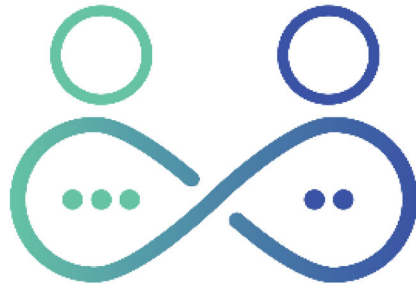


South Eastern Multiple Birth Association



SEMBA

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Birth Association

Annual Report 2024-25

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SEMBA is a member organisation of AMBA



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Background

The South Eastern Multiple Birth Association (SEMBA) is a support group for multiple birth families, run by parents of multiples. The club (initially as the Melbourne Mothers of Twins Club Southern District) has been operating since 1972, or 55 years, to support and connect families in the South-Eastern suburbs of Melbourne within the council areas of Kingston, Bayside, Glen Eira and parts of Port Philip. The club was renamed first to Australian Multiple Birth Association – Moorabbin Branch and in 1999 to SEMBA. Making this our 26th year in its current format.

The objectives of SEMBA have historically been:

- To provide a means of communication for sharing information on the care and raising of multiple birth children.
- To be a support group, co-operating with other community groups, to offer consistent support to multiple birth families.
- To increase awareness of the special needs of multiple birth families and improve resources available to them.
- To be a non-commercial, non-sectarian, and not-for-profit organisation

Executive summary

This report sets out SEMBA's activities over the year from our last AGM on 14 August 2024 to this AGM on 2 July 2025.

1. Committee

- a. Low levels of interest in joining our committee have meant most committee members have been involved for some time and their multiples are "older" (3-10 years old).
- b. The committee has been relatively small for some time and as such club activity has been limited to what this committee considers "the minimum".
- c. Thankfully, we have now seen several new members join the committee and look forward to FY 2025/26 with a larger committee to serve our members even better.

2. Finances/Treasurer's report: Cash at bank at 31 March 2025 was \$5,698.45 which includes \$475 of equipment hire bonds held, making member funds \$5,223.45.

During the FY SEMBA's cash reserves have reduced quite substantially - by 37%. This is a simple case of greater expenditure than income and could be addressed by either reducing expenditure or increasing income. Discussions at our next committee meeting will consider strategies in more detail.

3. Membership: After several years of stable membership levels in the mid to high 60's, they have taken a noticeable drop over the last year. Based on a larger committee as we start this next year, actively seeking membership increases may well be back on the cards.

4. Communication and social media: A large part of the last year was about keeping our business-as-usual going. Great effort by Kelly in keeping our Facebook members page up to date. Emails comms have been less regular than ideal.

Mariona has taken on the role of Social Media Coordinator in May and has amazingly set up our new WhatsApp SEMBA community already. We look forward to an active year of trial and error with this new tool.

5. Club events and activities: Despite the relatively small committee size, we have been able to organise a number of fun and meaningful events for our members. It would be great to increase the number now that we have "more hands on deck".

We continue to hold information sessions that do not rely on in-person contact virtually. This makes them more accessible and easier to organise.

Committee

The SEMBA year following our AGM in mid-August 2024 started well.

After a positive year 2023-24 albeit with a small committee of seven members, it was exciting to welcome Matt Kendall and Clare Hoekman as new committee members. While Jess (Matt's partner) did not formally join the committee at the time, she has acted as another committee member over the last year and we are delighted to have all three of them. Their joining was especially positive as both their sets of twins are much younger (in Matt & Jess's case their boys were not born yet).

Despite noting their reducing capacity in some cases, all previous members agreed to stay on the committee which was another positive outcome for SEMBA.

The results of the Election of the Committee of Management as shown in last year's AGM minutes are noted below.

Position	Nominee	Nominated/Seconded
President	Anna Arkell	Kelly Gordon / Kylie Rowe
Vice-President	Not filled	
Treasurer	Tara Henderson	Self / Kylie Rowe
Secretary	Kelly Gordon	Self / Anna Arkell
Buddy Coordinator	Tara Henderson	Self / Kelly Gordon
Equipment Hire Coordinator	Cameron Furlong	Self / Tara Henderson
Playgroup Coordinator	Louise Furlong (until end 2024)	Self / Belinda Connane
Communications Manager	Not filled	
Premmie baby / Special needs contact	Kelly Gordon	Self / Anna Arkell
Social Media Manager	Not filled	
Grants / fundraising Manager	Louise Furlong (from 2025)	
Membership Coordinator	Not filled	
Community Liaison Manager	Not filled	
General Committee Members	Kylie Rowe Belinda Connane Matt Kendall Clare Hoekman	

On 14 October 2024, Rebecca (Bec) Mannix responded to our latest newsletter offering her support for the committee as well as extended support from her husband Edwin. Delightful news for the entire committee.

More recently, at SEMBA's Mother's Day event on 4 May 2025, we were extremely happy to gain four new committee members; Catriona (Cat) Lunn, Mariona Dias Benito, Nicola (Nicky) Dracoulis, and Rohini Chari.

All of them have already had a positive impact and we look forward to their future involvement and contributions.

More generally, the committee has functioned well in supporting our members, no matter how small it was. Since our last AGM, we have however seen some shortfalls in particular areas.

- Specific areas like Fundraising/Grant Writing and Breast-Feeding Support are not covered.
- Emails can remain unanswered for longer periods of time.
- Activities are not as regular as we would like.

With our new committee members, I am excited to say that I imagine a much more active year from July 2025 to June 2026 ahead. The concern that SEMBA might fold like some other clubs locally and nationally have, are off the table for now.

Via our Committee WhatsApp group the following interests in roles for 2025/26 have been indicated. We will confirm the positions at this AGM.

While individuals have not self-nominated for the General Committee I have noted all remaining current members here. Anyone intending to step down will also be confirmed at this AGM.

Role	Nominee
President	-
Vice-President	Anna Arkell
Secretary	Kelly Gordon
Treasurer	-
Buddy Coordinator	Rohini Chari & Jess Kendall
Equipment Hire Coordinator	Cameron Furlong
Social Media Coordinator	Mariona Dias Benito
Grants/Fundraising Coordinator	-
Community Liaison	Nicola Dracoulis
Membership Coordinator	Mariona Dias Benito
Playgroup Coordinator	Rebecca Mannix
Premmie Babies / Special Needs Contact	Kelly Gordon
General Committee	Belinda Connane Catriona Lunn Clare Hoekman Kylie Rowe Louise Furlong Matt Kendall Tara Henderson

The above list is on one hand heartening in displaying different roles being filled that have been unfilled for some time. Nonetheless, three key roles without nominations are of concern. As current president, I would be willing to fill the role for one more year (if no interest is raised at the AGM) and am hopeful that during that time another committee member will be open to fill the role in 2026.

It is my hope that one of the committee members is willing to take on the Treasurer position from Tara. If not, we will have to create some workarounds to function for the coming year.

In relation to the Grants Coordinator, we have discussed at our most recent committee meeting that this might be a team effort where we set-up a meeting (perhaps quarterly) to get together and consider current available grants and make applications immediately. In light of our decreasing cash reserves this is definitely worth a try.

Interest in the Grants Team should be confirmed at this AGM also.

Finances/Treasurer's report

SEMBA's financial year (FY) runs from 1 April - 31 March.

Cash at bank at 31 March 2025 was \$5,698.45 which includes \$475 of equipment hire bonds held, making member funds \$5,223.45.

During the FY SEMBA's cash reserves have reduced quite substantially - by 37% (from about \$9,000) for several reasons.

1. Reduced membership (refer next section) meaning reduced income.
2. Reduced equipment hire revenue.
3. High AMBA affiliation fees (which cover our public liability insurance, TidyHQ and similarly critical things) of \$1,380 have noticeably impacted the bank balance and are almost twice the previous year's fees of \$735.
4. Fundraising and Grant Applications have not occurred since at least the beginning of 2023. The reduced size committee has not been able to cover these tasks.

This is a simple case of greater expenditure than income and could be addressed by -stating the obvious - reducing expenditure, increasing income or both. While discussions at our next committee meeting will consider strategies in more detail, some ideas have already been considered.

- Membership drives to increase membership and associated income while reaching additional interested families.
- Reduce event expenses (e.g., gifts/Easter eggs/entertainment at Easter and End-of-year events could be reduced).
- Expense for Mother's Day gifts/events could be self-funded or less reliant on SEMBA contributions.
- Grants applications to be revived.
- Fundraising activities to be considered.

The biggest expense category like in previous years have been our social events (about \$4,300) - it makes sense that building engagement, connection and community tops this list.

While this year's expenses also include a large sum for Mother's Day gifts (about \$800), those were for the previous year (due to the FY April-March) and we have organised free gifts from Pinch-A-Poo this year.

Membership

31 March 2023	66 members
31 March 2024	69 members
30 July 2024	66 members
30 June 2025	53 members

As the figures above show, our membership levels have been stable in the mid to high 60's for some time and have taken a noticeable drop over the last year. While it is unclear what has caused the drop in membership there is opportunity to grow the membership in future.

Currently no efforts are being undertaken to grow the membership and records show that it was substantially higher in the more distant past. The highest membership numbers were recorded in 2015 with 185 member families. Memberships were also much higher at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic with 120 at the 2020 AGM.

Currently, all new members find us via web searches or word of mouth. The committee has discussed an update to pamphlets on display at Maternal Health Nurse clinics as a starting point. New committee member Nicky has self-nominated for the Community Liaison role and we look forward to potential additional activity in this area.

Communication and social media

For most of this last year, Kelly has continued her amazing effort in keeping our private Facebook page up to date with events, information for members, and welcome notes for new members joining.

Like the year before, other communication (via email) has been limited to occasional newsletters focused on promoting events and other one-off comms to share information about specific topics.

In last year's report, I noted the following.

“Without further detail and interpretation, it is obvious that the engagement from members on Facebook and with other comms is low. It is however noteworthy, that chat groups where members have been connected by similar gestation and/or age of their twins seem to have created a good level of engagement between some parents and that they appreciate this opportunity for exchange. The private Facebook group is a core part of the organisation but due to the reduced relevance of Facebook may or may not be the best location for our social media input.”

Mariona has recently taken over the Social Media Coordinator role and has been busy setting up our new WhatsApp (WA) Community. We had talked about it for some time due to the limited engagement on FB and general good uptake of similar age buddy groups on WA. I am very excited to say that we have just launched the new Community - on 28 June 2025 - in lieu of the private Facebook group.

While FB is still active, we are planning to provide content previously shared via the private FB group to the WA Community. The public SEMBA page will remain on FB and we will work up a way of connecting it to the WA Community for those keen to join.

Our Community currently has the following groups. It will be interesting to compare this list to next year's status.

1. Announcements
2. SEMBA Active Members
3. SEMBA Committee 24/25
4. SEMBA Events
5. SEMBA Playgroup
6. Dads of SEMBA
7. Hand me downs & sales
8. Multilingual Multiples
9. Expecting Multiples
10. 0-6 months (Newborns)
11. 6-12 months
12. 1-2 years old
13. 2-3 years old
14. 3-5 years old (Kinder)
15. Primary school
16. Secondary school

Beyond FB and WA, we have plans to migrate our website to our Membership Management tool TidyHQ which provides some clever connections to events and other functionalities that are also organised via TidyHQ.

Mariona has taken on the Social media coordinator role with much enthusiasm and it will be great to see what other changes and ideas she brings to SEMBA over 2025/26.

Importantly, I would like to thank Kelly from the bottom of my heart for all she has done for SEMBA in relation to Social Media and Comms over many years. Countless hours spent have meant so much to our membership!

Club events and activities

We have held some great events and organised many activities in the last 10-11 months, despite the small to medium committee size.

Playgroup

A big and heartfelt thank you to Louise for reliably putting on the SEMBA playgroup each Friday afternoon at Castlefield Community Centre until the end of last calendar year. It is a big effort and no doubt very appreciated by all who participate.

Due to Louise's work/life schedule, she can no longer host and coordinate the sessions and we have been looking for a new coordinator/host.

Bec seems interested in giving this task a go. We have discussed initially starting by inviting other twin parents along to an existing playgroup (Bec attends one at St Catherine's in Moorabbin) and then considering a more exclusive event if sufficient interest is there.

Expectant Parents Sessions

We held only two online Expectant Parents Information Sessions on 7 October 2024 and 11 February 2025. A third session was planned on 10 June 2025 but sadly was cancelled due to technical difficulties. We will be putting a new session in the events calendar soon after this AGM.

The sessions are well received and while attendance varies, each event is considered valuable by the participants.

Family/Father's Day Event

As a repeat of the first event in 2023, on 13 October, SEMBA held a Father's Day event for the whole SEMBA community. We had booked an area at Flight Deck, a restaurant at Moorabbin Airport.

SEMBA paid for every attendee's first drink and based on feedback this was a great day for families. It may well become a regular in the SEMBA calendar - to be discussed at the next committee meeting.

Bubs & Bumps Morning Tea

For parents during pregnancy and those with 0-12 months-olds, we held a morning tea on 30 October 2024. While we had planned a further event in February and then in May, life unfortunately got in the way of both. As such, we are overdue to schedule the next event.

These events are a great opportunity to get out of the house with newborn/small multiple babies to a safe space where support and understanding of the special situation faced by parents with twins can be found. Feedback has been very positive by those that attended in the past.

A big thank you to Tara for opening her house to one group this year and many times in the past.

End-of-year Event

Great as always, last year's EOY celebration was held on 1 December 2024 at Dendy Park. The BBQ and ice-cream/coffee van were hugely successful as they always are. Santa made a much-loved appearance. Thank you to committee member Cameron for donning the red and white costume. Our gifts were predominantly wooden toys and books purchased largely from a small Australian online store. For the older kids, where wooden toys were less attractive we purchased items from online giant Amazon simply for the convenience.

As a note to myself and the committee, it would be great to consider more environmental and financially sustainable gift options for this year.

Like the previous year, we engaged a face-painter who created some stunning artworks and delighted many of the children (and their parents). Toys from the toy library were a great hit for most of the kids' age groups as usual.

We also had a "celebrity" visitor from local MP Zoe Daniel who was kind enough to spend time, engage and consider some of the challenges of multiple birth families, and pose for some photos.

Lastly, we offered a clothes swap like we had at one or two previous events. Unfortunately, on this occasion the donations were many but the uptake was low. Many of the donations ended up in my garage until Kelly, Tara, and I met about two months later to sort them for either donating to Our Village or going to recycling via Upparel. While the recycling came at a small cost, the alternative of landfill would have been much worse.

Members Drinks

We organised a Tuesday 25 February at the Brighton Beach Hotel. Unfortunately, the turn out was low with almost entirely committee members attending.

For greater success, we may try to gather interest on our newly established SEMBA Events chat group before we schedule the next one.

Easter Picnic

Another fun day was had at the Easter Picnic on 30 March 2025. This event is a favourite of many members (and the committee) and the turn-out over the years suggests it is valued by a large proportion of the membership.

After many years at Dendy Park, we tried a new location this year - Centenary Park Playground in Benteleigh East. It worked really well with a great playspace, bathrooms, plenty of parking etc.

In addition to the Easter egg hunt, hot cross buns, sausages, coffees, ice-creams, and most importantly the opportunity to meet and exchange with other members, we offered facepainting by the very talented Edith. Edith is Belinda's daughter and together with Kelly and her girls created some beautiful art works on the children's faces. Further to this we had a female clown who was able to entertain a variety of kids' ages.

We also offered a clothes swap like at the EOY event. This one was more successful but the jury is out if these are to be continued.

Mother's Day High Tea

Big thanks to Louise who again organised a great event for the SEMBA mums on Sunday 4 May 2025 at Dzert in Sandringham. We had a good turn-out with about 15 mums participating.

SEMBA subsidised the cost of an individual high-tea and tea/coffee of choice. The event worked really well for more in depth conversations and the afternoon was much enjoyed. The cafe kept their doors open for about 30 minutes past their normal closing time - a good sign that attendees had fun.

Mother's Day gifts

After a couple of years with trial and error for Mother's Day gifts, we reverted to a previous option: Pinch-a-Poo Mother's Day cosmetics packs. Big thank you to Kelly for picking them up in Bayswater. We handed them out in SEMBA packaging at the Mother's Day event and received positive feedback.

SEMBA Dad's Night

Following the successful SEMBA Dad's Night that was held in April 2024 at Stomping Ground in Moorabbin (and covered in last year's report), we have another Dad's Night scheduled for 27 August 2025 at the Bad Shepherd Brewing Co in Cheltenham. Looking forward to hearing some feedback on this one.

Look Ahead

Our AGM that this report is written for is being held on 2 July 2025. As noted above, invites to Dad's Drinks have gone out for 27 August 2025. In the more distant future our EOY Family Picnic & Swap Meet will be held on 30 November this year.

Through this section and the report generally, I identified the need to schedule some or all of the below.

- An Expectant Parents Information Session;
- A Bubs & Bumps Morning Tea;
- Potentially another Family Event around Father's Day;
- Also potentially another Member's Drinks when the weather warms up;
- If possible a new Playgroup;
- Information sessions: First Aid, Sleep & Settling, and other topics of interest;
- A Grants Teamwork Session; and
- More regular Committee Meetings.

Closing message

As your SEMBA president in my second year, I would like to finish this report with a few thank yous! Firstly, by thanking my twins Arlo and Millie for everything that through them, SEMBA has brought to me and my family.



Arlo & Millie Arkell - SEMBA Easter Picnic 2025

I think the SEMBA community of twin parenting is wonderful. Through all of you, I have learned countless things and have grown so much as a parent and as a person.

Some key perks of the role with SEMBA are and have been.

- _ Meeting the wonderful committee members I have the pleasure of spending time with (semi-)regularly.
- _ Providing support to parents of younger twins, knowing that a small piece of advice or word of comfort can be so important when you are sleep-deprived and overwhelmed.
- _ Organising fun events.
- _ Thinking beyond my day-to-day and achieving greater perspective.
- _ Feeling a sense of connection to people I would have not otherwise met.

With these points in mind, a massive thank you to any of the committee members that may step down at this AGM. Your commitment and service to SEMBA is nothing other than outstanding. You will be sorely missed!

Thank you in any case (stepping down or continuing) to those that have been here for many years - **Belinda, Kelly, Kylie & Tara**. You have supported our community greatly and have given countless hours. Despite this debt SEMBA owes to you, I am hoping you are sticking around for a bit longer. Thank you to all four of you for the laughs and the friendship.

Cameron & Louise, you came to SEMBA's rescue when it was so much needed. It's been wonderful to have you onboard for over two years already. Your running of the playgroup and the new events you have added to the calendar are a great addition to our club.

At the last AGM in August 2024, we were again in trouble as a club and committee. Bolstered by your joining **Clare, Jess & Matt**, we went into this year with a much more positive outlook. It is fantastic to have you on the committee representing a much younger group of twins which has been missing for some time.

Bec, you were a surprise addition to the committee when previous newsletters had never inspired anyone to join up. I love a surprise and it's been great to welcome you to the team. Your input is much valued and we look forward to the potential of a new SEMBA playgroup.

Last but certainly not least, **Cat, Mariona, Nicky & Rohini**. Four new committee members joining at once has been the best recruitment ever. We have already seen how new people and new ideas can make a big positive difference. Special thank you to Mariona for setting up and launching the WhatsApp community. I can't wait for the coming months and all the great things we can do together.

Happy twin parenting! Anna