



THE AUSTRALASIAN
BIRTH TRAUMA
ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/2023



Table of Contents

22-23

01.

Introduction to ABTA

02.

Our why

03.

Impact goals

04.

ABTA programs

05.

Advocacy: awareness and understanding

06.

Impact

Acknowledgement of Country

The ABTA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians whose lands we are fortunate to live and work on, and we pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.





Message from ABTA CEO Amy Dawes OAM

I am pleased to share this annual report for 2022/2023, highlighting our progress and achievements over the past year. Throughout the year, we have focused on advancing our strategic goals, enhancing our support services, and advocating for the interests of our community. Our commitment to excellence and collaboration has enabled us to navigate challenges and seize new growth opportunities. I want to extend my gratitude to our dedicated team, community, and partners for their invaluable support and contributions. Together, we are making significant strides toward a brighter future. Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Introduction to the Australasian Birth Trauma Association

Vision

Working towards safer births and better healing.

Our purpose

The Australasian Birth Trauma Association (ABTA) is Australia's peak charity dedicated to helping prevent, diagnose, and treat birth-related trauma. We are a peer-led association working with Australian women, birthing people and families who are impacted by birth-related trauma. In carrying out ABTA's goals, we aim to:

- reduce preventable birth-related trauma;
- de-stigmatise the experience of birth-related trauma;
- raise awareness of physical and psychological birth-related trauma, and
- connect traumatised birthing people/families with the support they need to heal.

We value information that is:

Evidence-based

Our approach is supported by the best available research.

Holistic

Our approach takes a broad view of perinatal trauma to include not only physical needs but also social and emotional.

Multi-disciplinary

Our approach involves a wide range of healthcare professionals, each with important strengths and contributions.

Underpinning ABTA's work is its commitment to the following values:

To promote acknowledgement and understanding of birth trauma through advocacy, education and research

1

To engage in active collaboration with health care providers, other perinatal service providers and consumers


2

To lead with empathy, compassion and without judgement

3

To contribute to better health outcomes for mothers, babies, families and health care providers

4



What motivates our actions and drives our purpose?



What is the issue?

- Despite over 110,000 women and families being impacted by birth-related trauma every year, birth-related trauma remains a relatively unknown issue.
- Lack of awareness and education results in a lack of individualised care, stigmas and feelings of fear and isolation.
- Many birthing families report having experiences of trauma dismissed, either during or after birth, and diagnoses of injuries can take months or years to receive.



Why does this happen?

- The reality is that very few women and people receive comprehensive, evidence-based information on labour and birthing and go into their labour unaware of potential outcomes.
- There is also minimal training for maternity health professionals on the prevalence and impacts of birth-related trauma.
- There is limited research or funding directed to understanding the prevalence, impacts, treatment and long-term management of birth injuries and birth-related trauma.



What can we do?

- Families need unbiased, evidence-based information about childbirth and be empowered to make informed decisions to prevent experiences of trauma before, during and after birth.
- Birth-related trauma must be recognised and understood in the community to reduce stigma and isolation.
- Maternity Health professionals need additional training and education to reduce preventable traumatic interactions and improve diagnosis and pathways to care.
- Those experiencing birth-related trauma must have access to dedicated birth-related trauma support programs and resources

ABTA Impact Goals

“Birth-related trauma” includes any injury or trauma, whether physical or psychological, sustained at any time in connection with pregnancy, labour or childbirth. This definition is intended to be broad in effect.

1

EDUCATION

We aim to educate women, birthing people, families, and health professionals about safer birthing and better healing from birth-related trauma.

This aim includes training healthcare professionals about how to prevent and better respond to birth-related trauma.

2

AWARENESS

We aim to raise community awareness of safer birthing and birth-related trauma, to destigmatise the experience of birth-related trauma, to increase access to support, and to reduce the prevalence and impacts of birth-related trauma.

3

SUPPORT

We aim to provide trusted peer-led support services for people affected by birth-related trauma, including for those in regional and remote areas.

Our goal is to increase connection for those people feeling isolated after experiencing birth-related trauma.

4

SUSTAINABILITY

As a largely peer-led and volunteer organisation, we aim to build long term organisational sustainability to underpin our three strategic goals. To do this, we will be mindful of making applications for relevant grants and governmental funding, and encourage and implement community fundraising efforts.



ABTA Programs

The Australasian Birth Trauma Association is proud to offer our community a range of free programs for parents. The ABTA has responded to the exponential increase in support and service delivery demand. While we still have significant resource and budget constraints, we have developed and launched our in-person support program, Peer2Peer Meets, and diversified our Peer2Peer Chat program.

We remain optimistic because we know the impact of our services and support is much needed. We endeavour to seek out new funding opportunities and financial contributions to ensure that our services remain focused on the needs of birthing families.

ABTA is committed to fostering a collaborative and inclusive approach through co-production methodologies. Acknowledging the significance of understanding and responding to the needs of our community—those with lived or living experiences of birth-related trauma—ABTA has created a platform for open dialogue. This platform utilises various digital mechanisms, as outlined below.

 PEER2PEER Support Program	The ABTA's Community Support Programs creating safe spaces to share your birthing experience, free from judgement, free from opinion, simply free. In Person, Online and Socials.		<i>Connecting with other women with different but common experiences was invaluable. I went from feeling desperately alone and broken to feeling like I can keep going and thrive.</i>
ThinkNatal™ EDUCATION AND TRAINING	Our consumer and clinician educational resources.	Providing women and people with the knowledge and tools to prepare for the birth they want while also preparing them for any possible scenarios.	
ThinkNatal™ EDUCATION AND TRAINING	Ongoing professional development to educate and up-skill in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of birth-related trauma.	Education resources to provide support and information for clinicians with the aim of improving practice.	
Research & Advocacy	Advocacy to increase access to care pathways and specialist support services, like perinatal physiotherapy. Significant publications included the 'Birth Injuries Survey And Report.'	Education resources to provide support and information for clinicians with the aim of improving practice.	
Raising Awareness	Raising awareness and understanding of birth trauma through various media, engagement and speaking opportunities.	Active promotion of safer births and better healing with healthcare providers and community.	

The ABTA Community Support Programs



The ABTA's flagship support service, the Peer2Peer (P2P) Support Program, was launched in August 2018.

This program harnesses the power of shared experience to deliver nonjudgmental, peer-led support via an online live messaging service through our website. Peer support is so effective because it allows parents to connect with an empathetic ear without the fear of judgement, enabling women and families to feel supported and validated.

“Through talking to other women through the Facebook support group and forging relationships with other women who had also suffered birth trauma, I was so comforted by the fact that I wasn't alone.”

“Through talking to other women through the Facebook support group and forging relationships with other women who had also suffered birth trauma, I was so comforted by the fact that I wasn't alone.”

100% of users would recommend the Peer2Peer Support Program to their friends and colleagues



Peer2Peer Social is our peer-moderated Facebook support group for women and birthing people who identify as having birth trauma.

With a community of 4000 members, as of December 2023, We foster an environment of empathy, validation, and shared wisdom, where each voice finds resonance, and every story finds validation.

“The ABTA Facebook support group was life changing for me. Having a community of support from other people who know exactly what you've been through makes such a huge difference. It has helped me so much and has opened new pathways for me to be able to help others through their birth trauma.”

“The ABTA Facebook group has been our main source of compassionate support during the incredibly hard first year after the birth of our child. The ABTA community helped us connect to the right medical help across Australia, and find the right support groups local to us. In every way, they have supported us to recover from the physical and emotional trauma our family has suffered, and today we are thriving again.”

About Peer2Peer Meets

At Peer2Peer Meets, we provide support and understanding for women who have experienced birth-related trauma. Our program is crafted to be trauma-informed and peer-led, ensuring a nurturing environment where individuals can embark on a journey of self-discovery. With empathy at the forefront, Peer2Peer Meets enables participants to find solace in the company of others who truly understand.

Importantly, we empower participants to chart their path forward on their trauma journey, providing them with the tools, resources, and support they need to reclaim agency over their narratives and cultivate resilience in the face of adversity. At Peer2Peer Meets, every woman is embraced with compassion; every voice is honoured.

Key objectives of the program are:

To provide recognition to participants they are not alone (sense of belonging)

To validate felt trauma: whatever that trauma looks like (feeling understood)

Create new social supports

Provide access to care pathways

Assist participants to develop a path forward.

The development of this support program has been informed by the collection of extensive anecdotal evidence from families who have experienced birth-related trauma, the input of health professionals and learnings from academic research. A peer-led approach to support has been selected for the delivery of this support program due to its evidence-based effectiveness. Peer support is an established intervention in which those with a condition or lived experience are supported by someone who has also had a similar condition or lived experience. It is effective because it focuses on person-centred outcomes, social inclusion, and empowerment.

Our program facilitators have lived or living experience of birth trauma and undertake the ABTA's two-day peer support training program as well as a half-day Peer2Peer Meets training workshop. The ABTA staff facilitates the mentor training, with relevant sections presented by health professionals. The ABTA places great importance on providing peer support workers with training that adequately prepares them for the service they will provide. The ABTA ensures these volunteers are not further traumatised through their volunteering duties. The purpose of the training is to provide peer workers with knowledge of the various types of physical trauma, the psychological impacts of birth trauma, how mentors can care for themselves while supporting others, and counselling skills.



“

I started seeing a Perinatal Psychologist who recommended I check out the ABTA website for additional resources. I joined the ABTA Facebook group and learnt of the P2P Support group which I joined. Working through my trauma alongside a number of other mothers who have experienced trauma from/post-birth helped normalise my experience and know that help and support are available. I valued hearing their stories which gave perspective as well as advice.

”

“

I am so grateful this type of program is available and at no cost. I feel there is a lot of value in the P2P support group and I wish it could be easily accessible and provided within the first few weeks/months postpartum, this will allow future mothers (and partners) to feel like they are not alone and may even prevented/eased anxiety, depression, sense of isolation and unnecessary prolonged physical injuries by seeking help early post birth

”

Advocacy

Awareness



Breakdown of media coverage:

Birth Trauma Awareness week - delivered annually since 2018.

- There were 27 stories that directly referred to the ABTA
- 14 online stories, 5 radio stories, 4 TV stories, 3 print stories and 1 podcast feature
- 18 were available locally, 2 were available statewide and 8 were available nationally

Media outlets:

- Print coverage was generated in the Gold Coast Bulletin, The Daily Advertiser and the Townsville Bulletin
- TV coverage was generated in ABC 7:30 program, Nine Gold Coast News, 7 Sunshine Coast News, 7 Riverina
- Online coverage was generated in abc.net.au, dailymail, abc, sbsinsight.com.au, mamamia.com.au, goldcoastbulletin.com.au, womensagenda.com.au, cairnspost.com.au, couriermail.com.au, theadvertiser.com.au, adalaidenow.com.au
- Radio coverage was generated in ABC Brisbane (state-wide), ABC Gold Coast, ABC Riverina, ABC Sunshine Coast, ABC Gold Coast



Understanding

Delivered presentations about birth-related trauma to over 20 key stakeholder groups, including;

- The Mental Health Professionals Network (MHPN): Ballarat, Geelong, Brisbane South, Sunshine Coast
- The Continence Foundation's National Conference and QLD's local Branch
- Student Midwives at CQU Brisbane, UQ Brisbane, University of South Australia, Midwifery Society Melbourne
- Royal College of Australia and New Zealand Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Annual Conference
- 14th Annual Malpractice Conference (third consecutive year)
- For When - National Charity
- Plus Paternal Network - National Charity
- Pelvic Pain Symposium for Pelvic Health Physiotherapists
- Australian Sonographers Association - keynote
- Hospitals:
 - Southern Sydney Health District: 8000 babies per year
 - Joan Kirner Women's and Children's, Sunshine Hospital, VIC: 6500 babies per year
 - Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney: 6000 babies per year
 - Canterbury Hospital, Sydney
 - Mercy Perinatal, Victoria (for a National event) totalling 1400 registrants
 - Cairns Hospital



“

I wanted to share a huge thank you to the Australasian Birth Trauma Association (ABTA) for their incredible presentation at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital-Birthing Services. The midwives and I learnt so much and we will take these skills with us every day. It provided an opportunity for us to collaborate to better prevent and treat birth-related trauma.
Karen Twohig, Clinical Midwifery Educator, Royal Price Alfred Hospital

”

“

I would like to thank you for the wonderful lecture you gave to The University of QLD Bachelor of Midwifery and Bachelor of Nursing and Bachelor of Midwifery Dual degree students. You were able to provide the students with a unique insight into the issues mothers and families can face following a traumatic birth and kept the students engaged and interested for the whole lecture. Your extensive and empathetic knowledge in this area allowed the students to ask questions and reflect on their own future practice and understanding. I cannot thank you enough for sparing the time to teach our future midwives.
Ann Peacock, Lecturer, The University of Queensland

”



OUR IMPACT

AWARENESS

EDUCATION

SUPPORT

ADVOCACY

4600+

Peer Support for women, partners and families across Australia every year.

7000+



unique website visitors each **month**.

SBS
ABC
Sydney Morning Herald
Daily Telegraph
Canberra Times
Australian Women's Weekly
Local Print and online Media
Podcast and Radio
Healthy Male

200+

Appearances in media advocating for birth related trauma and our community.

Peer led and trauma informed support and care

Peer2Peer 6,792

Peer2Peer related website content garnered 6,792 page views during the financial year

30+

Resources and videos developed for consumers and health professionals with thousands of views/downloads.

Global Engagement Snapshot



- Australia
- United States
- United Kingdom
- Canada
- New Zealand
- Ireland
- India
- Germany
- Netherlands
- Sweden

50+ Conferences



Over 3 years, reaching **3,600+** maternity and allied health practitioners across Australia.

Meetings with key politicians to advocate for our cause and strengthen our partnerships for future initiatives. Participation in industry working groups, including for RANZCOG and the Contenance Foundation of Australia.

In the financial year of 2022-2023



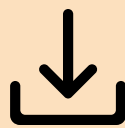
81,936

Users



101,264

Sessions



3,350

Unique Downloads



New South Wales
Victoria
Queensland
South Australia
Western Australia
Tasmania
Australian Capital Territory
Northern Territory

Distribution of birth-related trauma resources to hospitals, allied health professionals and birth centres in **every state and territory.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a national organisation, our dedicated team is pivotal to our success.

We are incredibly fortunate to have such a engaged community of supporters who believe in our vision and stand by our side. Whether through storytelling, donations, volunteering, or spreading awareness, every effort makes a difference, and we are grateful. Thank you once again for being a vital part of our journey. Together, we are making a real difference in the lives of those we serve.



We thank you for your continued support in our efforts for safer births and better healing.

CONTACT

Australasian Birth

Trauma Association

PO BOX 403, Buderim
4556

www.birthtrauma.org.au

support@birthtrauma.org.au



**birth
trauma**

ABTA's Vision

Safer births and better healing