

## Providing

reliable and up to date information to improve the understanding of arthritis and osteoporosis

## Promoting

healthy lifestyles and self-management to optimise health outcomes

### Inside:

P 2

- Background to the NT Arthritis Foundation

P 3

- Community engagement
- Information sessions

P 4 & 5

- A Falls Patient's story

P 6

- Membership

P 7

- Recipe
- Foodbank NT

P 8

- What we do
- Acknowledgements

# joinNTed



## Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT

The Arthritis Foundation of the Northern Territory Inc

October—November 2025

## Arthritis Australia - 75th Anniversary

Arthritis Australia was founded 75 years ago to improve the lives of those suffering from arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions. It has pioneered research funding, leads policy change and advocates accessible design which makes products easier to manage for those with arthritis.

The anniversary was celebrated with a function on 1<sup>st</sup> September at Parliament House in Canberra. The function was attended by the Prime Minister, Anthony Albanese, the Assistant Minister for Health Rebecca White with national leaders, clinicians, researchers and consumer advocates.

Consumer advocates presented personal stories offering a first hand view of the daily challenges faced by millions of Australians. Arthritis Australia is calling for a \$100+ million Medical Research Future Fund Mission to fast-track prevention, diagnosis, and treatment breakthroughs to deliver healthier futures over the next 75 years.



Photo: L-R: Arthritis Australia Chair Kaylene Hubbard; Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; Interim CEO Louise Hardy; Assistant Minister for Health Rebecca White; Parliamentary Friends of Arthritis Chair Senator Helen Polley.

## Annual General Meeting - coming up

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November at 3:00 pm

At the AONT office, Shop 48 Rapid Creek Business Village

A formal Notice of the AGM will be sent to all members next month.

## Some background to the Arthritis Foundation of the Northern Territory Incorporated

Our records show that in early 1981, a group of concerned and far sighted people met in Darwin to discuss “**the needs of arthritis sufferers ... including more information and patient education**”. As a result, the Arthritis and Rheumatism Association of the NT was formed in May 1981 (becoming incorporated soon after). Then in July 1983, the association was renamed to the Arthritis Foundation of the Northern Territory Inc.

An incorporated association is a legal identity separate from that of its members. It can enter and enforce contracts in its own name, for example our Funding Agreement with NT Health, small grants from the NT Community Benefit Fund and small projects with Arthritis Australia. Incorporation also means having a constitution which complies with the Associations Act NT. A constitution sets out guidelines for the proper conduct of an association. While ours has evolved over time, our objectives and purpose remain essentially the same: “**to provide an organisation primarily for the benefit of and service to persons afflicted with arthritis and osteoporosis**”.

The Board is collectively responsible for ensuring our association complies with both the Act and regulations made under the Act. From time to time, the NT Department of Business conducts information sessions on association governance to keep us up to date on changes and requirements. As a registered charity we also have an obligation to the Australian Charities and Not-for profit Commission to maintain correct procedures and to report annually.

Recently, when we participated in a workshop on good governance, we learnt that ideally members of an Association should agree to abide by the objectives. In practice this just means that members don't undermine or thwart the work of the organisation in providing services. Accordingly, the Board recently agreed that for new membership applications, a summary of objectives should be included on the application form for the information of new members.

As well as our formal name above, we have registered Business Names:

- Arthritis NT
- Osteoporosis NT
- Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT - from this one we derive our much used acronym, AONT

Registration was originally with NT Department of Business and is now with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission.

**Copies of our constitution are available at our office. For members interested in delving further into our history, you are welcome to contact the office to make arrangements to read these materials.**

## Community engagement

Providing information stands at community events is an important part of our community outreach - answering questions, sharing resources and catching up with old friends.

### Darwin Rural Seniors expo - A two day event in mid October

As a corporate member of COTA NT, AONT was invited to participate in the inaugural Rural Seniors Expo. Hosted by the Litchfield Community library, the event was held at Coolalinga Central, in and around the library. It was well attended with many helpful interactions.



### Palmerston Seniors Day - early August



AONT is now a regular participant in this annual event. As well as information stands and a range of entertainment items, visitors to Palmerston Seniors Day enjoyed a morning tea and lunch.

## Monthly information sessions

This year we have run regular self-management information sessions, rotating through a series of three different topics. If you are a regular reader of Seniors Voice published by COTA NT, you will see in their October-December edition a copy of the poster at right. This was developed by our Publications Volunteer as part of our Facebook promotion. The cost of placing the advertisement in Seniors Voice was met through a small grant project funded by Arthritis Australia to promote chronic conditions management. These info sessions are always well received, with very positive feedback on content and presentation, as well as usefulness and relevance of the sessions.

**Self-management information sessions** |  **Arthritis & Osteoporosis NT**

**Taking the first step**  
Help to get you moving, an essential part of chronic condition self-management  
• Friday 17 October, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm

**What a pain!**  
Self-management strategies for chronic pain, whatever the cause  
• Friday 21 November, 9:30 am to 1:00 pm

**Understanding and managing arthritis and osteoporosis**  
Update your knowledge  
• Friday 19 December, 10:00 am to 11:30 am

All welcome - bookings are essential.  
Call 8948 5232, Monday to Thursday 9:30 am to 2:00 pm

 Follow us on Facebook

**aont.org.au**



## A Falls Patient's Story - by Nola Sweetman delivered at the Healthy Bones reception at Government House in August 2025

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you all about my experience back on the 10<sup>th</sup> February this year. After a lovely weekend in Darwin River at my daughter Liz and her husband's property, I prepared to leave, arriving home at my property near Katherine a few hours later, much to the delight of my daughter Steph, mother of then 10-month-old twins. She was still in her pajamas and asked me to go shopping to buy some fresh fruit for the babies.



There was no massive rush to leave so an hour later I drove to town, still wearing my jeans and sneakers. Not knowing literally what I was about to encounter inside the Woolworths complex, I walked past the aisles and the shops alongside. I was in front of Brumbies when I spotted a friend, Des from Mataranka, en route to his car. I called out to him and as he turned around to greet me, I suddenly slipped on something on the floor. I did a pitch perfect ballet move with my left leg towards the ceiling... this position is called "developpe" or if you are not into ballet imagine a Can Can dancer doing a high kick.

Des was my only witness and he said he saw me put my hands behind my head as my foot came crashing down onto the concrete. I was stunned, to put it mildly, as I watched my ankle triple in size. Des called a staff member who brought me a chair, while he kindly grabbed a stack of shopping baskets to put under my foot.



I rang Steph at home to tell her what had happened. She later told me that she thought I was ringing to say, guess what, strawberries are at half price! Des had a bag of ice in his trolley which he tore open and applied to my ankle while someone I knew rang the ambulance.



On arrival at Katherine Hospital an hour later, the doctors called for X-rays to be taken and told me that I'd done a very good job!

Results revealed a three piece break or a 'trimalleoller fracture'. The lovely staff reassured me, wrapped my leg and gave me some painkillers.

The following day I was driven to Royal Darwin Emergency Department. After being reviewed in ED, I was moved to the surgical ward. Doctors informed me that they could not operate until the swelling around my ankle significantly reduced. I was asked to elevate my leg which I did on three pillows. Anything I was asked to do I did religiously to the best of my ability. Without exception, the staff, doctors, nurses, cleaners, kitchen staff were all lovely. I seemed to strike a rapport with each and everyone one of them including the young orthopedic team who swung by for a chat and a look at my leg around 9.30 each morning. It wasn't all smooth sailing. It was hard at times, the pain, the challenge of mobilising without quite a lot of support, the waiting game and by far losing the independence I had taken for granted every day.

Prior to the accident my life was in full swing including conducting weddings as a marriage celebrant, making local preserves, being an active grandmother and working on my property outside of town.

Probably the saddest part of the whole experience was missing my cruise to New Zealand after more than a year of planning.



Finally after what seemed an eternity, the orthopedic team declared one morning that the swelling had reduced enough to operate.

But then, when might the operation happen? I fasted, nothing happened, I fasted again and again but I still didn't make the surgical list due to the Operating Theatre being so busy with higher priority cases.

Finally my number came up and I was scheduled for surgery that day. Thankfully it was a success, however the surgeon said my bones were soft so recovery time could be prolonged.

It then dawned on me that in order to heal my ankle I had to do the work, no one else could do that, only me!! And to this day I am still pushing myself with exercises to get back to normal as soon as possible.

Now it was time for the recovery phase of the journey. Four days after surgery I was moved to Darwin Private where I met the effervescent Dr Angeline Simons. Over the next two and a half weeks I felt like I was doing boot camp. My resilience each day was due to a combination of my determination, staff pushing me and guiding me, as well as the nutritious food I received 3 times a day.



Quickly I went from having assistance in undertaking activities of daily living to being totally independent within my room.

I celebrated my birthday in hospital with my daughters and grandchildren who surprised me by driving up from Katherine. Beautiful chocolates, birthday cake, flowers, hair wash and style and a party dress.

How lucky am I?

Prior to my discharge I was wheeled to somewhere far from the Corella ward where my bandages were removed and a moonboot introduced. One step closer to home ... yah!

On St. Patricks Day, 17<sup>th</sup> March, five weeks to the day since my accident, there was a buzz around the Corella Ward that I was to be discharged. I was told several times how this was to happen. Reading the discharge paper it was written in bold print:

“Please ensure all patients are at the airstrip 15 minutes prior to departure. Pilot is on a tight schedule and will not wait.”

I would be escorted out the plane by airport staff at 4:15 pm promptly. My lovely physio Holly and another staff member would drive me to the small aircraft airport, leaving the hospital at 3:30 pm.

All went well and we arrived shortly after. Holly checked me in at Territory Air Services where a staff member escorted us to unlock a padlocked metal gate, a few metres from the empty waiting room where, with a little bit of luggage, I would be collected at 4:15 pm and driven out to the waiting plane.

Continued next page

I farewelled Holly and looked around. I could see around 25 light aircraft with more in the hangars. I was happy now to await the pick up.

4:15 came and went, 4:30, still no one ... At 4:40 I thought, if I don't do something I think I will be here overnight. I rang a friend in Katherine and rang my daughter who rang Territory Air.

### **I had indeed been forgotten!**

They hastily brought in a pilot who was at his home relaxing. We weaved in and out of the planes in a

buggy and finally there it was ... the skinny little single engine plane that



was to take me home. The safety brief from the pilot was so thorough it was on a par to travelling by Qantas to Europe! I was a little concerned when he told me how to open the door if necessary but thankfully I didn't need to do this.



Once in Katherine I had X-rays at the hospital a week later showing that my boot could come off in a month depending on the result of the next X-ray, overseen by Sen from the orthopedic team in Darwin (via telehealth).

I worked so hard on the exercises my physio was amazed at my progress each week.

Although I did lose my independence for a while I didn't ever lose my confidence that I wouldn't return to the way I was. Within days of arriving home I conducted my first wedding in a moonboot. I have since officiated at another four lovely ceremonies including flying by helicopter from just beyond my verandah up into the escarpment.

Everyone's journey is different and dependent on their determination and the effort that they put in. If you put in the work you are going to see the results.

Finally I believe age is only a number but just to let you know ... I am 84. I have learned so much and have decided that whatever you face in life it's up to you to improve what's happening.

**You alone are the one who can dictate how your life goes.**

**Work on it, push yourself, for if you don't it's only a dream.**

### **AONT Note:**

**Congratulations Nola—what an inspiration you are to all of us!!**

**Thank you for sharing your story.**



## **Membership renewals**

We appreciate the long term support of many of our members, as membership income really does make a difference to our viability.

Thank you to those members who responded so promptly to renewal notices included with the August-September newsletter. Notices are included with this newsletter for those who need another reminder. We look forward to hearing from you.

Renewals may be made in person, over the phone, using the internet or by post.



# Spinach Salad with Goat Cheese and Cashews — just what your bones need

## Ingredients

- 300 g baby spinach
- 1/2 cup coriander leaves
- 1 cup parsley leaves
- 1/4 cup coarsely chopped basil, chives, tarragon, mint
- 250 g green beans
- 2 tbsp sherry vinegar
- 1 small garlic clove, minced
- 1/2 tsp dijon mustard
- 75 ml olive oil
- Salt to taste
- 250 g goat cheese, crumbled
- 1/2 cup cashews, salted, roasted and coarsely chopped



## Instructions

1. Trim the ends of the green beans, cook in boiling water for 2 minutes, drain and cool. Pat dry.
2. Combine spinach with herbs. Mix in the green beans.
3. Prepare the dressing: whisk vinegar with garlic, mustard and salt. Mix in olive oil.
4. When ready to serve, add dressing and sprinkle with cashews and goat cheese.

Source: International Osteoporosis Foundation

<https://www.osteoporosis.foundation/patients/recipe/spinach-salad-herbs>

The recommended daily intake of calcium for older people is 1300 mg

This recipe: Calcium: 412 mg, Calories: 388, Protein: 15 g, Dairy and gluten free

## Foodbank NT

If you or someone you know is experiencing food insecurity, assistance may be available through Foodbank's Darwin Food Hub Referral. You will need a referral to access the Food Hub service. The first step is to contact one of the following agencies to see if you are eligible for a referral voucher:

Anglicare NT 8985 0007

Catholic care 8944 2000

Methodist Church of Fiji in Australia - Northern Territory Inc 0482 917 880

Mission Australia 8935 0900

St Vincent De Paul Society 0439 718 723

Alternatively you may be able to support this service through volunteering or making a donation. For more information on volunteering, call 8351 1136.

**The Arthritis  
Foundation of the  
Northern Territory Inc.**

Trading as  
**Arthritis &  
Osteoporosis NT**  
ABN 67 099 326 608

**Joint Patrons**

His Honour  
Professor the Honourable  
Hugh Heggie PSM  
Administrator of the NT  
and Ms Ruth Jones

**Vice Patron**

The Honourable Vicki  
O'Halloran AM CVO

**Find us at**

Shop 18 Rapid Creek  
Business Village,  
48 Trower Rd Millner

[www.aont.org.au](http://www.aont.org.au)

[facebook.com/  
arthritis.osteoporosis.nt](https://facebook.com/arthritis.osteoporosis.nt)

**Contact us**

Freecall: 1800 011 041  
(08) 8948 5232  
PO Box 452,  
Nightcliff 0814  
[info@aont.org.au](mailto:info@aont.org.au)

**We are open**

9:30am – 2:00pm  
Monday to Thursday  
(excluding Public Holidays)

**Staff**

*Administrative Assistant*  
Deirdre Moldenhauer

*Accounts*

Natalie Valastro

**Board**

**President**

Ruth Quinn

**Vice President**

Amin Islam

**Secretary**

Hilary Fowler

**Treasurer and Public  
Officer**

Ruth Garden

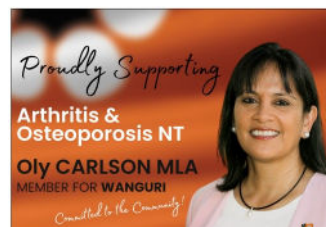
**Ordinary Board Members**

Lyn Skipper  
Helgi Stone  
Frieda Evans

## What We Do

### Our work includes:

- Responding to walk in and telephone enquiries
- Providing personalised information packs in response to enquiries
- Hosting self-management information sessions:
  - 1) “What a Pain!”,
  - 2) “Taking the first step”, and
  - 3) “Understanding & managing arthritis & osteoporosis”.
- Providing information stands at a range of forums throughout the year
- Presentations to community groups
- Keeping in touch with other community health organisations and the services they provide
- Delivering bulk materials on request to a range of health services
- Producing this newsletter six times a year
- Liaising with Arthritis Australia, interstate arthritis affiliates and Healthy Bones Australia
- Making applications for various small grants to assist with special projects



Thank you to the staff at the Electorate Office of Oly Carlson, Member for Wanguri, for assistance with printing and collating this edition of our newsletter.

 **Arthritis &  
Osteoporosis NT**

Proudly sponsored by  
 **Northern Territory  
Government**

