

Reflecting on 2020...

Looking back on 2020, it's easy to see some consistencies and recurring themes. I'm not referring to the supermarket grab for sanitiser, the joy at seeing Dan Andrews' North Face jacket instead of a suit, or the wild conspiracy theories that keep appearing online. This year we've seen the recurring themes of adaptability, resilience and community spirit.

We have been welcomed into people's homes via Zoom; we've connected with members and coaches over their favourite walks, foods, and lockdown hobbies; and we've had to become more creative with our interpretation of exercise. Basketball courts and outdoor parks were traded for bedrooms and lounge rooms, exercise equipment was swapped for water bottles and tin cans, and coaches' whistles were replaced by mute buttons – and still, our team persisted.

I want to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you to everyone who has been a part of the Maccabi All Abilities community this year. To the dedicated members and families who value our place in their lives; to the amazing coaches and volunteers who quickly adapted to running online programs; to our supporters (new and existing) who continue to believe in what we offer; to the community and sport organisations who provided guidance with navigating uncertain times; and to the Maccabi Victoria board and staff whose unending support allows us to do what we do – thank you.

This may not have been the year that anyone planned, but we certainly have a lot to show for it.

Programs and Participation Opportunities

Strong swimmers

Despite swimming being on hold for most of the year, our Snappers have still had a few key opportunities to get in the water.

They started the year with the Mount Martha Australia Day Swim. The Maccabi Swimming Club has an annual tradition of participating in the swim and this year some of our All Abilities swimmers created a new tradition by jumping in the water to join the event.

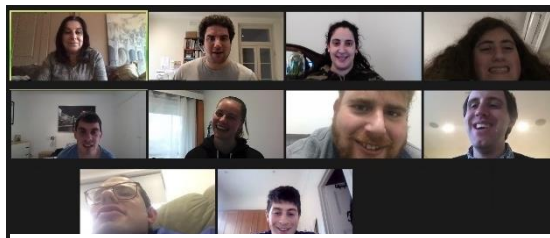
After months of not being able to get into the water, our swimmers had the opportunity to return to the pool for the annual Maccabi / MS Swimathon. This year raising money for MS, Maccabi and Jewish Care, the event adapted to the Covid restrictions and was held for the first time at an outdoor pool (with the option of a beach walk or swim alternative).



Smiling faces at the
Australia Day swim

The Maccabi Dolphins

The Maccabi Dolphins basketball team started the year with its regular Monday night sessions at Orrong Romanis. During the Covid 'time out', our dedicated coaches ran weekly sessions on Zoom, giving members a chance to work on their fitness and share their highs and lows from the week. We were so lucky to have been able to finish the year with a return to face-to-face sessions, with 2 weeks of skills and drills being run at Monash Caulfield's Sport Centre. We can't wait until a proper return to training in 2021.



Just another night at Covid-safe basketball training

Time for Tennis

We started our year with an afternoon of tennis at the Leon Haskin Tennis Centre. Next Gen alum and Maccabi Tennis coach Max led us through a great session to build our skills.

We were also invited to attend a tour of Government House and play tennis on the Governor's court. Even though Covid meant that we couldn't follow through on these plans, we wanted to say thank you to Tennis Victoria (and the Governor!) for the invitation.



Having a hit at our tennis afternoon

Sunday Shmoozing

Whilst a walk in the park wasn't as viable as we'd hoped, our crew still connected every Sunday with a range of online activities. Our Sunday schmooze programs included yoga, fitness, dance parties, stretching and of course sharing our favourite walks and recipes from the week. We did manage to finish the year off with one final session in Caulfield Park, and it was great to catch up with everyone again.



Buddies – and DJs – Max and Shannyn

Cricket Club Fun

The AJAX Senior Cricket Club welcomed us back for another training session, supported by Cricket Victoria. Our members enjoyed training with the senior team and having the opportunity to keep working on their cricket skills.

Planning is already underway for more cricket training in 2021.



The cricket crew

Buddy Up!

After the success of our trial buddy program in 2019, we knew that there was a need for more individualised, customised programs. Whilst we were unable to continue the program in the same way during the restrictions, we adapted the concept and formed small groups who met on a regular basis via Zoom. Sessions included fitness, yoga, dance parties and of course, a chance to catch up with people and share stories from the week. We are currently reviewing what the buddy program will look like in 2021, and we're hoping to be able to run a mix of small group and 1:1 sessions.



A Monday afternoon dance party underway

Healthy Living

One new initiative run this year was a Healthy Living Forum. Members had the chance to learn about healthy eating, exercise in lockdown and mindfulness and wellbeing, and ask questions and discuss practical strategies. The event was very well received, and we look forward to running another event in 2021.



Everyone was keen to learn some tips for healthy living in lockdown

Thank you

Our programs wouldn't happen without continued commitment and incredible support from our coaches, volunteers and Maccabi clubs. A special thank you to:

- Head swimming coach Lex and swimming club committee member Clive
- Head basketball coaches Barb and Dave
- Our fantastic Shmoozer Mandie
- Assistant coaches and superstar volunteers Ben, Jamie, Racheli, Emily, Lily, Timnah, Charlie, Jess and Matt
- Sharon and Debra for running yoga sessions
- Dave 'Sandwich Bag Dad' for a creative cartooning class
- Abby for a great dance and move session
- Ricki and the Flying Fox team for our joint sessions
- Our buddies Max, Shannyn, Cara, Dean, Naomi, Mia, Charlie, Hudson, Zoe, Teegan and Maddy
- Wayne, Mike, the Maccabi Senior Cricket Club and Cricket Victoria
- Max and the Maccabi Tennis Club
- Tennis Victoria
- Nutritionist Elise, PT Izzy and Mindfulness Maven Shannyn for our healthy living session

Generosity and Recognition

Simcha Support

This year has seen families celebrating milestones a little differently. One thing which hasn't changed is the fact that there are amazing community members who have chosen to share their special occasions with us. We would like to say a huge thank you to Phoenix Janover and Ethan Lakman, both of whom shared their bar mitzvahs with us by requesting donations for Maccabi All Abilities. Thank you and mazal tov!



Phoenix Janover, who shared his simcha with All Abilities

Community Grants

We are very grateful to the organisations who have provided funding to help us run programs both online and in person. We are especially grateful to the City of Glen Eira who provided funding for our online programs as well as funding for a new multisport program to be run in 2021, and to Cricket Victoria who are supporting us to establish an All Abilities Woolworths Cricket Blast program this coming summer.



Program supporters

Cricket for All

Maccabi Victoria was named runner up in Cricket Victoria's Sport For All Awards, in the Community Partnerships category. Cricket Victoria nominated us for our commitment to working towards inclusive cricketing opportunities, and we are very grateful for their recognition and support.



Cricket Victoria's A Sport for All awards

New Scholarship Opportunities

Thanks to the generosity of the Aronson Family, we have established the Aronson Family All Abilities Scholarship. This funding will assist people with a disability in the Jewish community to get involved in a mainstream Maccabi club as an athlete or coach. It is designed to complement what the NDIS can provide, by covering things such as club fees and coach training courses. We look forward to presenting the inaugural scholarship in 2021.

Community and Collaboration

Community Connections

The City of Glen Eira created the Community Groups Committee in recognition of the challenges that community organisations have met this year. Maccabi All Abilities was invited to be a part of the committee and alongside other community organisations discussed some of the challenges and considerations around operating remotely, engaging volunteers and returning to safe activities.

Jewish Disability Network

Despite being unable to meet in person for most of the year, the Jewish Disability Network (JDN) has still stayed connected. With emails and online meetings, the organisations in the network have maintained their focus of collaboration and support.

Flying Along with Flying Fox

After putting our ski trip plans on hold for 2021, we were still keen to collaborate with Flying Fox for some online activities. We ran 2 sessions in conjunction with Flying Fox, one as part of their Fun-athon (where they hosted the Flying Fox Olympics for Maccabi All Abilities in Victoria and NSW), and another as part of our Sunday programs. We look forward to more collaboration opportunities in 2021.



Thank you

We've loved collaborating with different organisations – whether for programs, advice or support – and would like to thank them all for their ongoing involvement with Maccabi All Abilities. This includes:

- The Jewish Disability Network (Access Inc, Flying Fox, Friendship Circle, Jewish Care and UJEB)
- The City of Glen Eira
- Cricket Victoria
- Disability Sport and Recreation
- AAA Play
- All of our generous program supporters and donors

Behind the Scenes

Training the Trainers

With a new influx of volunteer buddies coming on board this year, we recognised that it was time for training. Both new and existing coaches and volunteers were invited to a training session which gave everyone a chance to discuss how to handle challenging behaviour, ways to engage members, and the nuances of the online environment. We also created a new inclusive coaching handbook which has been distributed to all Maccabi clubs.

Staff Changes

This year we said goodbye to Cara Davies (program support) and Bella Oldham (program officer). Both Cara and Bella shared their passion, energy and enthusiasm with Maccabi All Abilities and will be missed around the office. Whilst we were sad to see them go, we are very happy that they are both keen to stay around as volunteers.



Bella Oldham (L) and Cara Davies (R)

In the (Home) Office

We've taken advantage of the 'down time' this year to clean up some systems and processes to ensure that our return to play is as smooth as possible. An updated member registration system and navigating new file storage have been some of the things we have been working on.

What next?

2020 has taught us that the best laid plans sometimes need to be adapted, but we're nonetheless planning for a Covid-safe sporting season in 2021. We are keen to return to our regular programs, as well as adding in new initiatives for both existing and junior members.

We would like to thank you for your support over the last 12 months and look forward to sharing the coming year with you.

*~ Shari Cohen
All Abilities Inclusion Coordinator*