

DRAGONS ABREAST AUSTRALIA

Annual Report 2018 – 2019



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Board and Advisory Panel

Board of Directors

Mabel Sansom - Chair

Jo Parry (Retired 1 March 2019)

Anne Stowe

Marion Blake

Pru Menzies

Megan Tozer

Patricia Hancock

Advisory Panel Members

Rosalie Thomas

Sue Bowen

Jo Parry (Appointed 1 March 2019)

Dragons Abreast Australia celebrated their 20th anniversary in October 2018. This was a significant achievement but more importantly it means that thousands of breast cancer survivors have paddled their way to improved health and fitness after treatment. Often survivors are on their own after treatment has finished and left to ask 'what next'? Paddling fills that void and has been medically proven to benefit breast cancer survivors.

Paddlers come in all shapes, sizes and age groups and many haven't done any sport since leaving school.

Dragons Abreast Australia offers all survivors and their supporters the opportunity to participate and everyone is assured of a warm welcome. At DAA we are committed to ensuring all those diagnosed with breast cancer have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of paddling. There are 29 groups in Australia with over 1100 members who paddle at least once a week, if not more. Our groups are always looking for new members and regularly schedule 'Come and Try' days and/or other events

DRAGONS ABREAST AUSTRALIA

Annual Report

2018-2019

The past year has been one of excitement and achievement for Dragons Abreast Australia. In July 2018 approximately 500 of our members participated in the International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission (IBCPC) Participatory Festival held in beautiful Florence Italy. This event is held every four years at different locations around the world and breast cancer teams from many countries join together to participate, remember, celebrate and honour the spirit and strength of all those diagnosed with breast cancer. It was an amazing three days of racing, laughing and enjoying the beauty of such a great city and paddling on the Arno River. For those who attended the event it will be remembered forever. A view from one participant shared by many says it all:

"For me personally, it was the joy of being part of a DAA composite team. I think that it really is what DAA does best. We were an eclectic mix of paddlers literally from all over Australia. When we explained to other paddlers where we were all geographically situated, they always asked how often we got together to practice. With a big smile we just replied that one day's practice (in Italy) was our first ever paddle together! When the starting gun fired, I did try my hardest, and I really wanted to win. I don't even know what our times were and I was excited that we did not come last in most of our races – I just wanted to be there!!"

DAA organised three composite teams for the Festival, providing the opportunity for paddlers from our member groups who were not or could not sending a team to Florence to participate. This is one of the strengths of having a national body, a structure which many survivor groups in other countries wish they had.

Participating in an event half a world way takes some organising and DAA is proud of all those who trained, travelled, supported and participated in such a memorable event. When over 4,000 breast cancer survivors and some of their supporters dressed in pink lined the banks of the Arno River to remember our breast cancer angels with a Flowers on the Water ceremony you were in awe of their determination and strength. DAA sends a special thank you to our members who organized the composite teams. Not an easy task but done with enthusiasm.

Grazie IBCPC e Firenze, un evento davvero eccezionale in una bellissima citta.

As members started to arrive back in Australia their attention turned to the 20th Anniversary of Dragons Abreast Australia. It is quite an achievement for any business, never mind a charity, that relies solely on donations to exist. We are proud to say that many members who were with us in the beginning are still paddlers or members today. This achievement is only made possible through the commitment of member groups around Australia with the assistance of the Board and national office in Brisbane.

DAA brings a national group of volunteers together who continue the mission to help breast cancer survivors improve their health.

To celebrate this milestone, a special logo was designed which we are proudly using on all communications.

Here are some key highlights from this past year!

Our Events – Connect.Move.Live

Dragons Abreast Festival and Gala Dinner – October 2018

The Dragons Abreast Festival at Darling Harbour in Sydney was again a success and extra special as we were celebrating 20th years of DAA. Under the capable management of Angie O'Reilly and her committed group of volunteers, this corporate/social event is our only major fundraiser. Funds raised at this event allow DAA to do more for existing groups and to help with the start-up of new groups. Some highlights of the event are watching paddlers who have never been in a dragon boat win a race (very exciting), the Chinese Youth League Lion Dancers and of course the Flowers on the Water ceremony where we take time to remember those who sadly have joined our Angels Abreast team.

'Flourish and Grow', DAA's 20th anniversary celebration was a nod to both Dragons Abreast Australia's growth and individual members' transformations.

Held in Sydney on the evening of the 2018 Festival, the DAA 20th Anniversary Gala Dinner embodied the remarkable journey Dragons Abreast Australia has been on over the past two decades. Attendees reflected on how DAA has made a tangible difference to thousands of people following a breast cancer diagnosis.

The evening was also a time to reflect on the early days of DAA. Memories were shared by two founding members Michelle Hanton and Janelle Gamble. DAA would like to acknowledge and thank dinner sponsor Amoena and all those who donated to and purchased silent auction item.

Ord River Marathon

While DAA encourages participation first, competition does happen. Our members love a challenge, particularly a personal one. In early June 2019 120 members paddled the mighty Ord River a 55 KM one day paddle from Lake Argyle to Kununurra. This certainly was their challenge but more importantly a bucket list item for many. The weather was perfect and while there were some very tired paddlers at the end of the day they all had big smiles remembering what they had accomplished. Congratulations to all who took up the challenge.

The Business of DAA

Members meeting – February 2019

DAA strives to always maintain transparent and open communication with all member groups. In early February 2019 representatives from our groups joined with the Board in Brisbane to discuss the future of DAA and help us plan. Their input was incredibly valuable and the Board of DAA appreciates their participation and suggestions.

DAA Board and Advisory Panel also want to acknowledge and thank the many groups who have donated to DAA as a result of their fundraising efforts. Their donations ensure that DAA can continue to benefit all breast cancer survivors around Australia.

Appointment of National Ambassador

DAA is happy to announce the appointment of Dr. Kellie Toohey as a National Ambassador. Dr. Toohey joins Robyn Moore in spreading the benefits of paddling for breast cancer survivors. Dr. Toohey has dedicated much of her professional life to improving the lives of others through exercise. She is an Accredited Exercise Physiologist and Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Canberra with a PhD in Exercise Oncology. While completing her PdD she worked with Dragons Abreast Canberra as they contributed to her thesis through demonstration of how exercise has benefitted them.

Dr. Toohey also dedicated her thesis to the late Anna Wellings Booth OAM and Bea Brickhill commenting and thanking them for igniting the fire in her heart to do more for cancer survivors. Anna Wellings Booth OAM was the founder of DA Canberra and a founding member of the national body.

Board Update

Dragons Abreast Australia now looks forward to the next twenty years. DAA will continue to use the theme 'Flourish and Grow' as we plan for the future.

However, our continued success would not be possible without the hard work and dedication of our Brisbane office staff:

Karen Jones – Office Manager
Vanessa Scott – Communications Guru
Collette McCaffrey – Bookkeeper Expert

DAA also acknowledges Jo Parry who has been a long serving Board member and an IBCPC representative for Australia. Jo is a member of DA Brisbane group, a breast cancer survivor and with her involvement over so many years, has provided the Board with valuable expertise. Jo retired from the Board on 1st March 2019 and while we will miss her she has now been appointed to the Advisory Panel.

DAA welcomed three new Board members elected at the 2018 AGM. They are all long term DAA members and their knowledge and skills will add strength and support to the Board.

Welcome:

Pru Menzies

Pat Hancock

Megan Tozer

It has been an exciting and busy year for DAA. The Board has worked hard to ensure DAA benefits not only breast cancer survivors but each member group. The Board and Advisory Panel are volunteers and contribute a great deal of time and expertise to their role. Each one of them has taken on additional roles this year from organising the Festival, the Gala Dinner, the Ord Paddle and many other activities. Thank you for always doing more than required.

Dragons Abreast Australia relies solely on donations and receives no funds or grants from government or other sources. We have been very grateful during the past year to receive donations from not only our sponsors, acknowledged on our website, but also our groups. Each dollar we receive means we can provide services to our groups and individual members.

Thank you to all who so generously donated.

Dragons Abreast Australia continues to build relationships where we can share information that will benefit members such as Mother's Day Classic, International Breast Cancer Paddling Commission and we are also a full voting member of the Australian Dragon Boating Federation.

Conclusion

As we conclude another year, there are so many to thank for our success such as Member Group Coordinators, DAA members, sponsors of our events, corporate and individual donors. DAA could not succeed without you and thank you for your contribution. Your spirit, support and energy are very much appreciated by the Board. You ensure that the DAA message of participation, inclusiveness and awareness is heard around the country. Without you, there is no Dragons Abreast Australia

The Dragons Abreast core values remain:

- Promotion of a healthy and positive outlook towards life after diagnosis
- Competition is secondary to camaraderie and the provision of a supportive post treatment environment; and
- Assist in raising breast cancer awareness within the community, helping to change associated stigmas.

Mabel Sansom (Chair) on behalf of the Board

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