

MATERNITY CONSUMER NETWORK

2026 Annual General Meeting

Minutes and Annual Report 2025–2026



Date	Saturday, 25 July 2026
Time	7:37 pm – approximately 8:35 pm AEST
Venue	Online via Zoom
Document status	Prepared from the AGM transcript for publication and formal confirmation

OFFICE-BEARERS ELECTED AT THE AGM

President	Alecia Staines
Treasurer	Norafiah Lever
Assistant Treasurer	Emilia Bhat
Secretary	Alecia Staines

Maternity Consumer Network is a volunteer-led consumer organisation working to improve respectful, woman-centred maternity care.

Part A — Annual General Meeting Minutes

1. Opening and welcome

The 2026 Annual General Meeting of Maternity Consumer Network Incorporated opened at approximately 7:37 pm AEST and was conducted online via Zoom. Members were welcomed and the work completed during the reporting period was acknowledged, with particular recognition of the organisation's volunteer committee and contributors.

2. Attendance

Committee members and association members attended online. The transcript records participation by Alecia Staines, Norafiah Lever, Emilia Bhat, Sharon, Ellen and Kristy, together with other members who participated in the discussion. No formal apologies were recorded in the transcript.

3. Annual report

The annual report for 2025–2026 was presented and discussed. Members noted the organisation's conference, education, advocacy, complaints-navigation resources, peer support, media engagement, research partnerships and organisational development. The full public-facing annual report is included in Part B of this document.

4. Financial report

- The 2025–2026 profit and loss information and current bank position were presented to members.
- The organisation's available bank funds were reported as approximately \$25,000 at the time of the meeting. Further Queensland Government income was outstanding, and subcontractor payments and other commitments remained to be processed.
- The association was reported to be in a similar or slightly stronger overall position than the previous year, despite delivering its first major conference during the reporting period.
- The conference generated approximately \$50,000 in ticket sales. Sponsorship and exhibition income contributed to costs, and the event produced a surplus that can support future conference activity.
- Members present indicated their acceptance of the financial report.

5. Election of office-bearers

All committee positions were declared vacant. Nominations and willingness to serve were discussed, and the following office-bearers were confirmed:

Position	Elected office-bearer
President	Alecia Staines
Treasurer	Norafiah Lever
Assistant Treasurer	Emilia Bhat
Secretary	Alecia Staines

Additional general committee members were also confirmed. Ellen agreed to join the committee and contribute to peer-support processes and the respectful maternity care working group.

6. Financial and administrative arrangements

- Norafiah Lever will be added to relevant banking and financial authorisations, subject to the requirements of the financial institution and government systems.
- Norafiah Lever will establish the required myID/RAM access to assist with Australian Taxation Office reporting and quarterly activity statement lodgements.
- Emilia Bhat will continue supporting Xero administration, account reconciliation and payment processing, and will assist with handover and mentoring.
- The association will retain two-person approval controls for transactions and establish a third authorised person as a practical backup when another approver is unavailable.
- The dedicated accounts email and improved administrative systems will continue to be implemented.

7. General business

- Regular committee check-ins will be scheduled approximately every six weeks, with availability to be confirmed through the committee communication group.
- The conference working group will continue planning future respectful maternity care events. An online event between in-person conferences will also be explored.
- MCN will continue expanding its maternity complaints-navigation resources, peer-support pathways and hospital-facing consumer information.
- The potential alignment of a proposed birth-trauma podcast with the Living Birth Trauma Project will be explored.
- Research collaborations, respectful maternity care training, consumer mentoring and advocacy work will remain key priorities.
- Opportunities to present or exhibit at relevant conferences, including the Waves of Change conference, will be progressed.

8. Actions arising

Action area	Agreed next step	Lead
Banking and government access	Add Norafiah Lever to appropriate bank, myID, RAM and ATO reporting arrangements.	Alecia Staines / Norafiah Lever
Financial handover	Continue Xero, reconciliation and reporting handover; maintain backup approval arrangements.	Emilia Bhat / Norafiah Lever
Committee meetings	Poll committee availability and establish approximately six-weekly meetings.	Alecia Staines
Conference planning	Continue the working group and assess an online event between in-person conferences.	Conference working group
Consumer resources	Continue developing complaints, peer-support and hospital-facing resources.	Committee / peer-support team
Projects and partnerships	Progress the respectful maternity care collaborative, research partnerships and potential podcast integration.	Relevant project leads

9. Close

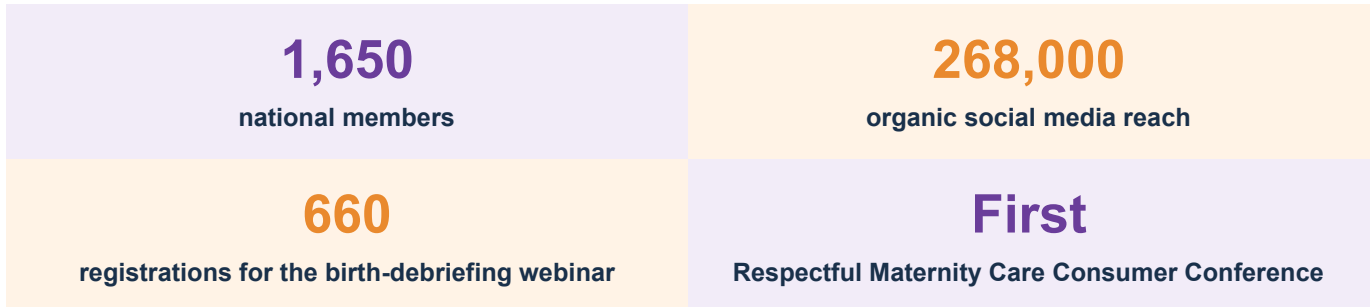
The meeting closed after approximately one hour. The next committee meeting date will be determined following a poll of members' availability.

Part B — Annual Report 2025–2026

Presented to members at the Maternity Consumer Network 2026 Annual General Meeting

Year in review

During 2025–2026, Maternity Consumer Network continued to grow its national reach while remaining a volunteer-led organisation. The year included the first Respectful Maternity Care Consumer Conference, expansion of complaints-navigation and peer-support resources, continued respectful maternity care education, increased media and public engagement, and a growing number of research and advocacy partnerships.



Respectful Maternity Care Consumer Conference

MCN delivered its first Respectful Maternity Care Consumer Conference in March 2026 after several years of planning. The event brought together consumers, clinicians, researchers, advocates and national and international speakers. It strengthened discussion about implementing respectful maternity care and created momentum for an ongoing collaborative focused on woman-centred care.

- Ticket sales were approximately \$50,000.
- Sponsorship and exhibitor income contributed to the costs of international guests and event delivery.
- The event generated a surplus sufficient to provide seed funding for a future conference.
- A conference working group has been established, and an online event between in-person conferences will be considered.

Strategic planning and organisational development

A strategic planning meeting was held to set priorities for the next two years and improve the systems that support MCN's work. The committee focused on making processes clearer, more sustainable and easier to share across a volunteer team.

- Improved committee onboarding and role clarity.
- Development of a dedicated accounts email and strengthened financial administration.
- More structured complaints-navigation and peer-support processes.
- Plans for regular six-weekly committee check-ins.
- Continued development of working groups for conferences, respectful maternity care and other priority projects.

Membership, communications and media

MCN's membership grew to approximately 1,650 people nationally, including women, consumer advocates, researchers and maternity care professionals. Social media content achieved an organic reach of approximately 268,000 during the reporting period, without routine paid promotion. Several advocacy and educational posts performed strongly, with one campaign exceeding 500,000 views.

MCN also continued national and state media engagement, including television and print coverage. Media activity remained an important avenue for sharing consumer experiences, communicating evidence and promoting respectful maternity care.

Complaints navigation and peer support

A major organisational priority was making maternity complaints and feedback pathways easier for women to understand and use. With pro bono community-support assistance from Squire Patton Boggs, complaint pathways were compiled for hospitals and health services across Australia and organised by state and service.

- State-by-state PDF directories identifying available complaint and feedback pathways.
- A consumer-friendly guide to preparing and lodging a maternity care complaint.
- Website navigation that helps women identify service-level options and escalation pathways.
- A clearer pathway for women to request MCN peer support.
- Continued one-to-one support for women navigating complex complaints and feedback processes.

The committee acknowledged the substantial volunteer contribution made by Emilia Bhat and others who supported women individually and helped develop these resources.

Education and respectful maternity care training

MCN continued delivering and developing Better Births with Consent, which entered its fifth year. Training was delivered in South Australia in March 2026, with further delivery planned in the Northern Territory. Quotes or proposals were also requested for Tasmania and Victoria, and MCN submitted a tender for respectful maternity care training in New South Wales.

The Queensland Government training program continued during the year. The committee noted the importance of strengthening systems, diversifying income and planning for the eventual conclusion of current government funding.

Research and academic partnerships

Demand for meaningful consumer involvement in health and maternity research continued to increase. MCN received multiple requests to participate as consumer investigators, co-design partners and advisory contributors. Because the organisation remains volunteer-led, careful allocation of consumer representatives was necessary.

- Consumer input into research concerning induction of labour and women's experiences of care.
- A partnership with the University of New England on a randomised controlled trial examining an evidence-based alternative to routine birth debriefing.
- Planning for stronger institutional pathways to support MCN-led ethics applications and grant activity, including a proposed Southern Cross University affiliation.
- Consumer-led research priorities identified at the conference, including declining care, rural maternity access, migrant women's experiences and training consumers to participate in research.

Consumer leadership, advocacy and mentoring

MCN continued supporting consumer leaders and community groups seeking improvements in maternity care. This included mentoring and collaboration with groups in the Northern Territory, Tasmania and New South Wales, as well as support for local advocacy concerning continuity of midwifery care, rural maternity services and publicly funded homebirth.

The organisation also continued engaging with government representatives, advisers, health services and professional stakeholders. State-based advocacy was identified as a practical priority alongside national policy work.

Webinars and public education

Two major public education activities were highlighted during the AGM: a webinar examining consent and legal accountability in maternity care, and a webinar on evidence-based alternatives to routine birth debriefing. The birth-debriefing webinar attracted approximately 660 registrations, more than 200 live participants and at least 80 subsequent recording views at the time of the AGM.

The response demonstrated strong interest in trauma-informed, evidence-based approaches to supporting women following difficult or traumatic maternity care experiences.

Financial overview

At the AGM, available bank funds were reported as approximately \$25,000. Additional Queensland Government income was outstanding, while subcontractor payments and other obligations remained to be processed. The organisation was considered to be in a similar or slightly improved financial position compared with the previous year.

The conference was a significant undertaking and generated approximately \$50,000 in ticket sales. Sponsorship, exhibitors and training income supported delivery, and the resulting surplus provides a foundation for future conference planning. The committee nevertheless recognised the need to continue strengthening financial systems and diversifying future income.

Priorities for 2026–2027

Priority	Focus
Governance and sustainability	Embed improved committee, financial, onboarding and reporting systems.
Training and education	Continue respectful maternity care training and expand access across jurisdictions.
Consumer support	Maintain and improve complaints-navigation resources and peer-support pathways.
Research leadership	Build ethical, academic and funding pathways for consumer-led and co-designed research.
Advocacy and partnerships	Strengthen state and national collaborations and mentor emerging consumer groups.
Events and engagement	Plan future conferences, webinars and accessible online education.

Acknowledgements

Maternity Consumer Network acknowledges the women and families who share their experiences and inform the organisation's work; the volunteer committee and peer supporters; conference speakers, sponsors and exhibitors; Squire Patton Boggs for its pro bono community-support contribution; research and academic partners; and the consumer organisations and advocates working across Australia to improve maternity care.

The achievements recorded in this annual report reflect a substantial collective contribution by volunteers working to advance respectful, woman-centred maternity care.

COMMITTEE OFFICE-BEARERS FOR 2026–2027

President	Alecia Staines
Treasurer	Norafiah Lever
Assistant Treasurer	Emilia Bhat
Secretary	Alecia Staines

FORMAL CONFIRMATION OF AGM MINUTES

CONFIRMATION

Confirmed as a true and correct record

Name and positionAlecia Staines — President and Secretary

Signature and date

