advocate for safer, more inclusive solutions across the industry.

That's a Wrap 2024: Advocating for Change

Our annual That's a Wrap 2024 campaign continued to deliver crucial community insights. This year saw record consumer participation, highlighting packaging that makes life challenging for those with arthritis, as well as celebrating designs that make daily tasks easier.

Worst Packaging of 2024

Our Top 5 offenders were:
5. Jars – Both plastic and glass jars cause discomfort and pain for many.
4. Cleaning product packaging – Hard-to-turn caps and tough spray mechanisms add frustration to simple household chores.
3. Ring-pull cans – Difficult and painful, with sharp edges often cause injury.
2. Child-resistant medication containers – Sadly many in our community cannot open their arthritis medication when they need it, this can result in unsafe methods to open packaging with tools and leaving bottles unsealed after initial opening.
1. Meat packaging – Vacuum-sealed trays and minimal pull tabs create daily struggles, with consumers frequently forced to use knives and risking injury.

Best Packaging of 2024

The egg carton was widely celebrated for its straight-forward, accessible design. Honorary mentions included screw-top wine bottles, easy-tear wrappers and wide flip-top toothpaste lids.

In response, we proactively reached out to companies whose products were nominated, advocating for redesigned, more accessible packaging.

That's a Wrap 2024 winners

8. Research

Research is a vital part of Arthritis Australia's commitment to the arthritis community; our mission is to find solutions and innovative treatments to improve the lives of people living with different types of arthritis.

Research is vital part of Arthritis Australia's vision of freedom from arthritis. We invest in research to generate new knowledge to improve treatment and support for people with arthritis, and to provide crucial support for the earlier career research workforce.

We distributed $914,000 in research and training funding for the year 2025. The majority was expended through the National Research Program (details on page 16-18).

We are grateful to donors including the Australian Rheumatology Association (ARA) Research Fund, Arthritis and Osteoporosis Western Australia, Arthritis New South Wales, the estate of Gladys Irene Benjamin and a grant from HJ &GJ McKenzie together with generous donations from the members of our community, who understand the need to invest in research for the future of Australians with arthritis.

Arthritis Australia's Medical Director Dr David Liew with Louise Hardy and Cathryn Corcoran at the Australian Rheumatology Australia ASM

Embedding consumer involvement in research

Arthritis Australia commissioned Research Australia in 2024-25 to deliver recommendations for Arthritis Australia to embed consumer involvement in our national research program and research partnerships. The purpose of this project was to ensure that Arthritis Australia's research activities are aligned with consumer priorities, reflect genuine consumer involvement and ensure that the outcomes of research benefit consumers. Arthritis Australia also appointed a Research and Consumer Engagement Manager to drive this work forward, and approved a number of enhancements to be rolled out in the 2026 grant rounds, including:

- An increased emphasis on Consumer Involvement.
- Introducing an Expression of Interest (EOI) Phase for Project Grants and Grants-in-Aid to streamline the application process.
- Providing additional consumer engagement funding for consumers to be in involved in the research design and development process, covering remuneration, travel, and other engagement activities.

To mark the launch of Arthritis Australia's new commitment to embedding consumer involvement in research, Arthritis Australia's Medical Director, Dr David Liew presented a poster at the Australian Rheumatology Australia ASM in May 2025 and later at the 2025 Annual European Alliance of Associations for Rheumatology (EULAR) in June 2025 titled 'Embedding a consumer-driven approach into Australian arthritis research: guidance from a national multi-stage consultation'.

2025 Grants Application round

Our National Research Program grant rounds are conducted annually. Assoc Prof Helen Benham was the Chair of our Research Grants Assessment Committee for the awards distributed in 2025. We awarded 2 fellowships, 3 scholarships, 1 private practice grant, 8 project grants and 4 grants-in-aid from our National Research Program.

Research funding recipients and their research are outlined below. To read a summary of each recipients' work, visit www.arthritisaustralia.com.au/programs-research/

FELLOWSHIPS

ARA-Ken Muirden Overseas Training Fellowship
Dr Bonnia Liu
Austin Health & Royal Melbourne Hospital
Research project: $100,000
Application of imaging biomarkers using PET/CT in large vessel vasculitis and polymyalgia rheumatica
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

ARA Research Fund Private Practice Grant
Dr Paul Russo
The Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Department of Rheumatology
Research project: $50,000
JAK inhibitors in Eosinophilic Granulomatosis with Polyangiitis (EGPA): a retrospective, multicentre, observational study
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Fellowship
Dr Etienne Masle-Farquhar
Garvin Institute of Medical Research. Department of Immunology.
Research project: $25,000
Leukocytes, acquired mutations and biomarkers in osteoarthritis.
From funds donated by Arthritis NSW and Arthritis Australia

SCHOLARSHIPS

Dr Jianna He
Westmead Institute for Medical Research
Scholarship: $25,000
Pathogenic B cells in inflammatory myopathy
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Athena Chin
Flinders Medical Centre. Department of Rheumatology.
Scholarship: $25,000
Clonal Haematopoiesis in Rheumatoid Arthritis
Funds donated from ARA Research Fund

PROJECT GRANTS

Dr Jessica Day
Wicks Laboratory- WEHI. Inflammation Division
Project Grant: $50,000
IBM Biomarker Discovery
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Annabelle Small
Flinders University, College of Medicine and Public Health. Dept of Rheumatology
Project Grant: $50,000
Acquired mutations as the link between rheumatoid arthritis and cardiovascular disease
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Laura Ross
St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne. Dept of Rheumatology
Project Grant: $50,000
Prucalopride for Treatment of Systemic Sclerosis Gastrointestinal Dysmotility
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Jenny Setchell
Institute for Urban Indigenous Health. Dept of Data and Research
Project Grant: $30,000
Persistent Pain Service: A Caring Pathway for Mob
From funds donated by: The Estate of Gladys Irene Benjamin

A/Prof Laura Diamond
Griffith University. Australian Centre for Precision Health and Technology
Project Grant: $30,000
Feasibility of movement retraining in a natural environment for self-management of hip osteoarthritis
From funds donated by: The Estate of Gladys Irene Benjamin

Prof. Michelle Smith
The University of Queensland. School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
Project Grant: $30,000
Foot orthoses plus education compared to usual care for ankle OA: A pilot and feasibility trial
From funds donated by: McKenzie Grant

Dr Jonathan Quicke
The University of Queensland. School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
Project Grant: $30,000
Foot orthoses plus education compared to usual care for ankle OA: A pilot and feasibility trial
From funds donated by: HJ & GJ McKenzie Grant

"I live with rheumatoid arthritis and hope that more research is able to be done so no one has to live with pain and inflammation. "

- Consumer comment

Dr Michelle Weise
University of South Australia. Dept Clinical and Health Sciences
Project Grant: $30,000
Loading Doses of Methotrexate as Initial Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis
From funds donated by: HJ & GJ McKenzie Grant and the Estate of Marion Simpson

GRANTS-IN-AID

Dr Sarah Wallwork
University of South Australia. Dept Allied Health and Human Performance
Project Grant: $25,000
Co-designing the VITAL Project for juvenile idiopathic arthritis
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Glen Whittaker
La Trobe University. Dept of Podiatry
Project Grant: $25,000
Patient-centred outcomes of a rheumatology podiatry service for people with foot-specific symptoms: a randomised feasibility trial
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Nicole D'Souza
University of Sydney. Discipline of Physiotherapy
Project Grant: $25,000
Co-design of a knee osteoarthritis gait retraining intervention program
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Ms Erin MacIntyre
University of South Australia. Dept Allied Health and Human Performance
Project Grant: $25,000
Project: "My Best Day for Knee OA" Creation of a web-based app to individualise time-use for people with painful knee osteoarthritis
From funds donated by: Arthritis Australia and Arthritis WA

9. Board & Governance

Board Members
Ms Kaylene Hubbard
- Chair
Mr Paul Ritchie
- Deputy Chair & Treasurer
Dr David Liew
- Medical Director
Mr Simon Smith
- Consumer Director
Dr Ian Dover
- Independent Director
Ms Sonja Read
- Independent Director

Company Secretary
Mr John Butt

Chief Executive Officer
Mr Jonathan Smithers

Patron
Her Excellency the Honourable
Ms Sam Mostyn AC, Governor-General
of the Commonwealth of Australia

Emeritus Directors
Ms Ita Buttrose AC OBE
Dr Mona Marabani MBBS
Prof Patrick McNeil

Council of Advice Members
Professor Catherine Hill (THRF-SA)
- Chair to December 2024
Ms Frankie Forsyth (TAS)
- Chair from March 2025
Mr Nigel Corne (NSW)
Ms Kate Templeman (QLD)
Ms Michelle Uhlhorn (TAM)
Ms Sylvia Caratti (WA)
Ms Hilary Fowler (NT)
Dr Chris Bollen (THRF-SA)

Grants Assessment Committee
A/Prof Helen Benham – Chair
Prof Ilana Ackerman
A/Prof Michelle Hall
Dr Lauren Host
Ms Kerry Mace
Dr Jessica Day
Dr David Liew
Ms Jeanette Pritchard
A/Prof Tasha Stanton
A/Prof Jenny Walker
A/Prof Mihir Wechalekar
Dr Sanaa Zaki

Scientific Advisory Panel
Dr David Liew - Chair
Prof Kim Bennell
Dr Rachel Black
Ms Linda Bradbury
Prof Andrew Briggs
Prof David Hunter
Mr David Menzies
Prof Mark Morgan
A/Prof Jane Munro
Prof Michael Nicholas
Prof Debra Rowett
A/Prof Tasha Stanton
Prof Deborah Turner

Consumer Advisory Panel
Simon Smith - Chair
Dr Susanne Armstrong
Brett Coshell
Annique Daran
Sharyce Helyar
Harpreet Kaur
Ruth Lee
Kerry Mace
Kevyn Morris
Gayle McNaught
Fiona Naughtin
Dr Jeanette Pritchard
Hayley Stephens
Dr Christine Walker
Dr Hugh Watson
Shirani Wright

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group:
Dr Brooke Conley, Ngiyampaa, Physiotherapist and Peeneeyt Thanampool Indigenous Postdoctoral Fellow at The University of Melbourne
Mr Kevyn Morris, Aboriginal consumer representative and Consumer Advisory Panel member
Ms Grace Banfield, Project Manager
Ms Alexandra Brayshaw, Accessible Design Manager
Ms Courtney Brown, Projects and Program Manager
Ms Fahima Fouzdeen, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Louise Hardy, Interim CEO (RAP Champion and RAP Working Group Chair)
Ms Anu Sawhney, Digital Communications Manager
Mr Jonathan Smithers (former CEO and RAP Working Group Chair)
Ms Krista Sutherland Smith (former Consumer Information Resources Manager)
Ms Julie Weston, Office Manager
Ms Cathryn Corcoran, Research and Consumer Engagement Manager
Ms Sarah Stevens, Philanthropy Manager

10. Financial overview

Treasurer's Report

Paul Ritchie
Arthritis Australia Treasurer
and Deputy Chair

I am pleased to present the audited financial statements for the year ended 30th June 2025, which reports a surplus of $8,348. The organisation's financial position remains strong, with a positive net growth in equity of $261,450. This ongoing stability enables us to continue delivering high-quality information, education, and support to consumers, undertake vital advocacy initiatives, and maintain our leadership in driving the national research agenda.

Total revenue for the year of $3,236,555 is down from the previous year, predominantly due to a decline of $470,086 in donations. Overall expenditure has remained stable, with a slight decrease of $103,142 compared to the previous year. This reflects the organisation's continued focus on prudent financial management and the careful allocation of resources to ensure maximum impact across all programs and initiatives.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

Restricted funds consist of specific-purpose bequests and sponsorships/ donations from the National Research Program.

Restricted Funds reported a net surplus of $246,278, underpinned by strong dividend income.

The total restricted funds under administration have experienced a net increase of $327,449, primarily due to the revaluation of the investment portfolio.

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Unrestricted funds support operational costs and consist of predominantly of donations and bequests, although the year has seen a 32% decrease in donations and bequests as compared to FY24.

Unrestricted Funds produced a deficit of $237,930, with a net decrease in the total unrestricted funds under administration of $194,760.

INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

Total investments as at the end of the financial year had grown 10% to $9,575,366 as compared to $8,692,062 in 2024. Koda Capital continues to take an active and disciplined approach to managing the portfolio, through ongoing market monitoring, strategic asset allocation, and prudent risk management, ensuring alignment with our long-term investment strategy and organisational objectives.

CASH POSITION/LIQUIDITY

The Cash Position as at 30 June 2025 was $1,064,690, a decrease of $545,670 from last financial year end. There was positive net cash from operating activities of $154,185 and net cash used in investing activities of $643,636, with the latter predominantly being attributable to the purchase of investments.

BALANCE SHEET

Accumulated equity at the end of the financial year increased to $8,507,871. Noting the previous comments in relation to cash and investments, there were no major variances recorded in the movement of the other Balance Sheet items.

OUTLOOK

While the 2025 financial year saw the easing of sustained inflation, the competitive environment for charitable giving still remains. We recognise the importance of innovation and adaptability, and are continuing to explore new, sustainable funding opportunities to strengthen our resilience and ensure we can continue delivering meaningful impact in accordance with our 2024-2029 strategic plan. I would like to extend my ongoing thanks to the CEO, staff, volunteers and fellow Directors for all their hard work to support delivery of services and desire to achieve the vision of freedom from arthritis.

Financial position

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION
As at 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
Current Assets	$	$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,064,690	1,610,360
Trade and Other Receivables	123,614	188,449
Other Assets	29,209	37,746
Total Current Assets	**1,217,514**	**1,836,555**
Non-Current Assets		
Financial Assets	9,575,366	8,692,062
Property, Plant & Equipment	27,566	26,796
Right of Use Asset	395,005	102,522
Total Non-Current Assets	**9,997,937**	**8,821,380**
Total Assets	**11,215,451**	**10,657,935**
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	2,170,245	2,213,583
Employee Benifits	95,448	87,406
Lease Liability	61,447	87,592
Total Current Liabilities	**2,327,140**	**2,388,581**
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Benefits	19,859	-
Lease Liability	360,581	22,933
Total Non-Current Liabilities	**380,440**	**22,933**
Total Liabilities	**2,707,580**	**2,411,514**
Net Assets	**8,507,871**	**8,246,421**
Accumulated Funds		
Contractually restricted funds	7,374,429	6,918,215
Unrestricted general funds	819,129	977,962
Unrestricted business reserved funds	314,313	350,244
	8,507,871	**8,246,421**

Profit & Loss

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
As at 30 June 2025

INCOME	2025	2024
	$	$
Donations/fundraising		
General	2,599,945	3,070,031
Affiliates	122,750	122,750
Total	**2,722,695**	**3,192,781**
Membership Fees	760	880
Investments		
Interest	18,890	21,579
Dividends	489,824	428,988
Total	**508,714**	**450,567**
Other Income	4,386	1,486
Total Income	**3,236,555**	**3,645,714**
Expenses		
Research	913,774	713,008
Education & Awareness	1,166,616	1,420,925
Administration	822,395	930,903
Fundraising	201,593	163,243
Depreciation	87,901	93,367
Lease Interest	35,928	9,903
Total Expenses	**3,228,207**	**3,331,349**
Surplus for the year	**8,348**	**314,365**
Other Comprehensive income		
Net gain/(loss) on the movement in Financial Assets through Other Comprehensive Income	124,341	391,637
Other Comprehensive Income for the year	124,341	391,637
Total Income for the year	132,689	706,002
Surplus attributable to the entity	8,348	314,365
Total Comprehensive Income attributable to the entity	**132,689**	**706,002**

Revenue & Expenditure

Following is the summary of revenue & expenditure of Arthritis Australia

ASSETS HELD	**$11,215,451**
LIABILITIES HELD	**$2,707,580**

REVENUE

National Research Program	$913,774	28%
Funding for Consumer Projects, Resources & Information	$837,613	26%
Income from Other Sources	$826,202	26%
Investment Income	$508,714	16%
Accessible Design	$150,250	5%
TOTAL	**$3,236,553**	

EXPENDITURE

Employee Expenses	$971,465	30%
National Research Program	$913,774	28%
Funding for Consumer Projects, Resources & Information	$781,789	24%
Other Expenses	$482,102	15%
Accessible Design	$79,077	3%
TOTAL	**$3,228,207**	

11. Fundraising & philanthropy

As part of our strategic plan, in 2024-25 we undertook a review of our fundraising strategy and have begun to make some changes to ensure sustainable revenue to fund research grants, advocacy and general operations.

Arthritis Australia undertook two online fundraising campaigns in December 2024 and June 2025. Our first appeal was live from 21 November – 20 December 2024 and raised $1,740. The End of Financial Year (EOFY) appeal was live from 22 May – 30 June 2025 and raised $45,017. We will continue to run two online campaigns yearly, growing awareness and building branding.

Our overall donations, between general and research specific support, reached just over $210,000 in this financial year.

The generosity shown through legacy gifts and bequests, for both general and research funding, was just shy of $900,000.

In June 2025, Arthritis Australia expanded our small team to include a part time Philanthropy Manager to continue to build on increasing our major to mid-level gifts, corporate donations, bequests and overall fundraising goals.

"I live with arthritis and want to contribute to the cost of finding treatment options. "

- Consumer comment

We'd like to take this opportunity to give a heartfelt thanks to our loyal and longtime supporters, and the families and loved ones of those who left a legacy gift for Arthritis Australia in their will. Without this support, we could not continue to do the work we do supporting arthritis and musculoskeletal research in Australia, providing trusted information for people living with arthritis, and advocating for better care and support to the Australian Federal Government.

For every Australian living with arthritis and MSK,
the government spent just $6 on research from the NHMRC

12. Donors & supporters

We are extremely thankful to our donors and supporters who have helped to advance our work in raising awareness, delivering education and support services, providing annual research grants and developing advocacy programs. Many have contributed expertise, time, funding, goods and services.

Thank you for your support

Parliamentary Friends of Arthritis in the 48th Parliament

Senator Helen Polley – Co-chair
Sam Birrell MP – Co-chair
Senator Jordon Steele-John – Co-chair
Dan Repacholi MP
Alison Byrnes MP
Jess Teesdale MP
Fiona Phillips MP
Senator Carol Brown
Michelle Landry MP
Alison Penfold MP
Steve Georganas MP
Anne Stanley MP
Dr Mike Freelander MP
Rebekha Sharkie MP
Senator Anthony Chisholm
Senator Deb O'Neill
Senator Varun Ghosh
Senator Michelle Ananda-Rajah
Senator Tammy Tyrrell
Senator Raff Ciccone
Senator Ellie Whiteaker
Senator Karen Grogan
Senator Marielle Smith
Senator Lisa Darmanin
Senator Tony Sheldon

2024-2025 Donations of $500+

The Gabriele Ross Ankenbauer Legacy
Estate of Gladys Irene Benjamin
Estate of Kathleen Malicia Chante
Shyam Chintala
Estate of Beverley Downie
Estate of the late Moira McGregor Glen
Gresham Partners Limited - Gresham Charitable Giving Milestone celebration
Stephanie Johnston
Estate of Alan Jones
Harpreet Kaur
The Landman Foundation
Andrew Lear
Graeme Mcintosh
Emily Mead
Gwenneth Nancy Head Foundation
Mary Peace
Betsy & Ollie Polasek Endowment
Bryan Rollins
Scotch Oakburn College
SR500 Club Australia Motorcycle Club
Lorraine White
Mark Willcocks
Ellie Winter
Christine Woodruff (The Glow Worm Foundation)

2024-2025 Fundraisers of $500+

Elly Baker
Maria Hakim
Shaylen Wellington

Our Supporters

Thank you for your support

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ITS NOT JUST A MATTRESS ITS AN ADJUSTA MATTRESS

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Helping consumers and health professionals make safe and wise decisions about medicines and diagnostics.
Funded by the Australian Government through the Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology Program.

13. Arthritis information & contacts

For all arthritis information:
Arthritis Infoline 1800 011 041
www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

Arthritis Australia
Level 2/255 Broadway
Glebe NSW 2037
PO Box 550 Broadway NSW 2007
P: 02 9518 4441
E: info@arthritisaustralia.com.au
www.arthritisaustralia.com.au
Louise Hardy
Current Interim Chief Executive Officer

AFFILIATE OFFICES

Arthritis ACT
Building 18,
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PO Box 908, Belconnen ACT 2616
P: 02 6251 2055 F: 02 6251 2066
E: info@arthritisact.org.au
www.arthritisact.org.au
Rebecca Davey
Chief Executive Officer

The Arthritis Movement (formally Arthritis NSW & Arthritis QLD)
Queensland Office
WOTSO Chermside, Level 2
Westfield Chermside Chermside QLD 4032
PO Box 2121, Lutwyche QLD 4030
NSW Office
Suite 201/65 Hume Street
Crows Nest NSW 2065
Locked Bag 2216, North Ryde NSW 1670
P: 1300 275 826 F: 02 9857 3399
E: info@arthritis.org.au
www.arthritis.org.au
Michelle Devoy, *Acting Chief Executive Officer*

Arthritis Northern Territory
Shop 18, Rapid Creek Business Village, 48 Trower Rd
Millner NT 0810
PO Box 452, Nightcliff NT 0814
P: 08 8948 5232
E: info@aont.org.au
www.aont.org.au
Hilary Fowler
Secretary

The Hospital Research Foundation – Arthritis
111A Welland Avenue
Welland, SA 5007
P: 08 8379 5711 F: 08 8379 5707
E: contactus@fightingarthritis.org.au
www.arthritissa.org.au
Sarah Grindlay
Programme Director

Arthritis Tasmania
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Moonah TAS 7009
PO Box 780, Moonah TAS 7009
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E: info@arthritistas.org.au
www.arthritistas.org.au
Jackie Slyp
Chief Executive Officer

Arthritis Western Australia
Wyllie Arthritis Centre
17 Lemnos St
Shenton Park WA 6008
PO Box 34, Wembley WA 6913
P: 08 9388 2199 F: 08 9388 4488
E: general@arthritiswa.org.au
www.arthritiswa.org.au
Ric Forlano
Executive Director

Arthritis AUSTRALIA

No matter who you are, or your experience with arthritis, we're here to help you manage your symptoms and get on with life.
www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

myRA RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS SUPPORT PROGRAM

A consumer support website dedicated to rheumatoid arthritis. www.myra.org.au

myPsA PSORIATIC ARTHRITIS SUPPORT PROGRAM

A consumer support website dedicated to psoriatic arthritis.
www.mypsoriaticarthritis.org.au

myAS AXIAL SPONDYLOARTHRITIS SUPPORT PROGRAM

A consumer support website dedicated to axial spondyloarthritis.
www.myas.org.au

moving with ARTHRITIS

Information and benefits of moving with arthritis.
movingwitharthritis.org.au

myOA MyJointPain OSTEOARTHRITIS SUPPORT PROGRAM

A consumer support website dedicated to helping people with joint pain and osteoarthritis lead more active and pain-free lives.
myoa.org.au

MyBackPain.org.au

Information and self-management for people living with low back pain.
www.mybackpain.org.au

14. Our team

Jonathan Smithers
CEO

Louise Hardy
Director of Policy and Advocacy

Fahima Fouzdeen
Chief Financial Officer

Anu Sawhney
Digital Communications Manager

Alex Brayshaw
Accessible Design Manager

Grace Banfield
Project Manager

Courtney Brown
Program and Projects Manager

Cathryn Corcoran
Research and Consumer Engagement Manager

Sarah Stevens
Philanthropy Manager

Julie Weston
Office Manager

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AUSTRALIA

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