

Australian Association for Adolescent Health Ltd
Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 2 December 2020, 3.30pm AEDT
President's Report

What a year it has been. Following our national Youth Health conference in Melbourne 12 months ago, during which we held the AGM, the country went on to see over 17 million hectares of land burn across six of our eight states and territories. As this bushfire season came to an end in March this year, the country joined the rest of the world in facing a global pandemic, the likes of which none of us will have personally seen. I want to take a moment to pause and reflect on the enormity of these events. In doing so I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you, **our members**, for all you continue to do in youth health and most especially for staying the course with AAAH, supporting us through your membership and loyalty to an organisation which I truly think our young people, and those who work with and for them, need more than ever. A summary of the achievements and activities of AAAH over the financial year 2019 to 2020 can be found in our [Annual Report](#).

I do want to mention some specific achievements here:

Governance

- An active, full Board of Directors has continued to meet monthly throughout the year
- AAAH Ltd underwent its first external financial audit (report available in the Members Area under AGM papers) and achieved the highest rating possible for our type of organisation
- AAAH has been able to remain financially stable despite the reduction in revenue this year
- AAAH Ltd was granted **Deductible Gift Recipient** status last month

Member Engagement

- The AAAH website was upgraded in July/ August this year
- Regular newsletters have continued with additional special bulletins issued throughout the year

Activities

- Publication of [Guidelines for Appropriate Remuneration of Young People in Health Program and Service Consultations](#)
- In the second half of this year, we have run a series of six webinars in conjunction with the Society for Youth Health Professional Aotearoa New Zealand, which are available for members to view on our website
- The Higher Degree by Research Showcase is running this week and is being recorded and will be available for members to view

Advocacy

- Our advocacy activities appear in newsletters and in our Annual Report. Most recently we provided a submission to the Senate Select Committee on Tobacco Harm Reduction which was accepted and is available for public viewing.

Partnerships

- Professional Placement (Master of Public Health student) – University of Technology Sydney
- Royal Australasian College of Physicians – Specialty Society recognition and privileges
- International Association for Adolescent Health – early networking activities with other national association presidents

I hope that these will continue to inspire or engage you in the work we can all achieve together and help us keep growing.

The Board's decision came early to postpone this year's Youth Health conference which was due to be held in Brisbane in September 2020. As a still small and unfunded association, the Board felt that we could not take the chance of proceeding with our planning and then having to cancel. I am extremely grateful to **The Association Specialists**, who were our contracted conference organiser, for allowing us to defer this year's event. I would also like to thank **Nell Harrison**, Executive Director of The Association Specialists, who has remained personally and professionally supportive of AAAH throughout this extraordinary year. I also thank **Francis Child**, Managing Director of The Association Specialists, for his support and assistance with our governance activities.

It has been the dedication of the **AAAH Board** that has carried AAAH through its work this year. Like most people around the country, every single Board member experienced extraordinary stresses this year. This was due to a range of things for different Board members, such as additional work, working or studying from home, financial insecurity, disconnection from friends or family and of course the constant baseline level of anxiety from Covid and its potential threat to our health or the health of loved ones or our communities. Our newest Board members, who joined in the past year, have contributed enormously to the Board and the entire association. **Ella Cehun** and **Kate Thompson** co-authored an [article](#) published in The Conversation in April this year, advocating for political leaders to talk with young people, not at them about Covid19. They also co-presented at our webinar on Covid19 and Young People held in October. **Simon Denny** took on the role of co-convenor of the planned Brisbane Youth Health conference and had done a lot of work in the weeks preceding our decision to postpone. He has also been facilitating a closer alliance with the [Society for Youth Health Professionals Aotearoa New Zealand](#) and we look forward to strengthening ties with them in coming years. **Jacqui Hendriks** has almost single-handedly organised our Higher Degree by Research Student Showcase, taking place throughout this week. The Board, our members, and indeed our HDR students whose work is being showcased, owe Jacqui an enormous debt of gratitude for what I know has been hours of additional work in bringing the program, registration and technology logistics together. As well as this, Jacqui supervised a major piece of work accomplished by our post graduate student, which led to the first AAAH [Opinion Piece](#) by a young person being published in October.

Angela Grant, who convened last year's Melbourne conference, shared her wisdom with the Board initially as part of the conference committee for the Brisbane conference and then in making approaches to potential keynote speakers for some virtual events that the Board discussed back in March and April. **Jonathan Kirkham**, who developed our Business and Strategic Plan 2019 – 2022 following the Board's face to face meeting in May 2019, has been an invaluable strategic thinker each time we meet to consider any number of decisions. **Rohan Borschmann** has continued supplying our newsletters with Research Corners and more recently supporting me in some of my duties involving governance and administration of the association.

David Perez has been a stalwart Board director who has really come to our rescue in taking on the Treasurer role last year. David's experience as a manager and his translation into plain English of finance reports and profit and loss statements at every Board meeting have been an enormous contribution to the smooth and fiscally-responsible running of the Association. And now to **Marc Zen** and **Geraldine Dyer**, two of my fellow three musketeers. Marc, Gel and I have run two terms on the Board and are not renominating for a third term. It is an understatement to say that without them, the Association would not be where it is today. Marc convened our 2017 Youth Health conference in Sydney and Gel convened the 2018 conference in Surfers Paradise. Neither of them lived anywhere near those cities at the time. Marc began his association with AAAH at the 2013 Youth Health conference in Fremantle as a young person involved in the Youth Forum. In 2015 he was elected a Board director and took on the role of Secretary. Around that time he also moved from Western Australia to Victoria, and by 2016 had put his hand up to convene the planned 2017 conference, and run the Youth Forum. Marc fulfils his responsibilities as company secretary and has assisted our

secretariat and me in triaging correspondence and checking meeting minutes. All while working full time and studying a Masters degree.

Geraldine has been the best Vice President I could have wished for. Complete strangers to one another beforehand, we have forged a working relationship and a lasting friendship. Gel is a dedicated health professional with a big heart. She is not afraid to ask difficult questions and to advocate for our organisation, speaking up when things don't seem right, bending over backwards to make things happen, and always with good humour, professionalism and candour.

As I step down as President I would also like to acknowledge my predecessor, **Donald Payne** and his Vice President **Andrew Kennedy**, who steered the AAAH ship from 2011 to 2015, building it up from virtually nothing – the Association having been dormant for well over a decade.

AAAH continues its relationship with important external partners including the Royal Australasian College of Physicians which recognises us as a Specialty Society, the International Association for Adolescent Health, the Consumers Health Forum Youth Forum, Wellbeing Health and Youth (Centre for Research Excellence in Adolescent Health) and the University of Technology Sydney which incorporates a Professional Placement term in its Master of Public Health degree. I would like to especially thank **Jane Ho**, who is the AAAH liaison with the RACP, and **Jenny Proimos** and **Susan Sawyer**, Vice President Oceania and President of IAAH respectively, for their ongoing support of AAAH. The Annual Report 2019 – 2020 contains more detail about these important relationships with our external partners.

Finally I would like to acknowledge and thank **Shreya Trasy** and **Annie Coulter** from The Association Specialists, who provide our secretariat. They both commenced in these roles with AAAH only a few months ago and yet in this time and in addition to their busy secretariat duties, they have helped AAAH finally overhaul our ailing website and successfully apply for Deductible Gift Recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office.

This year the Board made the decision to offer free membership to all students regardless of age or part time enrolment status. This has seen our membership grow and indeed we are celebrating the research of many of these students this week at our HDR Student Showcase. With our DGR status now achieved, our scholarly and advocacy activities advancing despite the year that has been, and ongoing engagement with all of our members, I would like to end my report by stating unequivocally that these past five years as president have been the highlight of my career, and I thank all of you for making it so.

Melissa Kang, 1 December 2020