NHAA AGM, 22 October 2018

President’s report

The Annual General Meeting provides a great opportunity to pause and reflect on the year that has been, our achievements, highlights and how we have faced any challenges. As the environment in which naturopaths and herbalists practice, evolves and changes, we need to respond and ensure the organization is as well positioned for the future as it has been for the past.

Firstly, I would like to thank the team of people that manage our association, the people that take your calls, respond to your queries, organize events, keeps our accounts in order, ensure health fund data is up to date (1000’s of entries a year) and share news and information with our members. Our small team of staff is led by our Executive Officer Andrew Hamilton. I would also like to extend my thanks to the team of volunteers that support the NHAA – this includes the board of directors, non board members of our sub committees that share their expertise and the people across a number of states who volunteer their time in the regional chapters.

The NHAA exists both for and because of our members, so the first success story I would like to highlight is in support of this, and that is the re-establishment of chapters in Sydney (SydHerbs) and Brisbane/Gold Coast (SEQHerbs). Additionally we supported the South Australian practitioners by working with them to deliver a one day training seminar with an impressive array of speakers in May this year. These join the more established VicHerbs which continues to thrive. I would love to see chapters in all parts of the country where we have members as they are such an important community support.

Two of our more challenging achievements this year were in relation to changes in our regulatory environment. I refer to the government’s announcement proposing the removal of the health insurance rebate provided to insurers on a number of natural therapies and the scheduling changes in relation to arbutin. In response to the private health insurance rebates, we have been in ongoing communication with Health Minister the Hon. Greg Hunt’s office including attending meetings. We still hope to positively influence how this impacts our members. Likewise we have been in active communication with the TGA regarding the arbutin issue in an effort to minimize the impact on practice while of course ensuring public safety. In both cases, our professions sub-committee led our responses and pleasingly we were able to collaborate with others in the sector to demonstrate unity that is not always apparent but sorely needed.

The preparation for the 11th NHAA Herbal and Naturopathic International Conference in March 2019, starts well ahead of the event. This year we have developed an all new conference website, secured fantastic keynotes and conducted the primary round of presenter abstract submissions to build a three day program to be proud of. We are also very proud to host the World Naturopathic Federation (WNF) who have scheduled their General Assembly to coincide with our conference which will ensure it is a truly international event. NHAA are a founding member of the WNF and although I stepped down as Treasurer after a year in the role, I retain a position on the executive.

I trust these highlights give you a flavor of the work the NHAA does on behalf of its members. The theme for the conference is ‘Traditional Wisdom, Future Practice’ and I don’t think it could be any more fitting. As Australia’s oldest complementary medicine association soon to mark our 100th year, we are custodians of our rich heritage. We are also keenly aware that to retain relevance for the next 100 years, we must evolve also focus on the future.

As always, many thanks for your ongoing support.

Natalie Cook

President NHAA