

A Message from the General Manager

While for many reasons 2020 may be the year we all want to put behind us, it has also highlighted just what a wonderful community we have. We started the year with drought, bushfires and flood then got hit with a pandemic. Our sister organisation in Kirrawee burnt down in May. Many of our members faced personal crisis too. Thank you all for your patience and understanding while we dealt with each crisis. We are now working on the 'new normal' way of operating as the pandemic continues.

For those of you who regularly picked up your products from our Stanmore premises, we have missed you and look forward to seeing you again as we gradually open our door. Our approach remains cautious with emphasis on the continuation of our operations and the delivery of essential supplies to all our members. We will publish pick up days on our website and continue to communicate with you through written notices in all orders.

Apart from dealing with a 'series of unfortunate events' we have been busy upgrading our computer system with a staged implementation throughout the year. We have now completely moved to the new system. I hope you are all seeing the benefit of our new delivery dockets. They not only tell you what products are in your delivery, you can also see your postage balance and the date your membership is paid to. We can add personal notes and general information for all members as well.

Internally, we have a brilliant stock control and ordering system making our purchasing really efficient and giving us greater control over our cash flow. We are continually reviewing all our systems with a view to giving all our members the best service possible.

The next step will be to upgrade our website and introduce on-line ordering. I know many of you are keen to see this introduced. For those of you who prefer to mail or fax your orders we will always offer you those options. We want to offer our members as many ways to order as possible. Unfortunately, we are not able to take orders by phone. We need your order in writing as Medicare and the Stoma Appliance Scheme requires that we hold '*proof of a member's request*' for each item we claim for a minimum of 2 years. You can send your order by email, fax or post. If you have a condition which prevents you from doing this please contact our office to make alternate arrangements.

Under the Stoma Appliance Scheme (SAS) we are required to monitor members usage and ensure that scheme limits are not exceeded. It's a complex scheme with over 3,800 products currently listed. The maximum quantities vary greatly even for products with the same purpose. If you find the maximum amounts aren't enough, please contact your Stomal Therapy Nurse (STN) to have your stoma and product usage reviewed. If you don't see an STN regularly, we provide access for all our members to an STN. Our nurse, Anne Marie Lyons, is a highly experienced STN and offers services by phone and email. Unfortunately, we had to close our on-site clinic because of the pandemic. If you don't need the maximum amount, please don't order it. Order what you need and we recommend you keep 2 weeks supply in reserve in case your order is delayed in transit. We understand how stressful it is if you are running low.

We hope to resume our Regional Information Days next year. We were forced to cancel all of them during 2020 because of COVID-19 but we know how important these days are to our members. The opportunity to meet with suppliers and learn from our guest speakers including our wonderful Stomal Therapy Nurses and other health professionals, is eagerly anticipated by many of you. Many of you report the most informative part of the day is the question and answer session, where you get the opportunity to hear and learn from your fellow ostomates alongside the professionals. I love these days because I get to meet some of our members, so fingers-crossed we can find a COVID-safe way to

deliver these in 2021. We are also exploring other ways to deliver information and stoma education and awareness through the use of technology.

I want to thank all our wonderful members who heeded our cry for donations (more than 1,400 of you). This has made an enormous difference to our ability to serve our members. On behalf of the board and staff I want to extend our heartfelt thanks. Later in this journal we have listed many of you (if you gave us permission) to give you the acknowledgement you deserve.

In 2021 we will also explore ways our members can volunteer with our association to increase the services we offer our members. Watch this space for more information. Many thanks to Paula Garrod our fabulous member and graphic designer who made our June & December journals possible. Thanks to all our board members who generously give us their time and expertise.

I wish you all a very happy 2021. May it be a happy, peaceful and uneventful year for all of us.

Mary Egan
General Manager, NSW Stoma Ltd