

# Maternal Child and Family Health Nurses Australia (MCAFHNA) Conference Guidelines



## 1 Introduction

The MCAFHNA conference guidelines have been developed to ensure clarity on the roles and responsibilities for all involved in organising a biennial MCAFHNA conference. As the MCAFHNA is an incorporated body, officers of the MCAFHNA are protected from being held liable as individuals for actions taken on behalf of the Association.

The MCAFHNA National Management Committee has identified a number of factors that are critical to the success of conferences. This document provides information based on our experience for effective organisation of a conference.

The aim of the biennial MCAFHNA conference is to provide a platform for:

- Professional development in the specialty of maternal, child and family health nursing
- Promotion of education in the specialty of maternal, child and family health nursing
- Promotion of evidence based practice in the specialty of maternal, child and family health nursing
- Networking and sharing of information in the specialty of maternal child and family health nursing across Australia.

The conference provides an opportunity to showcase the work of nurses who work in the field of maternal child and family health in Australia.

The conference is potentially an important source of income for the association. Therefore, each conference should set a goal to make a profit from the conference. Conference profits enable the association to continue in its role as the peak professional body in Australia for nurses working with parents of children from birth to five years of age. They also provide seed funding for future conferences.

The Conference host state or territory is usually identified at least two years in advance to enable planning, as well as an announcement at the conference of the next conference location. Conferences have been held in April and May and have attracted a large number of delegates from Australia and some New Zealand delegates.

The first three biennial conferences were hosted by member states. The fourth biennial conference was organised by a national committee. This document supports the national organizing committee model, rather than the host state/territory model.



## 2 The role of the MCAFHNA National Management Committee

The National Management Committee supports the conference committee with guidance and direction on the planning, organising and presentation of the conference where required. The National Management Committee is responsible for:

- Seeking expressions of interest from member states/territories to host the next conference.
- Selecting the host state/territory
- Appointment of the conference chair for the duration of the conference (from planning to conclusion) and co-opting the conference chair on to the National Management Committee for a set period of time if they are not already a National Management Committee member
- Approving the next national conference committee
- Seed funds are important to secure a deposit on a conference venue. If a profit has been made from the previous conference, seed funding should be drawn from this profit as required
- Approving the selection of an Events Management Company
- Developing and approving an agreement between the successful events management company and the National Management Committee to assist the conference planning committee in organising the conference
- Approving the conference theme and selection of suggested key note speakers
- Receiving written reports from the conference chair on the progress of the conference planning.

## 3 The Conference Committee

The Conference Committee is usually formed two years before the next conference to enable effective planning processes to be put in place. It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Conference Committee to seek expressions of interest from the member's states and territories to select representatives to sit on the conference committee. This is required within 3 months of commencement in their role.

The Conference Committee can employ a commercial events management team to assist them in the organising of the conference. The committee will use the *conference account* of the MCAFHNA bank account. Seed funding from the National Management Committee will be deposited into this account. At the earliest possible opportunity, the Conference Committee will need to liaise with the national treasurer to establish signatories for banking.

The committee should meet regularly via teleconference or face to face meetings, costs of these should be paid for from the conference funds.



Membership of the Conference Committee usually consists of the following representatives who ideally have a diverse range of skills and knowledge needed for hosting the conference. The Conference Committee shall comprise approximately 10 people including:

- Conference Chair
- National Treasurer from MCAFHNA (to oversee conference finances)
- Conference Treasurer appointed from committee membership
- Up to 3 members from the host state/territory association
- 1 member from each member state/territory association
- A representative from any partnering organisation if relevant

The Conference Committee will be considered core 8 if there are 50% + 1 members present.

The Conference Committee shall form two subcommittees: the Scientific Subcommittee and the Social Subcommittee. There may be 4 to 7 people on each subcommittee. Members of the subcommittees do not need to belong to the main Conference Committee however the Chair of each subcommittee must be a member of the Conference Committee.

The Scientific Subcommittee is responsible for decision making related to the scientific program. This includes invitations for and acceptance of abstract submissions, and organizing presentations and posters (if included).

The Social Subcommittee is responsible for decision making related to social events related to the conference. This includes the welcome reception and conference dinner.

The scientific and the social subcommittees will prepare a report including any proposed financial expenditure for each teleconference or meeting of the main Conference Committee.

In recognition of their voluntary contribution to organising the conference the President of MCAFHNA and each Conference Committee member is entitled to the following:

- Conference registration (this does not include conference workshops)
- Conference dinner.

President and Conference Committee benefits exclude:

- Registration to attend any pre-conference workshops
- Airfares to and from the conference location (these are usually tax deductible and may be supported by employers or scholarship funds).
- Accommodation costs.

Eligibility for benefits:

- A Conference Committee member is expected to participate in a minimum of 80% of all teleconferences and carry out the tasks that they are assigned in the minutes to receive the full benefits listed above.
- In the event that a Conference Committee member does not participate in a minimum of 80% of meetings or carry out their minuted duties, the Conference Committee member will not receive the benefits outlined above.



- Final decision regarding participation and awarding of benefits will be made by the conference chair.

Members of subcommittees who are not a member of the main Conference Committee are entitled to the following benefits:

- Social Subcommittee
  - Each member is entitled to a conference registration.
- Scientific Subcommittee
  - Each member is entitled to a conference registration.

Social and Scientific subcommittees benefits exclude:

- Registration to attend any pre-conference workshops
- Conference dinner
- Airfares to and from the conference location (these are usually tax deductible and may be supported by employers or scholarship funds).
- Accommodation costs

### 3.1 Role of Conference Chair

The conference chair is responsible for the overall organizing of the conference. The position will commence from initial planning until conclusion of the conference and handover to the next conference chair. The chair, with support from the committee members and events management team will oversee the development of a draft budget with projected costs. This budget will be forwarded to the National Management Committee approximately 18 months before the conference. The conference chairperson if not already a MCAFHNA National Management Committee member will be co-opted on to the National Management Committee for the duration of the conference through to its conclusion.

#### The Chairperson will:

- Liaise with the outgoing conference chairperson and receive a formal handover
- Form a Conference Committee – and organise regular meetings with the committee
- Chair the Conference Committee meetings
- Oversee the selection of an event management company
- Oversee the nomination and appointment of a conference treasurer
- Supervise the work of the commercial event management company
- Supervise the establishment of a scientific subcommittee and a social subcommittee
- Attend MCAFHNA National Management Committee meetings for the duration of the Chair
- Provide MCAFHNA National Management Committee with regular updates on conference timeline, program content, keynote speakers, finances and registrations
- Ensure that the committee's treasurer is supported by a bookkeeper or accountant, as needed
- Act as the key contact for any queries from delegates during the conference and social events
- Provide a report to the National Management Committee no later than two months after the conference on the outcomes of the conference including evaluation findings from delegates, budgets and feedback on the commercial events management company.



## 3.2 Role of Committee Members

The members of the conference planning committee support the chairperson in the overall planning, design and program content for the conference. The committee members will:

- Actively participate in the planning and organising of the conference and social events
- Contribute to ideas on social marketing of the conference in collaboration with the events management company
- Attend conference committee meetings, usually held via teleconference
- Act as key contacts for delegates during the conference and social events
- Be available to chair plenary or break-out sessions at the conference.

## 4 Conference Theme

The Conference Committee will develop the theme for the conference reflecting the current foci of the MCAFHNA. The theme will be developed within the first 6 months of planning and presented to the National Management Committee for approval.

## 5 Financial Matters

The National Management Committee is ultimately responsible for approval of financial commitments before adoption by the Conference Committee. Once the conference budget has been approved, the *Conference Chair* in consultation with the *National Treasurer* act on behalf of the conference planning committee in managing conference finances. The goods and services tax (GST) in Australia must be taken into account in all aspects of the conference budget. BAS payments to the Australian Taxation Office should be made from the Conference Account where possible. The Australian Taxation Office can provide further guidance on these matters. Due to the finances involved with the conference the National Association is required by the Victorian Office of Fair Trading to have an official audit conducted and this includes the conference finances.

Conference attendance fees should be no more than 10% above previous conference fees unless approved by the National Management Committee.

### 5.1 Timeframe for financial reporting and transactions

An overview of timeframes for the presentation of financial information to the National Management Committee is as follows:

- Present a draft budget with projected costs to the National Management Committee approx. 18 months before the conference
- At the conclusion of the conference, the conference chairperson should receive a budget statement and present this to the National Management Committee
- No later than four months after the conference, the National Management Committee should receive a full financial statement from the outgoing conference planning committee
- No later than four months after the conference the National Management Committee will direct the National Treasurer to transfer profits from the conference into the MCAFHNA *business account* and leave a nominated amount for seed funding in the *conference account*.



## 5.2 Preparing the Budget

The conference budget is prepared on an average of 500 delegates attending. This may be adjusted for areas where the likely catchment may be smaller or larger. The provisional budget should include but is not limited to the following:

- return of seeding funding
- commercial event management organizer costs
- merchant banking fees for credit card payments
- preparing and printing for conference flyers and registration brochures
- production costs for conference program and abstracts
- preparing and producing electronic conference proceedings for delegates
- postage of flyers
- catering for lunches, morning and afternoon tea and coffee on arrival on each day of the conference and cocktail drinks on the first day of the conference
- conference dinner
- entertainment for the opening and closing of the conference
- venue hire
- equipment hire including lapel and roving microphones, laptops and projectors for breakout rooms laptops and printer for delegate email
- technical support for presentations
- photocopying during the conference and stationery requirements
- bags/satchels/binders for conference materials, pen and pad for each delegate
- sponsorship and trade stands; plus attendance at conference dinner for sponsors if included in their sponsorship package
- speaker requirements, hotel accommodation, airfares, taxis, honorariums
- gifts for invited speaker and conference dinner and conference welcome attendances
- Insurance for conference travel
- Risk management insurance for conference venue if not provided
- Speakers would normally anticipate business class airfare. Honorariums are not normally large if all other costs are found
- Funding for partners or other family.

## 5.3 Registrations Fees

The National Management Committee must approve registration fees before advertising the conference begins. Registrations must be GST inclusive and will ideally accommodate:

- Early Bird registrations
- Standard registrations
- Registration for members
- Registration for students
- Day registrations



## 5.4 Surplus Funds

A well-marketed MCFHNA conference can produce surplus funds or profits. No later than four months after the conference the National Management Committee will direct the National Treasurer to transfer surplus funds from the conference into the MCFHNA *business account* and leave a nominated amount for seed funding in the *conference account*.

## 5.5 Sponsorship

The Conference Committee will ensure that the conference event management organizer will adhere to the guidelines on marketing developed by the MCFHNA National Management Committee that includes the WHO code.

# 6 Conference Program

The conference program will ideally incorporate presentations and workshops of relevance to the practice of maternal child and family health nursing. A range of presentations is preferred from plenary, keynote and concurrent sessions to workshops, posters and discussion forums. Conference committees are asked to encourage interactive sessions. Abstracts will be presented in a conference booklet for all delegates.

## 6.1 Keynote Speakers

It is important that keynote and guest speakers invited to conferences are well known within maternal child and family health nursing practice in Australia as they are likely to attract delegates to the conference. If potential keynotes are not well known to the general audience of maternal, child and family health nurses, the conference planning committee will need to articulate the significance of the potential keynote to the National Management Committee. When the theme of the conference has been established the conference chairperson is encouraged to seek contribution from the National Management Committee to determine and finalise keynotespeakers.

## 6.2 Registration forms and call for abstracts

Registration forms and call for abstracts needs to include at a minimum:

- General information about MCFHNA
- Conference themes and presentation formats
- Timeframes and closing dates for submitting and accepting proposals and papers
- The conference website address
- Information about the Keynote Speakers

## 6.3 Submission of abstracts

A system for submission of abstracts will be determined by the conference planning committee in collaboration with the events management company. The conference planning committee will establish a set of thematic guidelines for potential presenters. The scientific subcommittee will develop a set of selection criteria for the selection of abstracts. A first time presenter award will be offered to encourage first time presenters.



## 6.4 Poster presentations

Poster presentations provide an opportunity to deliver presentations in a picture format. Poster sessions can be offered at times when there are no other competing presentations, such as during lunch breaks. A poster presentation may also be offered to acceptable abstracts not able to be included in the oral presentations.

## 6.5 Pre-conference Workshops

Pre-conference workshops can be part of the conference. These are by invitation and of generic interest with high quality presenters. A set fee for each workshop will be established and registration should be included on the registration form. These will ideally be half day workshops and be offered on a full cost recovery basis. Facilitators would not normally be paid (though can do so if considered worthwhile), they may receive a free conference registration. It is recommended that the National Management Committee be consulted regarding pre conference workshop presenters.

## 7. Other items for consideration

### 7.1 MCAFHNA face to face meeting

The MCAFHNA annual face-to-face meeting for the conference year will be held following the biannual conference. This function will be funded by the MCAFHNA.

## 8. Post conference requirements

### 8.1 Evaluation of the Conference

An evaluation of the conference will be carried out in collaboration with the events management company and the conference organizing committee as part of continuous improvement. This evaluation will be made available for the National Management Committee.

A brief report on the conference will be provided to the MCAFHNA journal editor by the outgoing conference chair. The National Management Committee may consider attributing a special edition of the journal to conference papers of special interest.

### 8.2 Reporting to the National Management Committee

Within four months of completion the events management organization in collaboration with the conference planning committee will submit to the National Management Committee the following information:

- A full list of delegates including address details of conference registrants
- The final budget spreadsheet and statement
- The evaluation report