



The Australian Council of Stoma Associations Inc.

ABN 12 516 756 556

Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd)

ASPOA Conference 2020 Country Report- Australia

The Stoma Appliance Scheme (SAS), established in 1975 and subsidised by the Australian Government, provides support to people with a stoma by improving access to the most suitable and clinically appropriate stoma related products. Products supplied under the Scheme assist people affected with stomas to better manage their condition and allow greater participation in the society and workforce. These products are provided free of charge through 21 regional stoma associations across Australia.

Approximately 47,000 people with stomas access nearly 4,000 SAS listed products through stoma associations. The stoma associations purchase stoma related products from suppliers and distribute to their members as required.

These 21 association collectively form the Australian Council of Stoma Associations (ACSA). As the national peak body, it is the role of ACSA to liaise with government departments, ostomy product suppliers and associated and related groups on behalf of all ostomy associations. It also provides an advocacy and information service to its 21 affiliated associations.

COVID 19 Pandemic

What would report on recent activities be if I did not make mention of the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions placed on the community, by the Australian Government, to reduce the spread of COVID-19 has had a detrimental impact on the operations of stoma associations. Most associations have focused efforts on the distribution of stoma-related products as regular supply of product is essential. Many associations have also experienced staffing issues due to most volunteers being of an age or health condition which put them in “at risk” groups who were encouraged to ‘self-isolate’. It was pleasing to see that some associations also had an increase in new volunteers during this time.

COVID also saw the cancellation of a number of planned ostomate support events throughout the country. With the easing of restrictions and the expectation of further easing next year associations are only now beginning to plan events for the coming year.

Australia Fund

For nearly 20 years the Australian Council of Stoma Associations through The Australia Fund has been aiding ostomates in countries where they have serious difficulties or hardships in obtaining or affording basic ostomy supplies. In 2019, the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission introduced new governance rules for Australian associations and charities which places on them an obligation to take reasonable steps to ensure that overseas organisations receiving their donations (including supplies

such as stoma appliances) only use them for the purpose for which they were supplied, that they are operating in a legal and responsible way and that they meet a number of other operating standards relating to Australian law. These obligations have forced a change in the way that The Australia Fund operates moving forward.

Effective 2020, a new programme being the “Australia Fund Grants” programme has been established to provide limited support for coordinators wishing to continue with an association managed overseas support program in a manner which complies with the new Regulations. Unfortunately, the stringent nature of the new Regulations has inhibited most associations and coordinators from continuing the work of the Australia Fund and only two associations have so far been able to put forward complying projects. These projects have been to Samoa and two organisations in Kenya.

Since March, 2020 the barriers of operating the Australia Fund during COVID 19 have proved insurmountable. Most associations have been too busy managing the problems of the pandemic and are also not prepared to accept donated goods because they are not able to establish that they are “covidsafe”. As a result, most associations have suspended their Australia Fund activities until further notice. A resumption of Australia Fund activities is planned once the COVID situation has been resolved.

Great Comebacks Program

The Great Comebacks program enables people living with Crohn’s, Ulcerative Colitis, colorectal cancer or an ostomy to share their story to inspire others who are facing these diseases or transitioning to life after surgery. The program is supported by Bowel Cancer Australia, Ostomy New Zealand, the Australian Association of Stomal, Therapy Nurses and ACSA.

While the 2020 awards have been suspended because of COVID travel restrictions, recent recipients of the award were:

- 2019 – William Cusack
- 2018 – Tayla Goding

Proposed changes to the Stoma Appliance Scheme

In October 2020 the Australian Government announced that it was seeking expressions of interest for and order and distribution service model for stoma products and education, information and support programs for ostomates under the Stoma Appliance Scheme. Submissions for the expression of Interest close around the time of the ASPOA House of Delegates meeting.

ACSA has prepared a submission with a new order and distribution model coupled with expanded education, information and support programs which will hopefully allow associations to continue participation in scheme activities.

Dr Allen Nash

Vice President

Australian Council of Stoma Associations Inc.