

# Annual Report

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# MESSAGE FROM THE

## NUAA CHAIR

**Jude Byrne**

NUAA has had a challenging and purposeful year. On top of the funded program of activities the staff have had to respond to the ongoing hype of drug-related crises - often with no notice. Mary and the staff (particularly DanceWize NSW) ran a well-considered community centered response. We spoke to the philosophical question of pill testing and people's agency while also engaging with Government Departments to try and ameliorate the harms stemming from the Government prohibition-based response. The agreement to see NUAA DanceWize NSW members at more festivals than previously agreed upon was one important outcome. DanceWize NSW staff and volunteers were sorely tested by the extra hours needed to cover the festivals and they all came out smiling and successful. NUAA's advocacy around pill testing was combined with all the ad hoc meetings and responses NUAA was involved in while keeping abreast of the Governments Ice Inquiry. Both of these issues were well covered by an ill-informed media resulting in Marys' articles and editorials trying to educate the reporters and the public while letting our community know we were standing up for them.

The expanded NSP hours combined with the HCV related education prevention activities kept all staff and volunteers working at full bore. Our Accreditation application was successful on the first round which is a rare event the inspectors let slip — Woo hoo! Our policies and procedures are of the highest standards. The Accredited organisation must keep up to date with all legislative requirements and all workplace processes must be of the highest order. One of the most substantial pieces of work from the Board was the updating of a raft of policies and procedures to facilitate this. Such documents really help the Board and the EO in uncertain times to navigate the most appropriate, legally acceptable and community centered resolution. Thanks to Geoff Manu and Lisa Andreyeva for their leadership and support of the Accreditation process. The development of NUAA's Strategic Plan is another big-ticket item that has been achieved with the Boards involvement along with all other NUAA community members.

The second of NUAA's Peer Forums was a resounding success with over 100 individuals attending. The eclectic mix of people made the day

vital and engaging. From researchers, to doctors, the all represented. I think ensuring a trained peer workforce will become increasingly important as more peers will be required to help disseminate any hep C prevention work.

As with any organisation of people, not everyone works and lives by the same ideas or principles. What we try to do at NUAA is keep the wellbeing of the organisation at the fore of any decisions or discussions. NUAA is the New South Wales voice of the affected community articulating the drug using community's perspective on prohibitions-based harms, including overdose, BBVs and a myriad of other harmful outcomes for us and our community. We must keep NUAA in good working order as we have much work to do.

This is my last term on the NUAA Board I was coopted at a time of instability on the Board and while a resident of the ACT I had extensive experience and knowledge which I think we put to good use. I was happy to help NUAA, user groups have a harder environment to navigate and we need to pull each other along when required. I said at the beginning I would not take the place of any NSW residents and this year we have a healthy robust number of nominations.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of being involved in one of our oldest and most experienced groups, I know we achieved a lot – Larry, Diego, Brian, Nick, Annie and Jennifer – and have left NUAA with solid workplace policies a Strategic Plan and an Accredited organisation over the past year.

I am extremely proud that one of my last actions as Chair is to induct Greg Dore and Lisa Maher into NUAA's Hall of Fame.

P.S. Thanks so much to Mary for her willingness to help me explore the philosophical and esoteric questions prohibition throws up and how they will impact on our movement but most importantly how to have these unfit for purpose drug laws overturned.

Get treated for hep c, try not to overdose and to use sterilized equipment whenever possible – your best revenge on prohibition is a long life.

**MESSAGE**

**FROM THE**

**NUAA CEO**

**Mary Ellen Harrod**

The past 12 months have been a period of intense activity! Drug and alcohol issues have consistently been in the spotlight across NSW, largely due to six tragic deaths at music festivals in 2018-2019 but also from the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice'. The activity and scrutiny has brought an environment of enormous possibility with NUAA having considerable input into a number of high-level inquiries. We participated in the Expert Panel Report into Music Festival Safety, the Ice Inquiry, the Coronial Inquiry into Festival Deaths and the Parliamentary Inquiry into Festival Legislation with several appearances and support at both the Coronial and Ice Inquiries. This year we have seen peer-led harm reduction become a major part of the public discourse around drug use and music festival safety. The NSW policy environment around alcohol and other drug use is notable for a lack of a cohesive strategy with the official policy of "just say no" – in sharp contrast to the evidence-based national policy of harm minimisation.

The NUAA Operations team and the Board of Governance have been working incredibly hard to ensure NUAA is able to take advantage of this environment with the successful delivery of our contracted work and laying the groundwork to deliver on our new Strategic Plan. A key achievement has been attaining accreditation, a long-term organisational goal that will allow us to seek a greater range of funding opportunities. We held a second highly successful Peers and Consumers (PaC) Forum with increased buy-in from service stakeholders. The PaC forum is truly a unique opportunity for peers to discuss the issues that are important to them. We have also developed a comprehensive peer training program and a nine-part "Consumer Guide to the OTP". The DanceWize NSW team of staff and volunteers demonstrated grace and commitment under pressure to deliver harm reduction at 25 festivals – 2½ times what we were contracted for. We have strong partnerships with Local Health Districts, and our peers in Nepean, Hunter New England, Sydney and South West Sydney are doing their bit to eliminate hepatitis C in NSW. Insider's News – a publication targeted at people in custodial settings in NSW that is produced in partnership with Corrective Services and Justice Health – won a national hepatitis C health promotion prize at the recent AHVEC Conference.

It's impossible to single out any one team member but I'd like to make special mention of Dan Burns who returned to Melbourne after two years at NUAA as part of the DanceWize NSW start up. He truly went above and beyond as the sole program coordinator for six months delivering an essential and life-saving service.

The team is incredibly excited to work within our new Strategic Plan with programs and initiatives under way with more to come. Our task – improving the health and human rights of people who use drugs illicitly in NSW – is a huge one but we are united in our belief that we are bringing about positive change.

# PROGRAM WORK

## THE NUAA NSP

The NUAA Needle and Syringe Program continues to be the gold standard for service delivery in NSW. The NSP now has an integrated clinical service that is seeing about 3-4 people per day. Extended hours have been a major benefit to our community with these set to continue in 2019-2020, with some changes that will hopefully expand our reach.

The NUAA NSP operates 52 weeks of the year and in 2018-2019 was open Monday-Friday, 8:00AM-10:00PM. This year we:

Distributed **402,438** pieces of sterile equipment including 1mls, barrels and Tips

Collected **198,977** returns

Dispensed to **10,850** people

Provided **1989** brief Interventions and peer education sessions

Referred **60** people to the Open Clinic on Crown

Held **380** Peer Education Sessions

Placed two peer volunteers worked out of the Redfern NSP where they distributed equipment to **1103** people

Team

Lucy Pepolim, Louse Aquilina, Shawnee Rose, Tony McNaughton, Charles Henderson, PPP Volunteers

**OPEN CLINIC**

**ON CROWN**

Launched in November 2018, the Open Clinic on Crown (OCOC) is a primary care clinic managed by NUAA and Kirketon Road Centre. Open Clinic on Crown operates 4 hours a day, 5 days a week, and aims to provide accessible, low-barrier healthcare for all sections of our community. In the 2018-2019 FY, the OCOC team provided:

**130 clinics**

**407 visits**

**161 clients**

**107 hep C tests (DBS and blood)**

**9 hep C treatment initiations**

**16 hep B vaccinations**

**33 wound care episodes**

**55 people trained in overdose prevention**

A diverse range of members from our community were served, including individuals from a range of backgrounds including First Nations People, LGBTQI people, sex workers, HIV+ and HCV+ people, young people and people experiencing homelessness.

**84%** of clinic clients were people who inject drugs and **37%** had never been to Kirketon Road Centre.

Team

**Team: Tony McNaughton, Lucy Pepolim, Charles Henderson, Shawnee Rose**

# PEERS AND CONSUMERS FORUM

NUAA's second 2019 Peers and Consumers (PaC) Forum, held on September 3-4 at the Teacher's Federation Conference Centre, built upon the success of the inaugural PaC Forum in 2018. The PaC forum is a unique event in Australia; a space where peers can come together to network and discuss topics that matter to us.

The PaC Forum was larger this year, with **163** registrations. There were 17 feature sessions and workshops covering a diverse range of topics, including psychedelics as medicine, the benefits and pitfalls of identifying as a peer, the unique role of peers, hepatitis C peer support. For the full program list, check out the website at [nuaapeerforum.org.au](http://nuaapeerforum.org.au)

A survey of attendees found **67%** thought the Forum was better than expected or outstanding. The forum was well targeted to the intended audience, with over half of the attendees being either community members or Peer Workers. Additionally, there was a great turn out of researchers and health service staff. Feedback included several people finding it difficult to choose between sessions, suggestions that two days is too short, and the suggestion of potentially livestreaming next year's Forum.

Two consecutive years of success has established the PaC Forum as an annual event of importance for the community of PWUD in NSW.

**Team: Melanie Joyce leading entire NUAA staff team**

**'The whole event was miraculous and uplifting'**  
- Conference Participant

**NORTHCOTT**

**SHARPS**

**CLEAN UP**

The Northcott Sharps Cleanup program was set up earlier this year in conjunction with the South East Sydney Local Health District and the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ). The program has:

- Recruited 3 peers from the housing estate to pick up sharps and other paraphernalia on the grounds, while also delivering harm reduction, BBV prevention and testing and treatment information to residents.
- Over **400** pieces of discarded paraphernalia and community sharps collected between May and June 2019.

**HUNTER**

**NEW ENGLAND**

**OUTREACH**

Hope Everingham has been the NUAA peer support worker in Hunter New England Local Health District for a number of years and has strongly contributed to this LHD having one of the strongest track records for hepatitis C treatment in NSW. The program operates across two OTP clinics, Cessnock and Newcastle, with weekly equipment outreach and distribution.

On average, NSP equipment is provided to 6-9 people weekly, covering a distance of 100-200 kms. Over the past financial year, the program distributed:

**102,600 x 100 packs**

**4200 x 10 packs**

**4000 x 5mL barrels**

**7000 x sterile waters**

**28 x boxes of blue filters ; as well as**

**323,700 equipment returns**

Additionally, through our partnership with the Cessnock and Newcastle OTP clinics, we conducted over 220 hep C education/testing/treatment sessions this year.

Team

**Hope Everingham (Peer Support Worker), Melanie Joyce**

# PEER ENGAGEMENT

# AND TRAINING

The training team has been working for some time to develop core modules for peer workforce development, including training on brief interventions, workforce boundaries, and core skills around hepatitis C prevention and treatment. We are rolling this program of work out across 2019-2020, and will be offering training and support for peer workers in clinical settings starting in late-2019. We also have peers in four clinical setting – Newcastle, Penrith, Redfern and Liverpool – with more peers doing outreach to come.

The past financial year, we have held peer training workshops in:

Surry Hills (Northcott) with SESLHD (new site), with 23 people attending  
Katoomba with NBMLHD (new site), with 19 people attending  
Orange with WNSWLHD, with 23 people attending.

All up, **1455** meaningful engagements were carried out with peers, consumers, services, GPs, Pharmacists and community members.

As well as PeerLink workshops and forums, we have been involved in a range of outreach programs and events such as:

**Refresher training**

**Hepatitis in Prison Elimination Project expos**

**Communication Strategy focus groups**

**Community consultations**

**Naloxone workforce development**

**Overdose training**

**Hepatitis C Brief Interventions.**

Places visited for this outreach work includes:

Bathurst, Kariong, Penrith, Lidcombe, Cooma, Berrima, Wollongong, Dubbo, Wellington, Liverpool, Blacktown, Parramatta, Surry Hills, Wagga Wagga, Campbelltown, Miller, Darlinghurst.

Team

**Andy Heslop, Melanie Joyce, Charles Henderson**

**‘I’m going to change the way I  
inject to be safer’  
- Peerlink Attendee**

**ABORIGINAL**

**PEER WORKERS**

**AT NBM**

Jade Christian, NUAA's Aboriginal Peer Worker, works out of Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District South Court NSP as part of the Deadly Liver Mob (DLM) project. In promoting hep C education and treatment, over the past financial year the project has:

- **Carried out health education interactions with 65 Aboriginal people**
- **51 out of the 65 have had a blood test, with several of those with positive results beginning treatment**
- **Provided ongoing support to 13 people to assist their engagement with services and treatment.**
- **Supported community members with issues such as treatment for mental health, homelessness and housing.**

As a sign of its success and how valued it is, the Deadly Liver Mob collaboration was awarded the "Golden Fit" award for the "best NSP Partnership" at the 2019 HARP Forum.

Team

**Jade Christian, Melanie Joyce, Charles Henderson, Mary Ellen Harrod.**

**RACGP-ACCREDITED**

**TRAINING**

In the past financial year, NUAA developed and facilitated RACGP-accredited training sessions for GPs, focusing on improving access to health care for People Who Use Drugs. To date, two sessions have been held.

Team

**Annie Madden, Charles Henderson.**

# DANCEWIZE NSW

Over the past financial year, the DanceWize NSW volunteer's team has:

- Grown to **220** active volunteers
- Attended **23** regulated events, at which:
  - Our rovers interacted with over **102,577** party goers
  - Our front-of-house education space had over **15,835** unique education interactions
  - Our back-of-house care space had interactions with **1,016** people and provided **1,299** hours of care
- Attended **4** unregulated events, at which:
  - Our rovers interacted with over **1,695** party goers
  - Our front-of-house education space has had over **1,025** unique education interactions
  - Our back-of-house care space cared for **79** people.



**‘I am so grateful for the Dancewize team. One of your guys helped me through a hectic experience at Rabbit Eats Lettuce. I feel I wouldn’t have survived without the support. Every festival and doof needs Dancewize. You really do save lives.’**

**- Rabbit Eats Lettuce  
Festival Patron**

DanceWize NSW has also had wide-ranging interactions with the broader community to advance our harm reduction activities and principles. This includes:

- **Speaking to several media outlets**
- **Participating in several protests around issues such as pill testing, sniffer dogs, welfare quarantining and climate change**
- **In conjunction with Students for Sensible Drug Policy, launching the #BeHeardNotHarmed campaign (February 2019)**
- **Providing evidence to the Coronial Inquest at Death at Music Festivals**
- **Participated in events important to our community such as International Drug Users Remembrance Day, International Overdose Awareness Day and Mardi Gras.**
- **Participated in several conferences to advance harm reduction principles, including as far as way as Europe.**

# ADMINISTRATION

A key administrative achievement was attaining organisational accreditation in the Australian Services Excellence Standards (ASES) system. Accreditation has been an organisational goal for years, and required significant foundational work including the development of new systems and working processes (for example transferring to SharePoint). While accreditation was a requirement of our recent funding grant from the Alcohol and Other Drug branch of the Ministry of Health, it will also allow us to diversify our funding base and consider tendering for additional PHN funding.

- **Passed our ASES accreditation without any major corrective actions being required – a big achievement for a first attempt**
- **Held 8 Board meetings during the past financial year**
- **Carried out board training in February**
- **Created, or significantly updated, 5 policies across major policy areas**



# **EXTERNAL**

# **EVENTS**

Events that NUAA took part in over the past financial year included:

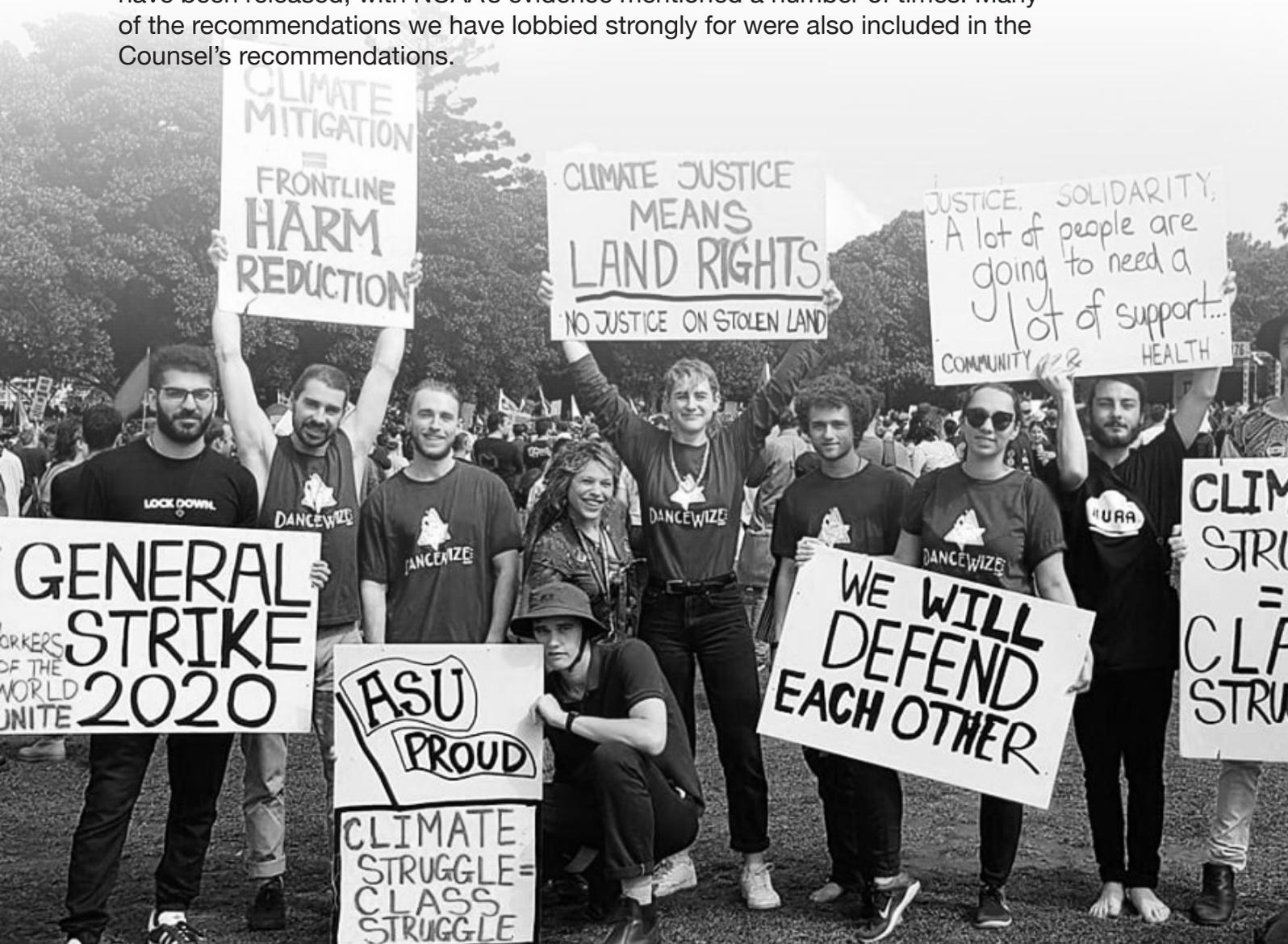
- **Yabun stall, with 230 engagements**
- **Fair Day 2019 stall, with 180 engagements**
- **Mardi Gras 2019 “War on Drugs” float, involving about 80 volunteers from NUAA, DanceWize NSW, Students for a Sensible Drug Policy and Pill testing Australia**
- **Remembrance Day 2018, with 80 engagements**

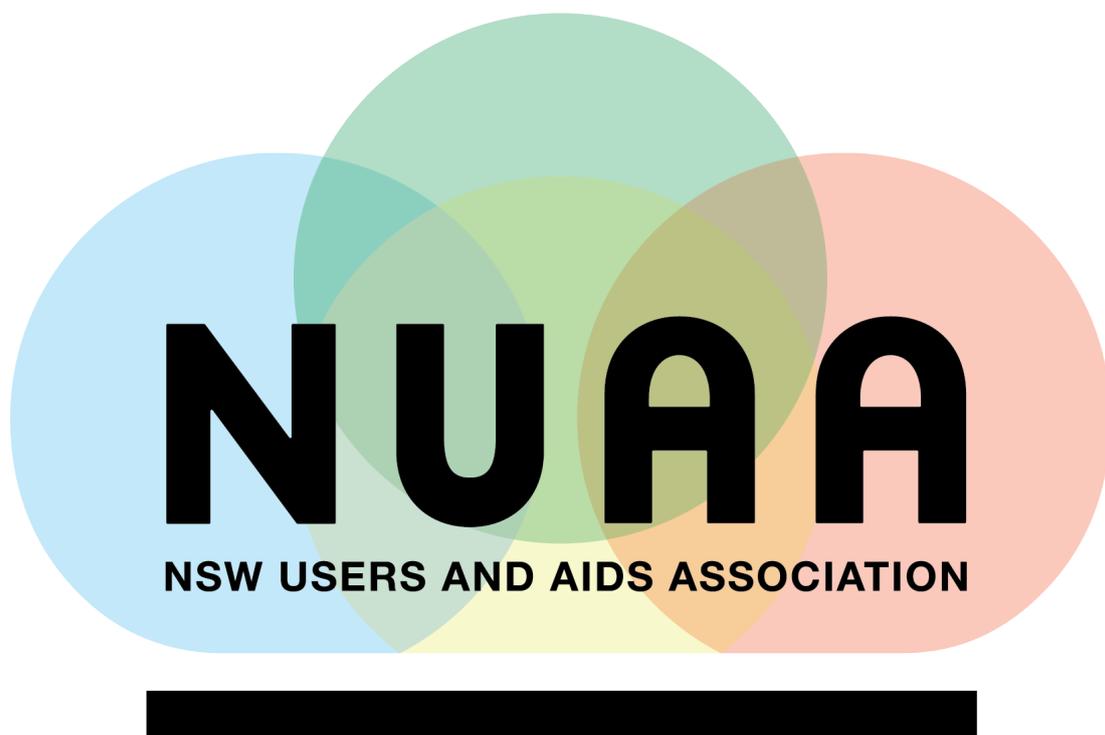
# ADVOCACY

Over the past year, NUAA staff have:

- Made submissions to 4 inquiries
- Appeared before 3 inquiries
- Submitted four academic papers on issues relevant to PWUD
- Took part in 3 research projects
- Gave five forum presentations
- Gave 11 conference presentations
- Addressed six protests
- Supported three other organisations by participating in Boards
- Took part in 16 committees

NUAA had a particularly strong input into the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice', with multiple appearances as well as requests from the Commission to support them identifying consumers. Although the findings are not due until January 2020, the recommendations of Counsel assisting the Inquiry have been released, with NUAA's evidence mentioned a number of times. Many of the recommendations we have lobbied strongly for were also included in the Counsel's recommendations.





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