

President report: Natalie Cook AGM 21 October 2019

Dear NHAHA members,

I have never been so proud as I am compiling the President's report for this 2019 AGM.

The energy the board members continue to give to the organisation inspires me daily and I am truly appreciative of all they give. The NHAHA International Conference held in Melbourne in March this year is one of the most obvious examples of this, however there is also so much that occurs unseen in the background. This year we welcomed Patricia Michel as Chief Executive Officer after Andrew Hamilton left the NHAHA at the end of 2018, after 6 years of leadership. Our small but very able team meanwhile continued to keep all our member services operating in what has been a year of much change. Thanks must go to them too. Now to a summary of some of our year's highlights:

2019 NHAHA International Conference on Naturopathic and Herbal Medicine - The NHAHA's biggest event to date, which also launched our 100 year celebrations. Founded in 1920, the NHAHA is the oldest complementary medicine association in Australia and we marked the beginning of the celebrations at the conference with the hugely popular centenary room and historic timeline. The conference theme of traditional wisdom, future practice showcased our history together with our contemporary relevance. We were also proud to host the World Naturopathic Federation (WNF) General Assembly, resulting in a truly international conference and cementing the NHAHA on the world naturopathic stage. Importantly, we also used the event to better connect with our indigenous healing history with keynotes and demonstrations from ANTAC. Global environmental health also featured and our sustainability obligations as a profession. A number of targeted invited stakeholders also yielded promising results including resultant meetings with members of parliament, related professional associations and political influencers.

Fighting Fund – At the 2019 NHAHA Conference, such was the commitment to the profession that, inspired by the 'fighting fund' highlighted on our epic timeline, we announced we would bring back a fighting fund as a mechanism for everyone to contribute, no matter the size, to key efforts in the interests of the profession. Coming soon!

Private Health Insurance – The NHAHA was a leading voice in challenging the decision to remove naturopathy and herbal medicine from Private Health Insurance (PHI) rebates. This included multiple meetings with the commonwealth Health Minister's office, a petition of over 7,000 signatures and meetings with the health department in Canberra. The result, a commitment to review the review that has widely been discredited as incomplete which is currently underway. We hope to see rebate eligibility back in 2020.

Scheduled herbs – The NHAHA Professions Sub Committee worked tirelessly to challenge the ruling on Arbutin containing herbs. Our submission to the TGA was comprehensive, and in late September, we were advised of an interim decision to support our recommendations. We hope to see Damiana and Bearberry back in dispensaries from June 2020. Particular thanks to the professions committee which includes a number of non board members who contributed countless hours to these tasks.

CPD and course accreditation review – We heard your feedback and are in the process of streamlining our CPD requirements. We still maintain the same high standards, but our intention is to make the process more accessible for new and existing members alike and bring NHAHA in line with registered health professions.

State chapters – we are nothing without our community and the state chapters in Melbourne (VicHerbs approaching 40 years), Sydney (Sydherbs since 2017) and Brisbane/ Gold Coast (SEQ herbs established July 2018) are going from strength to strength. The Adelaide NHAHA chapter is also regaining momentum in professional development activities.

Collaboration – I strongly believe the biggest threat to our profession is not external factors, but rather the apparent lack of unity within our profession. To that extent, the NHAHA has been working closely with other associations and industry over the last year to create mechanisms for better collaboration and a strong unified voice on key issues. The result is OneCAM, which includes industry and professional associations across the broad complementary medicine sector and Naturopathic and WHM Councils of Australia representing the specific disciplines.

Centenary year – The Rocks in Sydney was the site of the first western medicinal herb garden in Australia and the NHAHA submitted a Proposal Document to Place Management NSW (PMNSW -Council Authority for The Rocks) in June 2019. We have already received a donation of medicinal herbs and root stock for the garden project from the Lower Blue Mountains Gardening Club and plan for volunteer opportunities for students to be involved in the herb garden maintenance and/or ' working-bees' to refresh the garden planters seasonal.

National Herbal Medicine Week is coming up soon! (27 Oct to 3 Nov). We are creating resources for members to promote activities during this week within their own communities. Suggested activities include; Herbal Medicines at Home, Herbal Medicines in the Garden, weed walks etc. The aim is to inspire members to hold their own unique events, open the clinic doors and engage the public in celebrating herbal medicine in all it's forms for National Herbal Medicine Week 2019.

In closing, the NHAHA staunchly defends the highest standards for the professional and we also apply these to the board. That's why we hold public elections, we have capped terms and have an external Board Member Advisory committee. As I draw to the end of my 4 year term as President and 6 years on the board, I reflect on all that we have done and I continue to be inspired by the wonderful people I have met and what a privilege it has been.

Thank you.
Natalie Cook
MPH, BHSc (Nat), B Com (Mkt) FNHAA President