

# COTA

For older Australians



# Annual 15 Report 16



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# Welcome

Ewan Brown, President

Over the past year COTA ACT has developed a functional Strategic Plan and has been able to:

- consolidate its revenue generating grant programs,
- improve its image throughout a range of key sectors,
- establish stronger and more effective alliances,
- improve the working relationship with ACT Government agencies,
- improve the quality and content of materials/publications produced, and
- increase new membership.

This improved performance provides a sound basis for expansion of activities and services in the future.

The COTA ACT Policy Council has been instrumental in boosting the range of research projects undertaken, with an increase in the number of volunteer researchers, and several reports produced and shared with government and other ACT groups.

A proactive approach to the management of the Hughes Community Centre, along with some

minor renovation has resulted in increased revenue with the building being regularly used by U3A, community groups and families.

Relationships with a wide range of ACT Government agencies have been strengthened through improved levels of service (relating to grant-funded programs) and increased support and participation in other Government projects/programs.

In addition, relationships with a wide range of other stakeholders and interest groups have benefited from COTA ACT's willingness to collaborate, support and enter in discussions on issues of mutual interest. A number of discussions have taken place with other organisations to explore opportunities for new projects or expansion of existing programs.

COTA ACT has been actively participating in a wide range of community events with significant involvement by the President and Executive Director in promoting COTA ACT throughout the year.

A new website and an update to the quality,

style and content of our publications has further raised our profile in the community.

An increase in value-add content, creation of a wider range of links to partner organisations and communication to and connection with a larger stakeholder base has enabled COTA ACT to reach a wider audience.

Our increased scope is an integral part of our broader remit – to service all age cohorts from 50 years of age onwards (plus their families) and to be able to deliver the types and range of services that they need.

An efficient, highly respected COTA ACT will be better placed to represent the growing population of senior Canberrans.

I thank the COTA ACT Board members for their participation in productive Board meetings and committee activities throughout the year.

Ewan Brown  
President

# COTA ACT in 15-16

**The COTA ACT Board developed a new strategic direction for the organisation, with core areas of policy development, communications and management of the Hughes Community Centre taking priority in 2015-16.**

We remained actively involved in policy work, keeping a dialogue with the ACT Government, and regularly seeking input from our members on issues facing older people in the ACT.

Our Housing Options Advisory Service continues to play a significant role in assisting senior Canberrans with a range of housing issues. Our Housing Advisor, Luke Coniston, played an integral role in supporting senior Canberrans impacted by the Mr Fluffy buy-back/demolition program.

Our service delivery and referrals for older Canberrans continued to grow. The COTA ACT office took more than 11,000 calls from older people and their carers on topics ranging from health events, to Seniors Cards, to practical assistance. We regularly update the dozens of information brochures we produce to ensure senior Canberrans have up to date and easy to access information about a range of services in the ACT.

COTA ACT worked with a number of organisations and government agencies to promote issues of interest to seniors. Several opportunities for co-operation developed from enhanced liaison with ACT Government agencies, with active participation through:

- Ministerial Council on Ageing (MACA)
- Elder Abuse Roundtable
- Formation of the Elder Abuse Prevention Network
- Mature Age Employment Program
- Extensive involvement in Age Friendly Cities program
- Senior's Health Roundtable and
- A comprehensive series of seminars held in the Hughes Community Centre hall.

Other valuable liaisons were with NRMA Road Safety Trust, IRT and ACT Transport. COTA ACT met with Volunteering ACT and conducted a comprehensive presentation to a Volunteering ACT forum.

New membership continues to grow steadily and there has been a substantial growth in the number of volunteers and researchers providing support services to COTA ACT.

Government grant reporting processes have been refined to demonstrate the real value of

COTA ACT input and involvement.

COTA ACT is making greater use of email information distribution and is working closely with the Office of Veterans and Seniors to disseminate several forms of seniors' newsletters for the ACT government.

Significant progress has been made in 'recruiting' volunteers and expanding the scope of research projects of likely benefit to COTA ACT. Several research projects are underway or have been identified as important.

Looking forward, expertise/input will be sought on (but not limited to):

- Grant opportunities
- Sponsorships
- Events
- Partnerships/Collaborations
- Advertising
- New membership categories
- Commercial ventures
- Fee paying programs, and events entry fees.

calls to the  
**11,000**  
Seniors Information Line

**1500**  
older Canberrans assisted  
through the Housing  
Options Advisory Service

**42**  
community education  
information sessions

participants in  
community education  
sessions

**1198**

**2500**  
visitors at the  
Seniors Week Expo

**9937**  
seniors issued with a  
Seniors / MyWay card

# Our Policy Work

**COTA ACT Council plays a strong role in formulating policy and advancing our research and advocacy agenda.**

COTA ACT works with the government and the community on a wide range of issues to promote well-being and reduce the disadvantage faced by older people in the ACT.

In 2015-16 we maintained a strong relationship with the ACT government, including the Office for Veterans and Seniors and ACT Health, Community Services

*“The Active Ageing Framework included a number of our recommendations”*

Directorate and the ACT Housing, the Environment and Planning Directorate. COTA ACT also works with Health Care Consumers Association, ACT Council of Social Services, ADACAS, ActewAGL, Volunteers ACT, Law Society and U3A.

We prepared our priorities for the 2016 ACT Government Budget and were pleased to see the Active Ageing Framework (2015-18)

include a number of our recommendations.

We also worked with the Government on:

- Power of Attorney and Guardianship Acts
- Elder abuse prevention
- Seniors health, including a paper on Hospital Discharge procedures
- Transport options including the Flexible bus, Uber and the Taxi Industry
- Access and the challenges of digital technology
- Housing for older and disadvantaged people, rental property retirement villages and nursing homes
- The *Retirement Village Amendment Act*
- Palliative Care and Hospital Discharge Practices

We made a submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission inquiry *Willing to Work: National Inquiry into Employment Discrimination against Older Australians with Disability*, and to the ACT government on the:

- ACT Concessions Review 2015
- Review of the Taxi Industry in the ACT.
- Amendments to the *Powers of Attorney Act 2006*
- Review of the *Guardianship and Management of Property Act 1991*, and

- A Reportable Conduct Scheme for the ACT

COTA ACT regularly speaks with the media on matters that affect older Canberrans, so the COTA ACT Policy Council have been working hard to consider, develop and produce position and policy statements. This process is backed up by our involvement on the COTA Australia National Policy Council which meets twice each year.



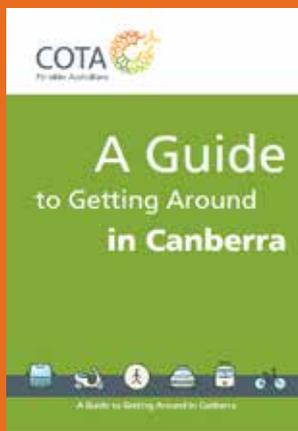
## A Guide to Getting Around Canberra

Our guide to getting around in Canberra was developed in 2015-16 to assist people to find their way around the transport system in Canberra.

It contains information about accessing buses, community transport and taxi options, as well as suggestions about what to do if you're faced with giving up your drivers license.

The guide has been distributed to hundreds of Canberrans and to many who visited Canberra from interstate.

We thank the Flexible Bus Service for assistance in the production of the Guide.



# COTA ACT in the Community

## Age Friendly suburbs

COTA ACT has remained involved in the ACT Government's Age-Friendly Communities project and, with a small grant from the ACT Government, undertook to seek feedback from residents about the 'age-friendliness' of their local neighbourhood.

COTA worked with the ACT government to make Weston and Ainslie Canberra's first age-friendly suburbs by suggestions on improving infrastructure and facilities to make it easier for older residents to get around. The project also, over time, will deliver active travel infrastructure and open space improvements. Age-friendly improvements to Ainslie and Weston will be constructed by June 2017, and improvements for Monash and Kaleen will be designed and constructed in the 2016-17 financial year, largely based on learnings from Ainslie and Weston.

## Roundtables and Workshops

We actively engaged the older community through workshops and roundtables on a range of topics.

These included:

- Two on energy efficiency
- Two on consumer directed care (CDC)
- *More to Life than Buses*, an examination of transport options for older people
- *Trouble with Technology*, an IT forum with ACT libraries
- A session with UBER on the use of their app on smartphones
- *Better Health needs for Older people in the ACT* with Capital Health Network
- A session with Steve Doszpot MLA, Shadow Minister for Ageing, on matters of interest to older Canberrans.

## Mature Aged Workers

COTA ACT were successful in obtaining a Seniors grant from the ACT Government to provide a program for mature aged job seekers. The program covered application and interview skills, networking, presentation, confidence and many other things that are needed if you're trying to break back into the job market.

We worked with recruitment agencies, as well as current job seekers and past job seekers who have found employment so we had a better view of the job market for mature-aged workers.

The Australian Institute of Management assisted us in training a group of mentors, and the group formed themselves into an informal Jobs Club which met fortnightly.

The program was successful, with more than half of those who took part in the training returned to the workforce. ABC television featured the program in their national news broadcast.

## Drop in Information Sessions

Over the past year, COTA ACT hosted regular monthly sessions and has worked with:

- Australian Taxation Office to host tax help assisting people with simple tax returns
- The Advanced Care Planning team from the Canberra Hospital
- Legal Advice with the help of ACT Legal Aid
- ACT Police preventing elder abuse.

## The Hughes Community Building

We continue to have a good relationship with U3A who use our facilities most days. The YMCA Canberra Heart Moves hold two sessions in the centre each week. Other sessions cover a range of fitness and relaxation sessions. The hall is well used by church and community groups on weekends and there is often a child's birthday held on a Saturday afternoon.

There have been some renovations to the building with the laying of new vinyl flooring in the foyer and tea room, thus removing unsafe asbestos tiles that were beginning to wear. We thank the ACT Property Group for assisting with this work.

The walls of the foyer have been painted, an information display was also added to that space along with new furniture. New plants have been added to the gardens outside and make the whole centre is more welcoming. The ACT Government has also upgraded the shopping centre paving and added more plantings and seating making it a more pleasant environment to meet friends.

# Community Education

**The COTA ACT Community Education Program provides free, practical and relevant information to seniors' groups throughout the ACT and surrounding regions. The information session topics vary from year to year, but all encourage and enable participants to minimise risks to their health and wellbeing.**

The Community Education Program uses a 'Peer Education' model. COTA trains presenters aged over 50 who then volunteer their time to talk to older people in our community about healthy ageing issues.

The primary focus of the Community Education team this year has been road safety. In 2014 COTA ACT received a grant from the NRMA Road Safety Trust to develop a program designed to promote road safety for older road users. 'Street Smart Seniors' is a one hour information session which explores driver safety, pedestrian safety, alternative transport options, seniors' concessions, and what to consider if contemplating retiring from driving.

Street Smart Seniors sessions were delivered to 1013 participants between August 2015 and June 2016 and demand for the sessions continues. The most common topic of interest in these sessions has been alternative forms of

transport (to self-driving).

The COTA ACT Community Education program continues to offer sessions on CDC Home Care Packages - 'Controlling My Own Life: Making the most of CDC'. This is a national program run concurrently by all state and territory COTAs and funded by the Department of Social

**After a *Street Smart Seniors* session, participants are asked: "What was the most interesting/useful thing you learned today?"**

"Very useful information on services provided in the ACT for non-drivers."

"I hate asking my family to drive me around so sometimes I miss appointments because I don't want to ask. But now I know about Flexible Buses – this will change my life!"

"I learned about safe driving and safety features in cars"

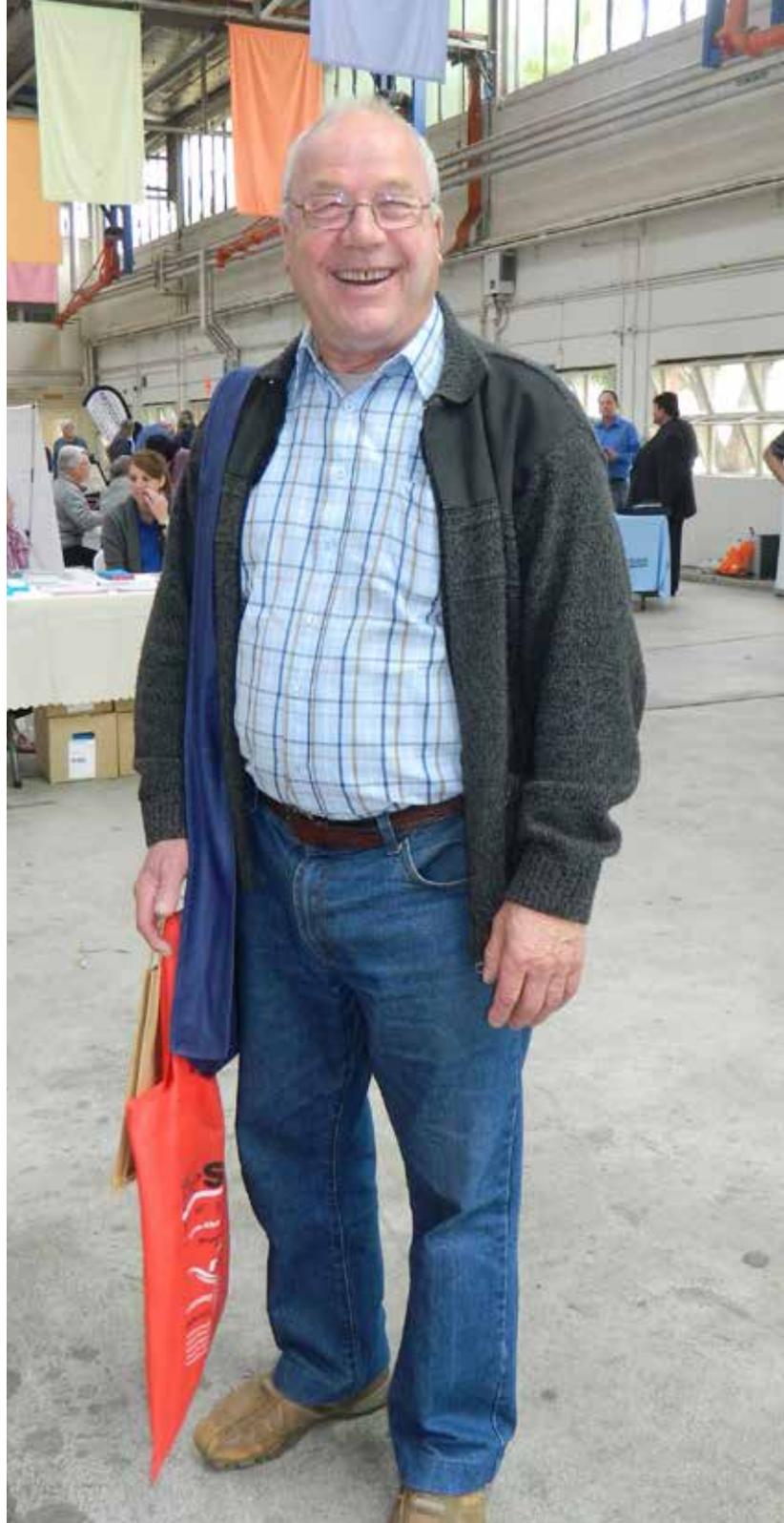
"High number of older people involved in accidents as pedestrians"

"Availability of NRMA older drivers' assessment. Availability of COTA advice."

"Absolutely everything! The information given ...y made us more aware of the challenges of driving, the considerations of being a driver and noticing other motorists, the positive actions we could take as "oldies" as well as the significance of seeking assistance"

Services. These sessions explain the recent changes to the way home care is provided. COTA ACT has collaborated with carer groups and home care providers to ensure the information is reaching the target audience. 176 participants attended CDC sessions in this period. The program is currently funded to June 2017.

The COTA ACT Community Education Program would not be possible without the incredible dedication, energy and experience of our wonderful volunteer peer educators. In 2015-16 the team presented 42 sessions to 1189 participants including nine sessions to CALD groups (150 CALD participants) to groups in Canberra and the surrounding region. This was in addition to the hours spent in training, workshops, support meetings and of course traveling to seniors' groups all over Canberra and the surrounding region.



# Seniors Week

**Seniors Week is an opportunity for Canberrans of all ages to join together and celebrate the valuable contributions that older people make to life in the ACT.**

Thanks to our 2016 Sponsors



*The***Senior**

**Beyond Bank**  
AUSTRALIA

*fernwood* FITNESS  
WODEN

**ActewAGL**  
for you

**THE STREET**



**Capital  
Chemist**

**TOBIN BROTHERS**  
FUNERALS

**Vikings**  
Group

**Connect  
Hearing** **c**

**ACT**  
Government  
Territory and Municipal Services  
Flexible Bus Service

Seniors Week 2016, proudly presented by COTA ACT and sponsored by the ACT Government and Beyond Bank, celebrated with over 300 programmed events throughout the ACT. This year COTA ACT endeavored to include even more events during Seniors Week. In doing so, we developed strong partnerships with many other organisations who were happy to co-host a variety of programs with us.



The week began with a well attended Seniors Week launch, combined with the opening night of *All this living*. Hosted by The Street Theatre on Friday 11 March, Seniors Week was launched by Dr Chris Bourke MLA and attended by Meegan Fitzharris MLA along with a healthy crowd of keen theatre goers including many COTA ACT volunteers.

The ACT Chief Minister’s Concert was held at The Auditorium at the Vikings Club Erindale with more than 500 attendees enjoying the RMC Band and the Australian Rugby Choir.

*TheSenior* Seniors Expo at Thoroughbred Park saw more than 2,500 people through the gates who were able to interact and talk with 200-plus exhibitors. Entertainment was provided by Keith Potger AO, founding member of the Seekers and cooking demonstrations were provided by Nutrition Australia on the *Fernwood* Stage. The Flexible Bus Service ensured people from all over Canberra were able to attend the expo, with free regular runs between the Woden bus interchange and Thoroughbred Park.

The Positive Ageing Awards saw a large number of inspirational Canberrans nominated for their work in the senior community. The panel of judges had a difficult time deciding on the winners of each award - congratulations to the finalists and the winners!

Community Sector Senior Volunteer	Intergenerational	Age Friendly Community	Seniors Advocate	Transport Services
<b>WINNER</b> Adele Stevens	<b>WINNER</b> <b>Young Person</b> Fiona Jarvis	<b>WINNER</b> Goodwin Aged Care Services	<b>WINNER</b> Donna O'Brien	<b>WINNER</b> <b>Individual</b> Stephanie Tolson
<b>FINALISTS</b> Chris Flaherty Jan Phillips Arthur Billington	<b>WINNER</b> <b>Older person</b> David Robertson	<b>FINALISTS</b> Belconnen Arts Centre The Eddison Day Club	<b>FINALISTS</b> Chris Flaherty Jan Phillips Arthur Billington	<b>WINNER</b> <b>Group</b> Community Transport Co-ordination Centre



# Housing Opti

**The Housing Options Advisory Service addresses a full range of accommodation issues faced by older Canberrans.**

This service is funded through the ACT Government's Community Services Directorate.

It provides a broad range of assistance in a number of important areas, including assistance with accessing community support systems for seniors in the ACT, tips on managing downsizing and home modifications, assistance accessing public and private housing options, assistance accessing retirement villages and permanent residential aged care facilities, and accessing the NDIS or home care packages to help people stay in their own home. The service also offers visits to clients in their homes in circumstances where disability or limited mobility issues would otherwise prevent an elderly person from attending an appointment at the Hughes Community Centre.

The 2015-16 financial year has been an extremely busy year for the service, with 31 public information events held around Canberra and nearly 1500 service users offered support. A number of these information sessions specifically assisted several culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) carer groups, as

well as older residents transitioning out of Mr. Fluffy properties. The service has also formed relationships with a wide range of private and community sector (NFP) service providers, and various ACT Government organisations, including the Community Services Directorate, the RADAR Intervention Team, the Older Persons Mental Health Service, ACT Police and the ACT Government's Asbestos Response Taskforce.

COTA ACT's Housing Options Advisory Service has actively participated on the ACT Government's Retirement Village Legislation Advisory Group that resulted in key amendments being introduced and passed in the ACT Legislative Assembly in June 2016.

These amendments included increased consumer protections in relation to information that has to be provided to prospective residents, new internal dispute resolution, simpler and more consultative budget approval processes (with greater resident input), increased safety and security for retirement villages and clarification of the difference between retirement village living and residential aged care.

The service has also introduced a number of innovations during 2015-16, including its involvement with the Canberra Living Conditions Network, which was established to promote the development of a coordinated, multi-disciplinary response from community sector and government agencies to respond to hoarding or squalor situations in the Canberra community. Working in conjunction with several other members of the network, we have conducted several training sessions that are designed to provide ACT Government and community sector workers with a clear idea of what situations can be defined as hoarding or squalor. It also assists with how to communicate effectively with individuals and families who are experiencing these difficulties, and how to connect with service delivery organisations who can provide both immediate relief and ongoing support to facilitate recovery.

Overall, it has been a successful year for the service that has resulted in the ACT Government renewing and increasing funding through to 2019.

# Seniors Card & Directory

COTA ACT had a significant increase in applications for the ACT Seniors/MyWay Card with 9,937 seniors being issued a new card. We have manually processed the majority of those applications through the COTA ACT office.

As of 30 June 2016 the number of ACT Seniors/MyWay Card holders reached 63,670 which represents a growth of 12%.

The 2015-17 Seniors Card Discount Directory was launched on 5 November 2015 by Minister for Ageing, Mr Mick Gentleman MLA, and attended by COTA ACT staff, volunteers and stakeholders.

The directory can be used by the 60,000+ Seniors Card holders to get discounts on a range of goods and services ranging from food and beverages, travel, computer services, entertainment and more.

A new ACT Seniors Card website allows businesses that were not fortunate enough to appear in the 2015-2017 Seniors Card Discount Directory the opportunity to appear online. The website is user friendly and has been developed to allow Seniors Card holders to find and access the offers on goods and services from the 300 businesses, as well as

information on government concessions. The new website has received 6,072 unique visitors since its launch in February 2016.

COTA ACT also manages the Seniors Information Line. The majority of callers request information on health, transport, computer challenges, keeping active, grandparent carers, and referral on home maintenance and modification. We direct some of these callers to businesses appearing in our Seniors Card Discount Directory. We also provided advice to the 420 calls into our office relating directly to the ACT Seniors/MyWay Card.



# Our People

## COTA ACT Board Members

Ewan Brown	President
Rod Gardiner	Vice President / Past President
Sue Jordan	Treasurer
Margaret Simmonds	
Elizabeth Grant AM	
Bruce Shaw	
Paul Feldman	
Rick Lord	
Fergus Thomson	
Jenny Mobbs	Public Officer

## COTA ACT Staff

Jenny Mobbs	Executive Director
Helen Taylor (until April 16)	Events / Volunteers
Ingrid Pepper	Community Education
Liz Hughes (until June 16)	Publications / Seniors Card
Raina Johnson	Membership / Seniors Card
Luke Coniston	Housing Options
Robyn Walter	Administration / Community Centre
Jane Thomson	Policy
Vicky Di Scipio	Finance

# THANK YOU

## **COTA ACT Office**

### **Volunteers**

Maria Philpot  
Jonas Mockunas  
Anne McNeilly  
Cheryl Ovenell  
John Wightman  
Margaret Simmonds  
Jan Yannopoulos  
Noel Semple

## **Community Education**

### **Volunteers**

Anne McNamara  
Dr Diana Shogren  
Janet Werner  
Sandra Gray  
Beverley Shannon  
John McCauley  
Richard Gray AM  
Rick Causebrook  
Ian Lambert  
Rob Lynch  
Kay Millburn

# Policy Council and Research Volunteers

Grateful thanks to our energetic researchers who have worked with us over the past year on a wide range of topics. This has often meant they have attended meetings with other organisations including government, meeting with our staff and investing time on literature reviews and much time on the computer.

Some who have helped us were:

Jenny McGee  
Susan Gray  
Peter Chivers  
Kerrie Byrne  
Rebecca Goldfinch  
Mahroo Parsi  
Marisa Vearing  
Sylvia Jamieson  
Alma Quick  
Audrey Guy  
Matthew Collett  
Trish Lord  
Karen Khoo  
Pauline Carder  
Jo Canty  
Sherene Suchy  
Susan Pennings  
Sylvia Jamieson  
Tony Beck  
Graham Jackson  
Audrey Guy  
John Boden  
Tracey Dalitz

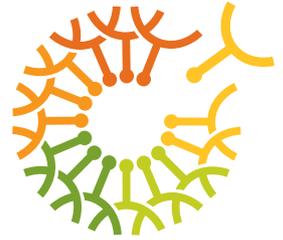
Marisa Vearing  
Bill Arthur  
Song Qian  
Eva Cotteral  
Lakshman Ganesharajah  
Paul Kwok  
Roger Shelton  
Margaret Power  
Rick Lord  
Bruce Shaw  
Paul Feldman  
Chander Khera  
Adele Stevens  
Kevin Vassarotti  
Trevor Smith  
Ailsa Turrell  
Fiona Proctor  
Deborah Evans  
Sam Wong  
Sue Schreiner  
Sue Jordan

... and others who have stepped in and out over the year.



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