2023/24 ANNUAL REPORT

Arthritis AUSTRALIA

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1. A message from our Chair

Kaylene Hubbard
Arthritis Australia Chair

I am very proud of the year that has been at Arthritis Australia and the great strides we have made in pursuing our vision of Freedom from Arthritis. Our dedicated team, with the support of our donors and supporters, have increased our advocacy reach, continued to provide reliable information for those living with arthritis, and pursued our work to champion a new, consumer driven agenda for arthritis research in Australia.

Our new Strategic Plan covering 2024 to 2029 builds upon recent achievements, and guides us as our voice as a national body, representing every Australian with arthritis, is heard at the highest levels of government, sought after in consultation, and valued by the Australians we serve.

The results and benefits of our activities this year are set out in detail in this report. However, there are a few key achievements that should be highlighted.

Our advocacy reach continues to expand, covering the welcome 60 day dispensing changes in September, giving evidence at the Senate enquiry into the cost of living in January and launching, with our Parliamentary Friends in February 2024 a new report commissioned from Monash University, led by Professor Ilana Ackerman, with updated national projections for arthritis, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile arthritis to the year 2040.

The roll out of the National Arthritis Action Plan is in its final stages and we have been pleased to share the outcomes and learnings of these with government. In particular we were proud to launch culturally informed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources, working closely with the Staying Moving Staying Strong team.

We continue to focus on provision of reliable, single source of truth digital information resources for people living with arthritis, ensuring that they have accurate and updated information with which to be empowered to manage their condition. Our dedicated websites, MyAS, MyRA, and MyPsA, will soon by joined by MyOA, which is being developed in collaboration with Professor David Hunter.

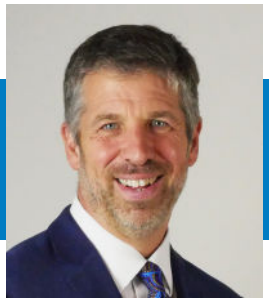
Our research program again coordinated the delivery of grants to many dedicated researchers, and our work continues to bring to life the recommendations made in the 'Impactful Arthritis Research Report. This includes a review of our grants program to embed consumer involvement and ensure reflection of consumer priorities in musculoskeletal research in Australia, as we continue to advocate for increased research into these conditions.

These and other achievements of the past year are testament to the commitment and hard work of the staff, members of the Board, our Committee members and our many volunteers who participate in steering and project committees, focus groups, testing and reviews, surveys, and our other activities. I would like to acknowledge the strong support we receive from our State and Territory affiliated organisations, other national body partners, including the Accessible Design Alliance, the Australian Rheumatology Association, and our generous sponsors and supporters.

Over the coming year our priorities will be:

- Furthering our response and implementation plan with respect to the 'Impactful Arthritis Research Report' and taking action;
- Focussing on provision of information resources to empower Australians with arthritis; and
- Continuing to advocate for the needs of people with arthritis.

2. A message from our CEO



Jonathan Smithers
Arthritis Australia CEO

I am delighted to report on another year of progress and positive change. As I write, now close to four years since my appointment, with the disruption of Covid in the rearview mirror we can more clearly see the progress being made towards our mission of Freedom from Arthritis.

The Board's strategic plan 2020-23 provided an excellent roadmap for us. Despite various challenges including the pandemic, the organisation was able to deliver all the stated aims and desired outcomes. Led by the Board we have finalised a new strategic plan, 2024-29 which builds on those foundations and will guide us in the next few years, a mix of day-to-day activities, but also with wider ambitions and some stretching targets.

Policy and advocacy have been a significant focus this year, led by our Director of Policy and Advocacy, Louise Hardy, whose detailed report appears on page 9.

The Health Minister's policy to increase minimum dispensing for certain routine medicines to 60 days provided a welcome opportunity for us to advocate for cheaper medicines for consumers. When others chose not to speak, we conducted some significant Parliamentary engagement, to help ensure the passage of legislation.
I was particularly privileged to be asked to stand with Minister Butler at the policy launch in Adelaide on 1 September 2023 and as (coincidently) I needed a prescription renewal, to receive what was probably the first 60 day script in Australia. In a crowded consumer advocacy space, opportunities to engage directly with government are rare so we were delighted to ensure that advocacy for Arthritis Australia on behalf of consumers was at the heart of government.

Pictured (L-R): Jonathan Smithers and The Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care

We were one of a very select group of consumer advocacy organisations to give evidence in person, to the Senate inquiry on the cost of living held in January, in Brisbane. Not only where we able to make clear to the Senators the considerable cost burden on arthritis consumers and difficult choices which many have to make, but also to demonstrate our expertise and influence as a peak body on behalf of millions of arthritis consumers.

The three National Strategic Action Plan grants which have consumed much of our energy over the last four years are now in their final phases. We are talking to government about the great outcomes achieved for consumers and how much more can be done. We were one of only a few groups who received funding in the federal budget in May which, working with our affiliates, will allow us to continue to expand the reach of our JIA kids camps.

Working closely with the Staying Moving Staying Strong team, we were very pleased this year to mark the launch of culturally informed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources.

Consumer Information Resources have been continued focus of our activities. Over the years we have accumulated a fantastic resource, originally just paper-based, but now fully digital, including the condition specific websites, MyJointPain, MyRA, MyPsA and MyAS. After 10 years in service, we are now working on a complete platform upgrade of MyJointPain, to become MyOA. This has been facilitated by and is in collaboration with Professor David Hunter. It Is expected to be completed by the end of this calendar year.

We were also able to launch two new consumer care guides for rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile idiopathic arthritis at the Federal Parliament in Canberra in December, with the help of our Parliamentary Friends of Arthritis. These two activities came from the National Strategic Action Plan and are a very welcome addition to our suite of resources.

Our broader work to lead as the peak body for arthritis in Australia, has continued at pace. Building on previous achievements, we have engaged with many organisations in the consumer health environment, charities, membership organisations and industry partners. These include, for example the Australian Patient Advocacy Alliance (on whose policy board I sit, the Consumers Health Forum with whom we advocated jointly on 60 day dispensing, speaking on stage at the Bio Pharma Dispatch Conference alongside Pain Australia and attending and participating in the Australian Rheumatology Association annual scientific meeting in Christchurch.

In February 2024 we held a parliamentary launch of a new report 'The future burden of arthritis in Australia: Projections to the year 2040' commissioned from Monash University, led by Professor Ilana Ackerman, with updated national projections for arthritis, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile arthritis to the year 2040. The event was well attended by MPs and other stakeholders and attracted significant media coverage including on Radio National breakfast and Channel 9 news.

The Accessible Design Division, (page 12) is a very exciting and evolving part of our delivery and our strategy for serving consumers. We continue to lead a group of 11 consumer charities in coordinated advocacy to improve design through the Accessible Product Design Alliance.

Our research program (detailed report page 14) is an area of our work of which we are very proud. The coordination of grants from our generous donors, support for our expert peer review process and then administration of numerous grants over multiple years as well as the communication of research outcomes, is a considerable undertaking but one which we know consumers both want and need in furtherance of our mission.

We have also continued to work with Research Australia to implement recommendations from their 2022 report into implementation of a national strategy and greater consumer involvement in arthritis research.

One of our strategic pillars both in our previous and new strategy relates to organisational sustainability. Our finance function is expertly managed under the leadership of our Finance Manager, Fahima Fouzdeen. We have also continued the never-ending work on updating and reviewing numerous policies and ensuring compliance with principles of good governance, assisted by our Company Secretary, John Butt.

The work which I have detailed, and much else besides, is undertaken and facilitated by my colleagues (page 26). I am proud to lead such a dedicated team. It is also a great pleasure to work collaboratively with our Affiliated arthritis organisations in the States and Territories.

In the next year, we are looking forward to continuing our success in providing information resources, advocacy and research for and on behalf of consumers and towards our mission of Freedom from Arthritis.

Channel 9 news coverage of new report

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

$ 379,000

value of projects that support affiliates

$ 713,000

in funding for research and training

594,961

visitors to our websites

10,564

calls to the arthritis Infoline

33,586

social media followers

Active email subscribers with an average open rate of 50.9%

16,304

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 range of new resources including a new exercise-specific website, two new information booklets on pain and fibromyalgia and two consumer care guides to empower people living with juvenile arthritis (JIA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA).

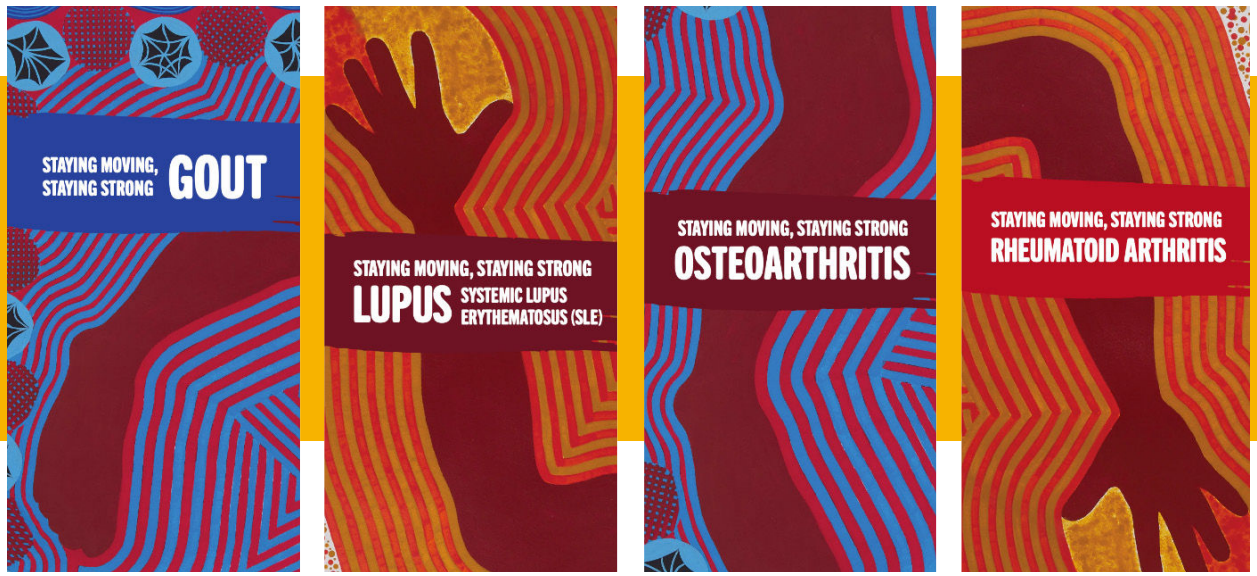
Moving with Arthritis

In 2023 Arthritis Australia launched Moving with Arthritis. A website designed to support people with arthritis access exercise programs and resources to better manage their condition. The site features a personalised quiz that recommends programs and resources based on user' arthritis type, location and exercise preferences.

Since its launch in December 2023, the site has attracted over 30,000 visitors.

Staying Moving Staying Strong resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

The Staying Moving Staying Strong (SMSS) project developed arthritis information resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living with osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and gout. The resources have been developed by the SMSS project team, in partnership with Arthritis and Osteoporosis Western Australia, with the support of Arthritis Australia and funding from the Commonwealth Government.



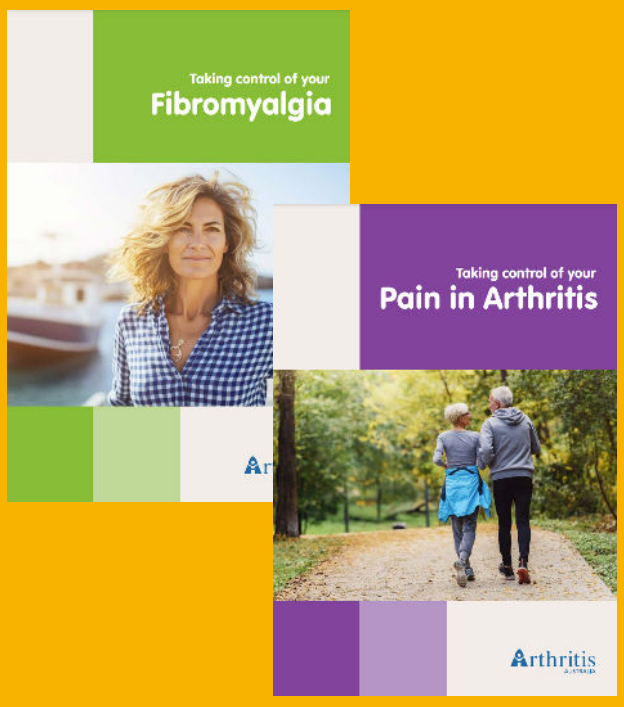
The SMSS project team consists of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers, health practitioners and Aboriginal Community members with lived experience of osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus and/or gout. The SMSS project team conducted research yarns (culturally appropriate interviews) with Aboriginal people about their arthritis information needs and preferences, and reviewed clinical practice guidelines to create culturally informed, evidence-based information resources.

Pain and fibromyalgia information booklets

Arthritis Australia published two new comprehensive information booklets this year. These include an expanded arthritis pain management booklet for people with moderate to severe arthritis-related chronic pain, and a new fibromyalgia information booklet.

Both booklets provide practical advice to support self-management of these conditions.

The booklets have been widely accessed via the Arthritis Australia website, with the pain booklet downloaded 1,886 times and the fibromyalgia 2,213 times since their launch, as well as distributed via our affiliates.



Juvenile Arthritis and Rheumatoid Arthritis Consumer Care Guides

Arthritis Australia published two consumer care guides (guides) to support people affected by JIA and RA in navigating the health system. These guides provide comprehensive information on what to expect at different stages of the disease, along with practical tips for managing each life stage. Both guides were co-designed with people affected by JIA and RA to help ensure the guides meet the diverse needs of the community.

Arthritis Australia contributed consumer codesign to develop the revised Australian JIA Clinical Care Standards and the first Australian RA Clinical Care Standard, and the Guides introduce consumers to these care standards to further empower consumers to advocate for their care.

Quality Use of Medicines Alliance

Arthritis Australia began a new partnership with The Quality Use of Medicines Alliance, a consortium of eight health and consumer organisations awarded two new grants under the Australian Government's Quality Use of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Pathology (QUDTP) Program, including a program to improve the management of gout. The Quality Use of Medicines Alliance brings together unique expertise from education providers, consumer groups, researchers, health professional colleges, peak bodies and member organisations to develop free educational activities, at scale, for a national audience of health professionals and consumers.

Arthritis Australia website

The Arthritis Australia website continues to play a crucial role in providing important information to consumers and health professionals.

More than 835,000 unique views for the websites in the 2023/24 financial year, almost double the views from the previous year of 449,500.

www.arthritisaustralia.com.au

"This service is incredibly valuable and life changing. I have learnt so much about my conditions and how to manage them, information that I never would have learnt from the short appointments with a rheumatologist and GP and physio."

- Consumer comment

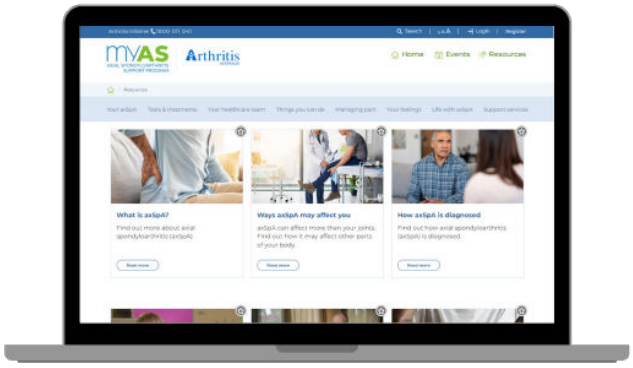
Arthritis Australia social media

Our Facebook community is 26,800 followers strong across the nation and remains an important source of real-time consumer insight and information sharing.

Our Instagram page is our best performing social platform with more than 3,120 followers.

Our X (Twitter) performance has remained stable with 2,560, providing real time content and updates for our advocacy efforts, focusing on our parliamentary engagement.

Our growing LinkedIn community has a following of more than 770 people.



594,961 visitors to our website
10,564 calls to the Arthritis Infoline
33,586 social media followers across all platforms

6. Advocacy

Speaking up for arthritis

Arthritis Australia has continued our strong national advocacy for better support for consumers and investment in research, as well as continuing to deliver on the implementation of the National Strategic Action Plan for Arthritis.

Federal budget funding for kids camps

Arthritis Australia was one of only a few disease group peak organisations to receive funding in the 2024 budget, with $300,000 announced for JIA kids camps.

Advocacy for better care

Arthritis Australia has worked 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 Australian 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.

Pictured (L-R): Adrian Cosenza, CEO Australian Orthopaedic Association, Jade Rowarth, Chair Musculoskeletal Australia, The Hon Mark Butler, Minister for Health and Aged Care, Monica Boogs, Deputy CEO Pain Australia, Louise Hardy, Director of Policy and Advocacy Arthritis Australia

Meetings have been held with the Federal and Tasmanian Health Ministers, the Shadow Federal Health Minister, WA Chief Medical Officer and senior adviser to the Minister, and an adviser to the NSW Health Minister.

Separately, Arthritis Australia secured a meeting with the Secretary of the Department of Health to discuss opportunities to provide better non-surgical care for musculoskeletal conditions. The meeting was an excellent opportunity to present proven cost effective models of care and discuss ways to overcome barriers to consumer access.

Following the airing of the Four Corners investigation into spinal cord stimulators and spinal fusion surgery, Arthritis Australia advocated strongly for patient safety and for investment in improved non-surgical care for chronic musculoskeletal pain, including a joint statement with Consumers Health Forum and Chronic Pain Australia calling for a national inquiry.

Parliamentary launches

In February 2024 we held a parliamentary launch of a new report commissioned from Monash University, led by Professor Ilana Ackerman, with updated national projections for arthritis, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis and juvenile arthritis to the year 2040. The event was well attended by MPs and other stakeholders and attracted significant media coverage including on Radio National breakfast and Channel 9 news. Meetings were also held with a number of parliamentarians to discuss key advocacy priorities of access to allied health and research funding, and the specialist rheumatology workforce.

In December 2023, Arthritis Australia organised a joint parliamentary launch of

Parliamentary Friends of Arthritis senators gathered with Arthritis Australia and the Australian Rheumatology Association to celebrate the launch of new resources for RA and JIA.

Australian's first consumer care guides for RA and JIA, and the first Australian Clinical Care Standard for RA, with the Australian Rheumatology Association. The event received excellent engagement from senators and was well attended by consumers and clinicians.

60 day scripts

In 2023-24, Arthritis Australia continued its strong advocacy for 60 day scripts to reduce the cost and inconvenience of filling routine scripts, including a media release and series of parliamentary meetings and attendance at a Green's Partyroom meeting. We have also provided up to date information to consumers.

On 1 September 2023 our CEO Jonathan Smithers and consumer Sharyce Helyar stood alongside Minister Butler at a press conference to announce the commencement of 60 day dispensing, and Jonathan may have received Australia's first 60 day script.

Parliamentary Inquiry on Cost of Living

Arthritis Australia was invited to give evidence at an inquiry hearing where

Pictured (L-R) Prof Rachelle Buchbinder, Consumer Hayley Stephens, Senator Janet Rice, Dr Anne Webster MP, Prof Ilana Ackerman, Senator Louise Pratt

Professor Ilana Ackerman being interviewed on RN Breakfast

we raised awareness of the increasing impact of cost of living and out of pocket healthcare costs on people with arthritis, as well as the impact on community organisations of decreasing donations and increased costs of providing services.

Abatacept (Orencia) shortage

Arthritis Australia worked with the Therapeutic Goods Administration, the Australian Rheumatology Association and Bristol Myers Squibb to manage the latest shortage of abatacept (Orencia) 125 mg/mL ClickJect autoinjector for subcutaneous injection and prefilled syringe for subcutaneous injection.

As the lead consumer body, we ensured timely and transparent information to consumers and consumer organisations.

Action Plan Grants

Three grants were 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. These grants are a four year investment by the federal government totalling $4 million. In 2023-24, Arthritis Australia and our affiliates successfully completed delivery and evaluation of all activities under the Consumer Awareness and Education and Information Support grants, which included increasing National Arthritis Infoline calls by over 50%, undertaking quality improvement, delivering JIA kids camps and developing new consumer information resources.

The remaining grant is the Health Professional Education and Training Grant

Working with a consortium of experts, the objectives of this grant to deliver two core projects are nearly complete:

i) To develop the ATLAS e-Learning education modules for the management of osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis, accessed digitally by a range of health professionals that provide clinical care for arthritis consumers. This project is being delivered by a consortium of seven partners comprising of: University of Sydney, University of Melbourne, Arthritis and Osteoporosis Western Australia, Curtin University, Australian Rheumatology Association, and Arthritis Australia.

ii) To develop and make publicly available an Australian Living Guideline for the Management of Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis. This project is seeking to present the best available, current scientific evidence and offer clinical recommendations to assist decision making in the management of JIA. It is being produced by a consortium comprising of the Australia and New Zealand Musculoskeletal Clinical Trials Network, the Australian Rheumatology Association, and Cochrane Musculoskeletal.

Arthritis NSW Camp Footloose

7. Accessible Design Division

Advocating to government and industry to improve product and packaging accessibility.

Arthritis Australia proudly leads the Accessible Product Design Alliance, a collective comprising of 11 not-for-profit health consumer organisations. In the previous years, this coalition issued a joint position statement, shedding light on the challenges faced by 5 million consumers living with chronic conditions and disabilities in both Australia and New Zealand, who commonly struggle with hard to use products and packaging. The group continues to explore ways to drive industry change, aiming to encourage innovation that enhances the usability of products and packaging.

ACCESSIBLE PRODUCT DESIGN ALLIANCE

Accessibility Advocacy Kit - Arthritis Australia and the Accessible Product Design Alliance have collaboratively developed and launched an Advocacy Toolkit to empower our supporters in addressing accessible design concerns with both government and industry. This kit features a summary of key issues as well as template letters that can be customised and send to both manufacturers of products and Members of Parliament (MP), to lobby for change. The initiative aims to provide our followers with the tools they need to make their voices heard and drive positive change.

The Good, The Bad & The Hack - For the second consecutive year, the Alliance ran The Good, The Bad & The Hack campaign, which continues to encourage individuals living with disabilities to share both their positive and negative product experiences, along with any life hacks or workarounds that make life easier. Participants filmed themselves in their chosen category and then the Alliance shared the campaign with the community throughout the month of September.

This collaborative initiative highlights our dedication to nurturing a supportive community, amplifying the voices of individuals with disabilities, and advocating for meaningful improvements in product and packaging design.

Educating future packaging designers

The Accessible Design Division is constantly on the lookout for opportunities to make a difference, and one of the ways we have accomplished this is by educating the next generation of packaging designers about accessibility. In partnership with the Australian Institute of Packaging (AIP), the Division had the opportunity to teach the Master of Food and Packaging Innovation students at the University of Melbourne. The lecture explored the challenges faced by our community and discussed design elements that can either enhance packaging accessibility or create obstacles for users. Students will take this knowledge into their careers and hopefully design more inclusive packaging in the future.

On the Air

This year, the Accessible Design Division has had the opportunity to appear in ABC radio talkback segments twice, both in Brisbane and Adelaide, to discuss the challenges posed by inaccessible packaging. We are thrilled to gain more media attention on this crucial issue for our community.

PIDA Judging

The Accessible Design Division has been invited once more by the AIP to serve as judges for the Australasian Packaging Innovation Design Award's (PIDA) Accessibility Special Award. This important industry award recognises companies that are innovating in the accessibility sector. The Division was particularly excited to see advancements occurring in the meat industry, with the award going to Don Smallgoods new innovative flow wrap design.

That's a Wrap 2023

The Accessible Design Division's annual social media campaign is designed to assess packaging that affects consumers with arthritis, identifying the best and worst examples. This initiative offers crucial insights into the experiences of our arthritis community and helps the Division address problematic packaging designs.

The 2023 campaign achieved an impressive number of nominations and votes in both the best and worst packaging categories. Furthermore, the Division was able to engage with companies that had products nominated in the 'worst' category, underscoring the campaign's value as a platform for change.

Worst Packaging of 2023
Our top 5 worst offenders were:

5. Peel Tabs – Usually labelled as 'Peel/ Pull Here', sadly many of these are still impossible to open.

4. Blister Packs – Both foil and plastic blister packs are tricky for consumers with arthritis to open, with some consumers resorting to using knifes and scissors to access the contents.

3. Jars – Plastic and glass jars with metal lids continue to inflict pain to our consumers hands.

2. Foil/induction Seals – Usually found hidden under drink and sauce bottle lids, these have caused a lot of trouble for our community this year.

1. Childproof medication containers – We know the problem is significant when the packaging is described by one consumer as a "terrible torture device", while another noted that some pharmacists struggle to open them on your behalf. Past research has shown that hard to open medicine packaging can mean that patients are unable to take their medication in a timely manner, which means change in this category is needed urgently.

Best Packaging of 2023
This year we had a variety of nominations such as biscuits, tea, and sauce bottle packaging. The winner this year is the Goodness Me Really Fruity snacks. The snacks are packaged in a pouch with serrated edges that requires minimal force and grip strength to open.

This campaign highlights our dedication to enhancing accessibility for the arthritis community, while also advocating for meaningful improvements in product packaging.

"Thank you for the excellent news about the offer of a Grant-in-Aid from Arthritis Australia. I am thrilled that the Grants Committee for Arthritis Australia could see the value in supporting our team's research. "

-National Research Program recipients' comment

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.

We distributed $713,000.00 in research and training funding for the year 2023. The majority was expended through the National Research Program (details on page 16).

We are grateful to the ARA Research Trust, ARA Victoria, Arthritis and Osteoporosis Western Australia, Arthritis New South Wales, together with generous donations from the members of our community, made via our website and through bequests who understand the need to invest in research for the future of Australians with arthritis.

$ 713,000

in funding for research and training

Embedding consumer involvement in research

Arthritis Australia commissioned Research Australia to deliver a project to embed consumer involvement in our national research program. This project will ensure Arthritis Australia's research activities are aligned with consumer priorities, reflect genuine consumer involvement, and ensure the outcomes of the research benefit consumers. The approach will respect the agency of consumers and demonstrate a commitment to empowering consumers.

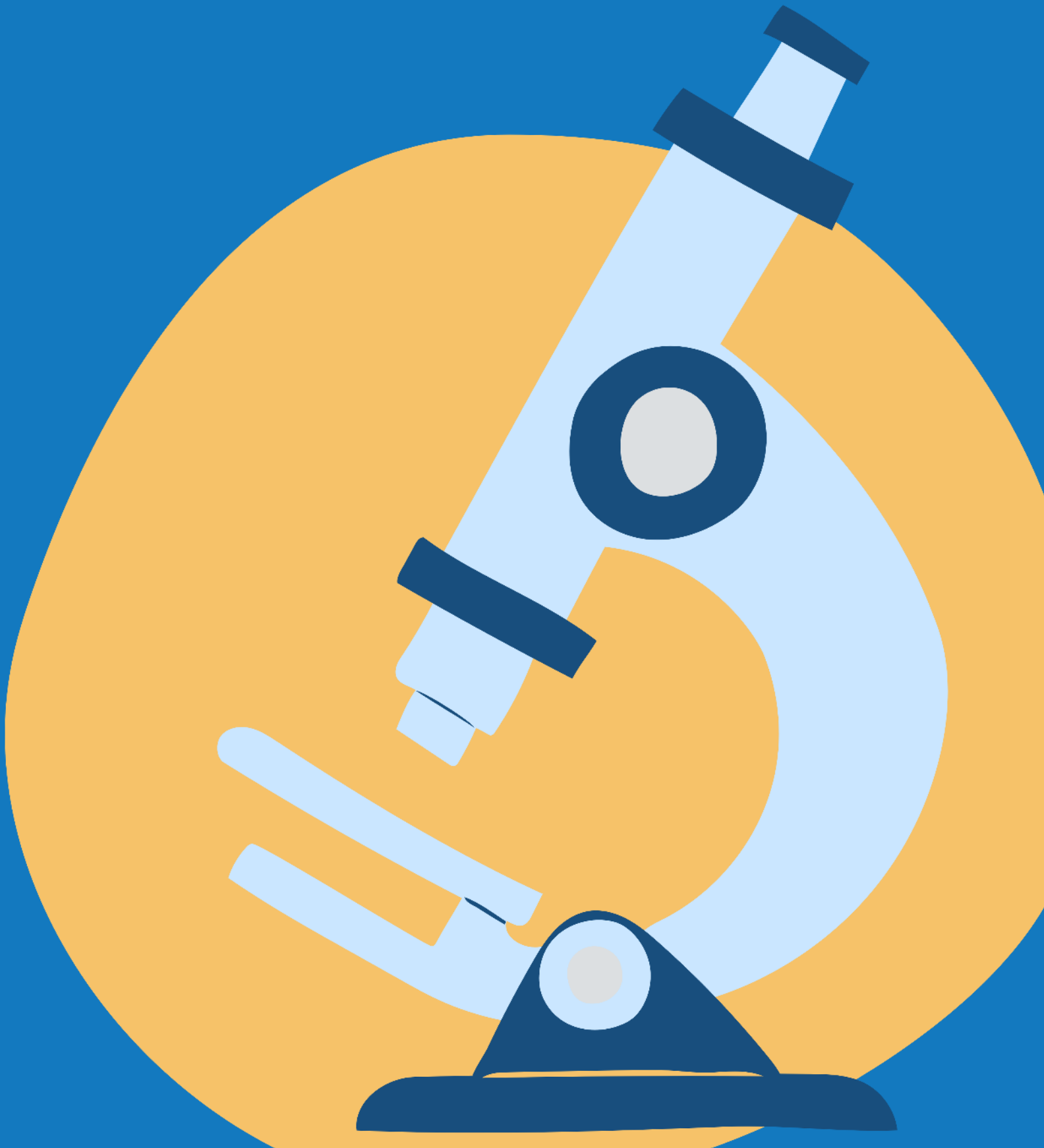
Research Advocacy

Arthritis Australia was a finalist in Research Australia's 2023 Advocacy Awards, in recognition of our ongoing campaign to raise awareness of the long term underfunding of arthritis research and to advocate for a Medical Research Future Fund Mission.

Pictured (L-R): Louise Hardy, Krista Sutherland-Smith and Jonathan Smithers attaending the Advocacy Awards

2024 Grants Application round

Our National Research Program is conducted annually. Assoc Prof Helen Benham was the Chair of our Research Grants Assessment Committee for the awards distributed in 2024. We awarded 3 fellowships, 1 scholarship, 1 memorial award, 5 project grants and 4 grants-in-aid from our National Research Program.



Recipients of the research funding and their research is 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 Talia Igel
Monash Health, Department of Rheumatology
Research project: $100,000.00
Identifying Ancestry-Specific Lupus Molecular Profiles that Could Uncover New Genetic Causes of SLE
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

ARA Philip Robinson Memorial Award
Dr Mandana Nikpour
The University of Melbourne at St Vincent's Hospital and St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research Melbourne - Department of Rheumatology and Department of Dermatology
Research project: $50,000.00
Gene signatures in scleroderma skin: towards molecular disease classification and personalised treatment targets
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

ARA Victorian Fellowship
Dr Luigi Zolio
The University of Melbourne
Research project: $50,000.00
Defining and Validating the Lupus Low Disease Activity State (LLDAS) using the British Isles Lupus Activity Group (BILAG) Index
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Fellowship
Dr Belinda Lawford
University of Melbourne
Research project: $30,000.00
Co-designing a physical activity mobile app for lower limb osteoarthritis: JointMotion
From funds donated by: Arthritis WA, Arthritis Foundation of Australia

SCHOLARSHIPS

Ms Lara Glass
Westmead Institute for Medical Research, Centre for Immunology and Allergy Research
Scholarship: $20,000.00
Linking genotype and autoantibodies to pathology and treatment in systemic lupus erythematosus
From funds donated by: Arthritis Foundation of Australia

PROJECT GRANTS

Prof Elina Hypponen
University of South Australia, Clinical and Health Sciences
Project Grant: $45,000.00
Machine learning to predict and prevent rheumatoid arthritis
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Romi Haas
Monash University, School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine
Project Grant: $45,000.00
Living clinical practice guidelines for management of rotator cuff related shoulder pain: Priority questions
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Prof Christopher Little
Kolling Institute - University of Sydney, Raymond Purves Bone and Joint Research Lab
Project Grant: $45,000.00
Does mild joint injury and how its managed, increase risk of catastrophic injury and post-traumatic osteoarthritis?
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund and Arthritis Foundation of Australia

Dr Claire Owen
The University of Melbourne - Austin Health, Department of Rheumatology
Project Grant: $45,000.00
Utility of 18F-FDG Whole Body PET/CT To Quantify Disease Activity and Monitor Treatment Response in PMR
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Changkui Fu
Australian Institute for Bioengineering and Nanotechnology
Project Grant: $20,000.00
Synthetic joint bio-lubricants for mitigating osteoarthritis and associated chronic pain
From funds donated by: Arthritis NSW

GRANTS-IN-AID

Dr Kim Watkins
Curtin University, Curtin School of Allied Health
Project Grant: $20,000.00
Closing gaps in osteoarthritis care through community pharmacy
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Annabelle Small
Flinders University, Department of Rheumatology
Project Grant: $20,000.00
Synovial neutrophils in early rheumatoid arthritis: relationship with clinical outcome and the development of improved handling procedures
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Caitlin Jones
The University of Sydney, Sydney Musculoskeletal Health
Project Grant: $20,000.00
REduced oPioids After joInt Replacement Surgery (REPAIRS): a pilot trial
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

Dr Rocco Cavaleri
Western Sydney University, School of Health Sciences
Project Grant: $15,000.00
Home-based neuromodulation: Boosting the analgesic effects of exercise
From funds donated by: ARA Research Fund

9. Board & Governance

Board Members
Ms Kaylene Hubbard
- Chair

Prof Susanna Proudman
- Deputy Chair & Medical Director until Nov 2023

Dr David Liew
- Medical Director from Nov 2023

Mr Paul Ritchie
- Treasurer
- Deputy Chair from Nov 2023

Mr Simon Smith
- Consumer Director

Dr Ian Dover
- Independent Director

Ms Sonja Read
- Independent Director

Ms Margaret Stone
- Independent Director until Nov 2023

Company Secretary
Mr John Butt

Chief Executive Officer
Mr Jonathan Smithers

Patron
His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AS DSC (Retd), 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
Mr Nigel Corne (NSW) - Chair until March 2024
Professor Catherine Hill (SA)- Chair from March 2024
Ms Kate Templeman (QLD)
Ms Sylvia Caratti (WA)
Ms Hilary Fowler (NT)
Ms Frankie Forsyth (TAS)

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
Jeanette Pritchard
Hayley Stephens
Dr Christine Walker
Dr Hugh Watson
Shirani Wright

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/Professor Tasha Stanton
Prof Deborah Turner

Grants Assessment Committee
Assoc Prof Helen Benham – Chair
Prof Ilana Ackerman
Assoc Prof Michelle Hall
Dr Lauren Host
Ms Kerry Mace
Dr Katie Morrisroe
Dr Susanna Proudman
Mr Simon Smith
Assoc Prof Tasha Stanton
Assoc Prof Jenny Walker
Assoc Prof Mihir Wechalekar
Dr Sanaa Zaki

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 2024, which reports a surplus of $314,365. The financial position of the organisation remains sound, with a positive net increase in equity of $706,002, continuing to allow Arthritis Australia to deliver on providing quality information, education and support for consumers, together with important advocacy work as well as our ability to drive the national research agenda.

Total revenue for the year of $3,645,714 is 14% down from the previous year, predominantly due to a decline of $324,301 in donations. Total expenditure has remained steady, reporting a modest decline of $89,073 since last year.

RESTRICTED FUNDS

Restricted funds consist of specific-purpose bequests, National Research Program sponsorships/ donations and funds from National Strategic Action Plan Grants.

Restricted Funds reported a net surplus of $205,087, with continued strong dividend receipts, being 9% up on the previous year.

The total restricted funds under administration have experienced a net increase of $557,523, primarily due to the revaluation of the investment portfolio.

UNRESTRICTED FUNDS

Unrestricted funds support our operational costs and consist of public donations and bequests. Additional funding is from Accessible Design (the accessible packaging advisory division) and fees from trademark licences. Federal government grant funding includes an element of contribution towards operational costs. This year has seen a decrease in donations and bequests as compared to previous years.

Unrestricted Funds produced a surplus of $109,278, with a net increase in the total unrestricted funds under administration of $148,479.

INVESTMENT PERFORMANCE

Total investments as at the end of the financial year were $8,692,062 as compared to $7,795,183 in 2023, with a net return after fees of 9.6% for the year to 30 June 2024. Koda Capital continues to actively manage the portfolio in support of our investment strategies.

CASH POSITION/LIQUIDITY

The Cash Position as at 30 June 2023 was $2,585,244, The Cash Position as at 30 June 2024 was $1,610,360, a decrease of $974,884 from last financial year end. There was a net cash deficit from operating activities of $377,343 and a net cash deficit from investing activities of $517,544, the latter predominantly being attributable to the purchase of investments.

BALANCE SHEET

Accumulated equity at the end of the financial year increased by $706,002 to $8,246,421. Together with the operating surplus, this was predominantly as a result of the net gain of $407,991 on the revaluation of the investment portfolio.

Noting the previous comments in relation to cash and investments and with the exception of trade and other payables decreasing by $689,825 to $2,213,583, there were no major variances recorded in the movement of the other Balance Sheet items.

OUTLOOK

During the 2024 financial year, all corners of the economy were again affected by persistently high inflation, which despite some softening results over the year, the Reserve Bank of Australia has signalled that interest rate cuts are not likely until mid-2025. The economic climate poses challenges to fundraising activities and the competitive landscape for charitable giving has intensified, making it imperative for us to innovate and secure new and sustainable funding sources.

In response to this, Arthritis Australia has recently developed its 5 year strategic plan (2024-2029) and I remain optimistic about our ability to adapt and thrive as Australia's leading national arthritis charity, as we continue to link Australians with arthritis to information, education and support.

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 2024

	2024	2023
Current Assets	$	$
Cash and Cash Equivalents	1,610,360	2,585,244
Trade and Other Receivables	188,449	112,514
Other	37,746	25,906
Total Current Assets	**1,836,555**	**2,723,664**
Non-Current Assets		
Financial Assets	8,692,062	7,795,183
Property, Plant & Equipment	26,796	25,838
Right of Use Asset	102,522	184,540
Total Non-Current Assets	**8,821,380**	**8,005,561**
Total Assets	**10,657,935**	**10,729,225**
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	2,213,583	2,903,408
Employee Benifits	87,406	77,263
Lease Liability	87,592	79,997
Total Current Liabilities	**2,388,581**	**3,060,668**
Non-Current Liabilities		
Employee Benefits	-	17,613
Lease Liability	22,933	110,525
Total Non-Current Liabilities	**22,933**	**128,138**
Total Liabilities	**2,411,514**	**3,188,806**
Net Assets	**8,246,421**	**7,540,419**
Accumulated Funds		
Contractually restricted funds	6,918,215	6,360,692
Unrestricted funds	1,328,206	1,179,727
	8,246,421	**7,540,419**

Profit & Loss

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME
As at 30 June 2024

INCOME	2024	2023
	$	$
Donations/fundraising		
General	3,070,031	3,727,425
Affiliates	122,750	122,750
Total	**3,192,781**	**3,850,175**
Membership Fees	880	840
Investments		
Interest	21,579	4,557
Dividends	428,988	378,697
Total	**450,567**	**383,254**
Other Income	1,486	448
Total Income	**3,645,714**	**4,234,717**
Expenses		
Research	713,008	652,383
Education & Awareness	1,420,925	1,621,834
Administration	930,903	904,903
Fundraising	163,243	129,489
Depreciation	93,367	101,003
Lease Interest	9,903	10,810
Total Expenses	**3,331,349**	**3,420,422**
Surplus for the year	**314,365**	**814,295**
Other Comprehensive income		
Net Gain on revaluation of Financial Assets	407,991	361,417
Loss on Disposal of Investment	(16,354)	(25,793)
Other Comprehensive Income for the year	391,637	335,624
Total Income for the year	706,002	1,149,919
Surplus attributable to the entity	314,365	814,295
Total Comprehensive Income attributable to the entity	**706,002**	**1,149,919**

Revenue & Expenditure

Following is the summary of revenue & expenditure of Arthritis Australia

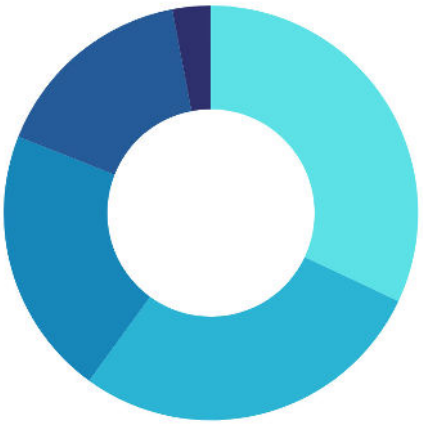
ASSETS HELD	**$10,657,935**
LIABILITIES HELD	**$2,411,514**

REVENUE

Income from other Sources	$1,360,108	37%
Funding for consumer projects, resources & information	$963,069	26%
National Research Program	$713,008	20%
Investment Income	$450,567	12%
Accessible Design	$158,963	4%
TOTAL	**$3,645,715**	

EXPENDITURE

Funding for consumer projects, resources & information	$1,076,504	32%
Employee Expenses	$932,910	28%
National Research Program	$713,008	21%
Other Expenses	$516,363	16%
Accessible Design	$92,522	3%
TOTAL	**$3,331,307**	



11. 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

Awareness and education

Johnson & Johnson
Novartis Australia
UCB Australia Pty Ltd
Sandoz Pty Ltd
Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd

Parliamentary Friends of Arthritis in the 47th Parliament

Senator Louise Pratt - Chair
Senator Janet Rice - Co-convenor
Dr Anne Webster MP - Co-convenor
Dr Monique Ryan MP - Member
Senator Anne Ruston - Member
Mr Steve Georganas MP - Member
Senator Tammy Tyrrell - Member
Ms Zali Steggall MP - Member
Senator Carol Brown - Member
Mr Graham Perrett MP - Member
Senator Catryna Bilyk - Member
Dr Gordon Reid MP - Member

2023-2024 Donations of $500+

The Gabriele Ross Ankenbauer Legacy
Bean Counting Plus
Phong Bui
Eleanor Bullen
Adam Cogar
Laurent Dapremont
Miriam Davies
Earlwood Social Golf Club
Mark Feetom
Chris Flavelle-Smith
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Gwenneth Nancy Head Foundation
James Hejtmanek
A. Hickey
Libby Higgin
Stephanie Johnston
In memory of Peter Jorgensen
Harpreet Kaur
William Kosky
La Rocca Investments Pty Ltd
James Lewis
Heather Logue
In memory of Margaret Morgan
David Motteram
In loving memory of Samar Munoz
Perpetual Foundation
In memory of Claudette Perrett
John Quinlan
Eugenia Raskopoulos
Susan Rathburn
Estate of the late Marjorie Renshaw
Bryan Rllins
Sanitarium Health & Wellbeing Company
In memory of Prabati Sarkar
C. Savage
Paul Scott
Ben & Gloria Sharma Foundation
Rob Stewart
Andrew Strang
Meridy Taite
Snezana Thomson
Zoran Tsangidis
United Clinical
Bruce & Maureen Wallis
Christine Woodruff (Glow Worm Foundation)
Woolcock Construction Pty Ltd

2023-2024 Fundraisers of $500+

Stacy Burgess
Helen Mardiste
Tim Patrick
James Perrett in memory of Claudette Perrett
Daniel Sherwood

Our supporters

Thank you for your support

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12. Arthritis information & contacts

For all arthritis information:
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Jonathan Smithers
Chief Executive Officer

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Hilary Fowler
Secretary

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Alex Green
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Sarah Grindlay
Programme Director

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Jackie Slyp
Chief Executive Officer

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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

MyJointPain.org.au

Information and self-management plans tailored for people who have joint pain or been diagnosed with osteoarthritis.
www.myjointpain.org.au

MyBackPain.org.au

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

13. Our team

Jonathan Smithers
CEO

Louise Hardy
Director of Policy and Advocacy

Fahima Fouzdeen
Finance Manager

Anu Sawhney
Digital Communications Manager

Alex Brayshaw
Accessible Design Manager

Peter Brongo
Accessible Design Coordinator
(Until 1/23)

Courtney Brown
Project Officer

Grace Banfield
Project Manager
(From 4/24)

Maryanne Ng
Senior Project Manager
(Until 3/24)

Julie Weston
Administration
(From 5/24)

Jenica Alano
Administration Assistant
(Until 3/24)

Krista Sutherland-Smith
Consumer Information Resource Manager

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