

Polio Australia

Representing polio survivors throughout Australia



Polio Australia Board and Staff

Annual Report

2019–2020

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Gillian Thomas OAM

President and Business Manager

The 2019-2020 year brought with it unexpected changes and challenges but, never daunted, we're still here!

At the start of the year we were delighted to learn that Dr John Tierney, our National Patron and past President had been appointed a Member of the Order of Australia for significant service to people with polio. In December, John decided to fully retire and step down as our National Patron, after 12 years sterling service in the role. John's efforts on behalf of polio survivors over this time have been inestimable. John head-hunted his own replacement and we were honoured to have Michael Lynch AO CBE take on the role.

December 2019 was also the end of an era as Maryann Liethof retired as National Program Manager - she was an integral part of Polio Australia for 10 years. I worked closely with Maryann throughout this time and keenly felt her loss to our office.

During the year we also farewelled three Board members: Christine Tilley (Qld), Brett Howard (SA) and Tessa Jupp (WA). Subsequently, two new Board members returned us to close to full strength: Maryann Liethof (independent) and Robyn Grote (Qld).

Very sadly, Brett passed away not long after he stood down from the Board for health reasons - those who knew Brett lost a mate, and polio survivors across Australia lost a champion.

There were also a number of staff changes this year - Bonnie Douglas (July), Paul Cavendish (November) and Rachel Ingram (February) left us for other opportunities. In their stead, we welcomed Darlene Felsch (August), Michael Jackson (November) and Paulette Jackson (March) to the team.

The Board held its usual annual face-to-face meeting in October 2019 as we came together for the AGM and related meetings. Our strategic plan was updated in view of staff and program changes, with focus areas confirmed as education (both health professionals and polio survivors), partnerships, advocacy, and future-proofing our operations.

"The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry". The new year started promisingly, with many education activities planned around Australia. Once the COVID-19 pandemic put all face-to-face learning on hold, we had to reframe how we could still reach our target audiences.

By necessity, the Kew office was closed in mid-March - the initial couple of weeks soon turned into months. Setting up home offices, Steph Cantrill and Michael turned to Zoom meetings to creatively provide support and online services to the post-polio community and health professionals, respectively. To help support our staff as they work remotely, Treasurer Alan Cameron, Maryann and I join them in monthly video conferences. The Board and its Sub-Committees now also hold their meetings by video conference.

If anything good can be said to result from the pandemic, it is that polio, and thence its late effects, have been re-introduced to the community consciousness with media outlets being keen to explore similarities with earlier virus pandemics and epidemics. Polio Australia representatives were interviewed in a number of articles, raising our profile as well.

Financially, we were very pleased this year to receive a 3-year extension to our Department of Health grant to enable the Clinical Practice Workshop (CPW) program for educating health professionals to continue until 30 June 2022.

Our biggest challenge remains achieving ongoing funding to maintain our core operations.

Similarly to the CPW program, most of the available funding sources are directed towards discrete projects. Such funding is vital to maintain and expand the services we can provide to Australia's polio survivors and the state networks who support them. However, it doesn't pay the rent or other operating costs - such expenses must be met through other sources, primarily donations and bequests.

NATIONAL PROGRAM MANAGER'S REPORT



Maryann Liethof

National Programs Manager

The 2019-20 period has been a roller-coaster ride for me, personally. I retired from paid work in December 2019, but first had to find a replacement for Paul Cavendish, our Clinical Health Educator. In November 2019, we were very fortunate to interview and engage Michael Jackson in the role. Michael had previous experience working with polio survivors as a physiotherapist in the USA.

Rachel Ingram, who was set to co-manage Polio Australia following my departure, also left in February 2020, to pursue a long-held career goal. However, the remaining staff pooled their respective knowledge and skill-sets and continued to provide the services admirably. In March 2020, we were joined by Paulette Jackson in an administrative role - her nursing background adds an extra dimension to the team.

During October's 2019 Polio Awareness Month, I coordinated Polio Australia's final Polio Health and Wellness Retreat in Baulkham Hills, New South Wales, for 55 participants. Details of the sessions and available handouts, presenters, and photos can be found online here: www.polioaustralia.org.au/retreat-2019

Once again, we decided to combine our annual *Walk With Me* fundraising activity with the Retreat (*below*) to make the most of the number of people who would be attending. The combined donations from *Walk With Me* and the Rotary Club of New Farm *Wine With Me* event (hosted by Board Member, Sue Mackenzie) enabled us to raise just shy of \$5,000. Whilst this was down from previous years, it is still a vital injection of funds for Polio Australia's programs.

In February 2020, I was elected on to Polio Australia's Board, which has allowed me to provide support and guidance to the team, as required.

In 2020, I have continued to produce Polio Australia's quarterly e-zine, *Polio Oz News* in a volunteer capacity. This serves the dual purpose of relieving some of the team's workload, as well as keeping me involved and up-to-date with polio-related news. All editions are uploaded to the website here:

www.polioaustralia.org.au/polio-oz-news

Over the years, I have included articles about the increasing use of Telehealth and it has been interesting to witness the rapid real-life rollout of this service throughout the pandemic. Polio Australia has also been delivering more online services through sheer necessity, but it has proved to be an invaluable connection for both polio survivors and health professionals alike.

The team members have certainly learned a lot from the experience, and are progressively building a solid, online knowledge bank legacy. In these financially uncertain times, perhaps we are seeing the future of Polio Australia's service provision. The coming year will bring many changes for everyone, so watch this space!



PROGRAM REPORTS: HEALTH PROMOTION & CLINICAL PRACTICE WORKSHOP SUPPORT



Rachel Ingram

Health Promotions Officer



Paulette Jackson

Administration Officer

This financial year has been productive yet interesting with the effects of the coronavirus pandemic. Health Promotions Officer, Rachel Ingram, supported the Clinical Health Educator with Clinical Practice Workshops (CPWs) and also managed the health promotion activities. She was instrumental in driving several programs as well as the organisation of resources. Rachel left the organisation in February 2020, and I joined Polio Australia in March 2020. My primary role as Administrative Officer is to support the Clinical Health Educator with Clinical Practice Workshops.

Health Promotion

The 2019 theme for Polio Awareness Month was *Access. Inclusion. Equality.* This theme focused on polio survivors having three things:

1. appropriate access to services
2. inclusion in all aspects of society, and
3. equality in all areas of life.

During this time, we launched the new Clinical Advisory Group for Polio Australia. We recognised World Polio Day through events with Global Citizen (*below*) and Spinal Life Australia.

Office Resource Management

To better manage information and the sharing of resources between staff, Rachel transitioned our data management to Google Drive. This allows real-time edits and file management, and reduces problems with duplication and information access.

A move was made toward utilising Salesforce as a client relationship management (CRM) system, however staff have adopted it to different extents. Salesforce integrates with both our registration platform (Trybooking) and our new bulk email platform (iContact). We transitioned from our previous bulk email platform (MailChimp) to iContact late in the financial year. iContact allows for direct integration with Salesforce thus reducing duplicate and error-prone contact lists.

Specific to my primary role as Administrative Officer for the Clinical Educator, I have participated in resource development. This included the creation of an Australia-wide list of target CPW locations, the rollout of the iContact email integration with training, the production of YouTube videos for and with staff, and the development of our COVID Safe Plan for CPWs.



PROGRAM REPORTS: CLINICAL PRACTICE WORKSHOPS



Michael Jackson



Paul Cavendish

Clinical Health Educator

This year has clearly been an unusual one. The first half of the year was business as usual with the funding extension of the Department of Health Grant, but since November many changes have transpired. Staff changes took place, with Paul Cavendish handing on the role to me in November 2019. This was followed by Rachel Ingram moving on in February 2020, with her assistant role being taken up by Paulette Jackson later in the year. The coronavirus pandemic arrived just as numerous workshops were due to take place. This resulted in many other work-from-home projects coming to fruition in the absence of multi-state travel for the workshops.

Workshops Delivered

In the first half of the financial year, 28 workshops were delivered across Australia, reaching each state at least once. Notably, there was successful delivery of workshops in the Northern Territory, upskilling medical professionals at all major hospitals. A total of 464 health professionals attended the Clinical Practice Workshop on The Late Effects of Polio. A new audience added with the renewal of the Department of Health contract - enabling the training of aged care case managers in Tasmania.

Due to the onset of the pandemic in the second half of the financial year no workshops were delivered. A Toowoomba workshop was cancelled due to low registration before the event. The 16 other workshops scheduled were cancelled with the intent of rescheduling when facilities were re-positioned for live education and travel between states was unrestricted. A four-part online webinar series was presented and recorded as foundation information for health professionals, drawing on some of the workshop material.

Increased Understanding of LEOp

With support from Spinal Life Australia, Polio Australia was able to have fact sheets printed and distributed to state networks for their distribution to their members. Two additional fact sheets were developed and added to our Living with Polio website resources, and two poster studies were written and distributed from the Polio Australia 2020 Medical Survey. Ten *Polio Oz News* articles were published during the year, between Paul and myself as Clinical Health Educators.

Health Professional Outreach

LEOp presentations took place at a national conference on assistive technology in Canberra and at a symposium on exercise at Lismore, in late 2019. A link was established with a Rehabilitation Physician at Royal Hobart Hospital. Also in 2019, 25 new entries were added to Polio Australia's online Health Professional Register. The Clinical Advisory Group was re-established and expanded during the financial year. The group now has 18 members from a diverse range of specialty fields who are able to comment on post-polio questions and topics. Three clinical topic videos were created and published on the Polio Australia YouTube Channel.

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Partnerships

Numerous partnerships were developed during the year to work on various projects where our capacity to do so would have been limited otherwise. These included: Spinal Life Australia for GP resources and planning a Brisbane conference; Dr Nigel Quadros to write a MedicSA article (*right*) and develop a telehealth clinic concept; DiverseWerks to have CALD translation of our Migration Services fact sheet; UNE researchers to write and publish a meta-analysis and systematic review for polio survivors and exercise; the UQ Rural Clinical School to develop rural LEOp education opportunities; HealthPathways to publish a LEOp pathway in Metro South Queensland, and the National Disability Insurance Agency to create a LEOp Snapshot for NDIS providers (*below*).



Polio related Disabilities Snapshot

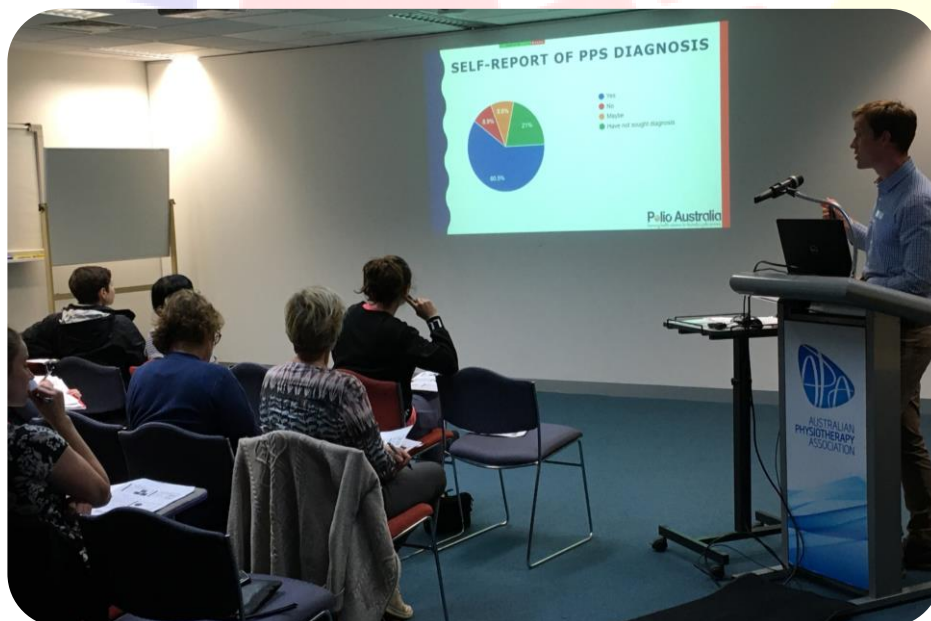
This Disability Snapshot is about polio related disability and will assist you in supporting the participant and communicating effectively. This information is a general guide only and each participant will have their own needs, preferences and experiences. This information has been prepared for NDIA staff and partners and is not intended for external distribution.

Peak body consulted

In developing this [resource](#) we consulted with Polio Australia.

What is polio related disability?

Polio related disability affects those who have survived polio, knowingly or unknowingly. Many polio survivors have lived with neuromuscular disability since their polio infection, which usually occurs in early childhood. Other polio survivors develop disability later in life, which is known as Late Effects of Polio (LEoP). Some polio survivors will go on to have a specific diagnosis of Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) from a specialist doctor.



*Paul Cavendish
presenting to
physiotherapists*

PROGRAM REPORTS: COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT



Stephanie Cantrill

Community Programs Manager

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on community activities in the 2019-20 financial year. The year started during a trip to Tasmania, where I was able to meet with several service providers and migrant resource centres, and completed a Community Information Session in Hobart. Sessions throughout NSW followed over the next few months. Since March, however, I have been working from home and all face-to-face events have been cancelled. While things have certainly looked different, the community programs have continued.

Community Engagement

- There were 10 Community Information Sessions conducted in this period: 1 in Tasmania, 1 in ACT and 8 in NSW. This number is significantly fewer than the previous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with the last sessions conducted in early February (*below right*). Four more sessions were scheduled for mid-March in northern NSW, but these were cancelled. Further sessions in southern NSW, Victoria and elsewhere could not be arranged. A one-day seminar for polio survivors and their families in Brisbane, with Rotary and Spinal Life Australia, was also scheduled and later cancelled.
- As an alternative avenue for education, 11 short videos were produced by Polio Australia staff. Topics included staff introductions, fatigue management, stretching and an explanation of the “lived expert” role for workshops. We aim to continue to produce videos as a way of sharing information.

- Social media engagement has also been an important aspect of connecting with the Australian polio community, and we have used Facebook to share these videos along with articles, announcements and new resources.
- From May onwards, online community sessions were conducted via Zoom. While these were less formal than in-person Community Information Sessions, they provided a valuable means of connection and information-sharing among the polio community. 6 sessions were held in May and June, and we intend to continue virtual meetings over the coming months.

Awareness and Advocacy

- I have been pleased to act as Polio Australia's representative in the Assistive Technology for All Alliance (ATFA), Neurological Alliance of Australia and Chronic Illness Alliance. We have participated together in a number of advocacy activities.
- During this period I have also connected with a range of service providers and other organisations, including aged care and disability providers, carers' organisations and migrant resource centres, to increase awareness of post-polio issues.
- I have also attended several community groups such as Rotary, CWA and Probus clubs, to help raise post-polio awareness.

State Network Communication

In January, we initiated the monthly “*Behind-the-Scenes*” newsletter, as a way of increasing communication between Polio Australia and its state members. I have also attended committee meetings in NSW and Victoria.



SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY



Polio Australia is continuing to engage in systemic advocacy activities to raise awareness of the ongoing needs of the polio community in Australia. This has included formal submissions, letters and participation in alliances. Most can be viewed on Polio Australia's website: www.polioaustralia.org.au/advocacy

Alliances

We have been working with two integral Alliances:

1) The **Assistive Technology for All Alliance (ATFA)** - previously known as Assistive Technology for Older People) is a national partnership of peak bodies and consumer representatives across the health, ageing and disability

sectors. ATFA is campaigning for the establishment of a national assistive technology program to meet the needs of the many thousands of people with disability who are excluded from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS).

2) **Neurological Alliance Australia**: an alliance of national organisations representing people with progressive neurological or neuro-muscular conditions in Australia. The Neurological Alliance aims to promote improved quality of life for people living with these conditions and funding to support research.

Formal Submissions:

- Polio Australia's submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety was commenced in the previous year but finalised and sent in August 2019. Key issues in our submission were:
 - Aged care funding is insufficient for the complex needs of older Australians living with a disability.
 - A lack of recognition of disability and the disability-related needs of older people within the aged care system.
 - Inappropriate and inadequate level of assessment for people with disability and specific health conditions.
 - A lack of available support and funding for assessed care needs.
 - A lack of funding, and funding consistency, in relation to assistive technology.
 - A lack of knowledge and/or training by aged care workers regarding disability and specific health conditions.
 - Inconsistency in the level of care available between different geographical regions.
- Polio Australia also joined with ATFA in a separate submission to the Aged Care Royal Commission calling for increased supports for older people with disability.
- ATFA also completed a submission to the Victorian State Disability Plan 2021-2024 Consultation.
- ATFA has also commenced working on submissions for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and the National Disability Strategy, in consultation with members of the alliance and with the wider disability community.

Other Advocacy Activities:

Letters and other submissions in this period included the following:

- Letter to the Prime Minister, calling for continued funding of the WHO in light of the US decision to cease funding;
- Position paper calling for a continuation of expanded telehealth options beyond the COVID-19 period (with the Neurological Alliance of Australia);
- Letter to the Minister for Families and Social Services calling on the Disability Reform Council and the National Disability Strategy to address funding shortfalls in assistive technology; and
- Letter to the NDIS Minister calling on increased fairness and clarity in eligibility for grant funding (with a sub-group of the Neurological Alliance of Australia).

PROGRAM REPORTS: RESOURCES



Darlene Felsch

Resource Manager

As my first year in the role of Resource Manager for Polio Australia, I am pleased with what we have achieved as a team.

The first challenge of the year was to implement 'One Touch Payroll'. This was an initiative introduced by the Australia Taxation Office (ATO) for organisations with 19 or fewer employees. In order to implement 'One Touch Payroll', I needed to migrate our payroll onto MYOB, set up 'reporting categories' and start reporting our payroll to the ATO every fortnight. This project has been successful and is now easy to manage.

The second major change I implemented this year was Salary Packaging for employees. The federal government introduced Salary Packaging for the Not for Profit sector as it recognises that many Not for Profit organisations do not have the capacity to pay commercial salaries to employees. In order to attract employees to work in the Not for Profit sector, the government allows employees to earn an additional \$15,900 per year in tax-free earnings. The benefit to employees is significant and has been well received by the staff at Polio Australia.

Team members have applied for a number of grants during the year, but due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have not received responses back from many of the funding organisations. Naturally, most funding bodies have shifted their focus to providing support related to COVID-19.

We are very grateful for the continued funding of the Department of Health in the amount of \$156,667 per annum for the purpose of providing education sessions to health professionals. This important project has been funded to 30 June 2022.

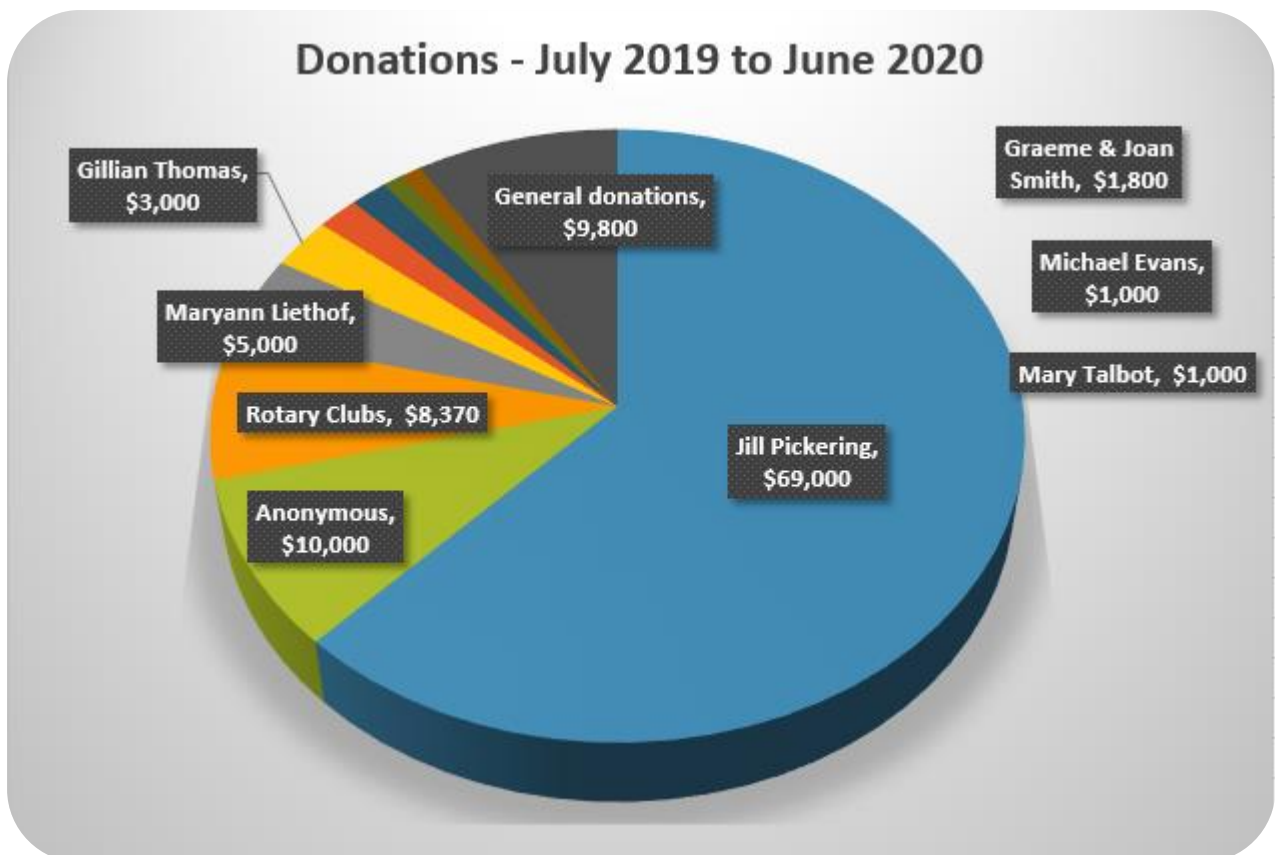
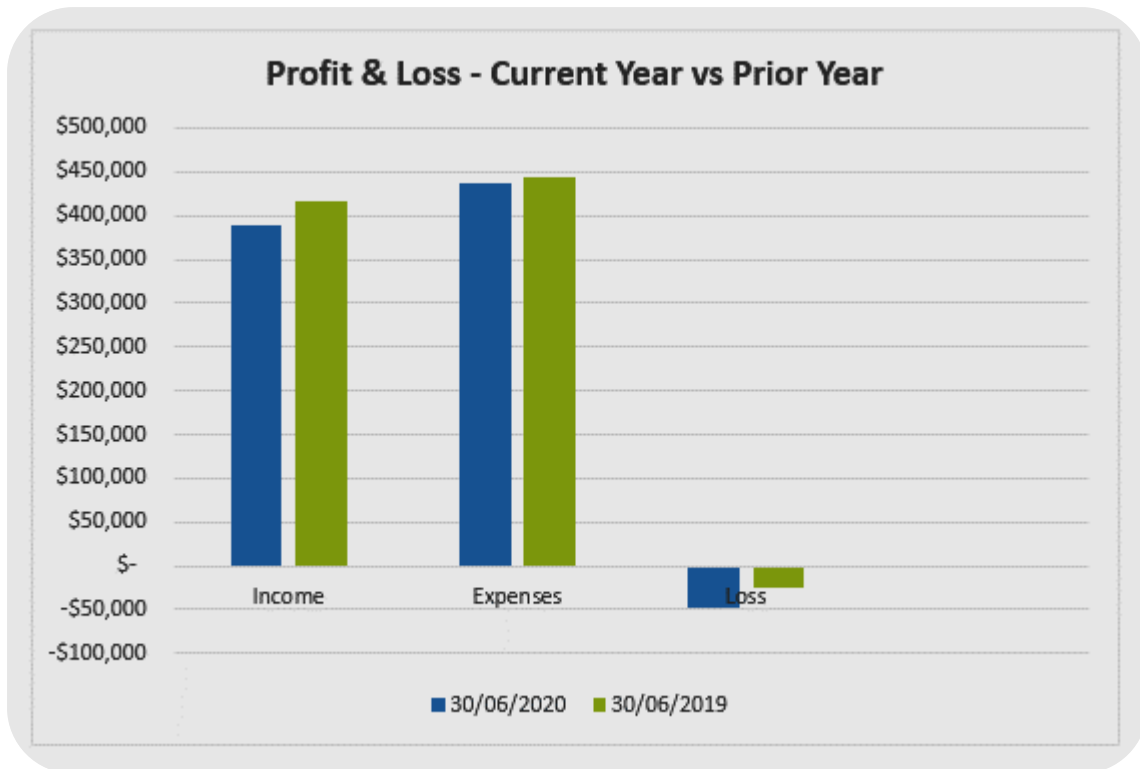
We received \$10,000 under the National Disability Conference initiative and \$20,000 from the Flack Trust, which helped to subsidise the cost of the 2019 Annual Retreat for polio survivors. A wonderful time was had by all and we are very thankful for this financial support.

We received \$3,995 from the Gambling Community Benefit Fund which will be used for a conference in QLD. This was due to be held in 2020 but, due to the pandemic, it has been postponed until 2021.

We would like to thank Spinal Life Australia for paying for the printing of our key Fact Sheets, and for funding close to half of the anticipated cost of the postponed Brisbane conference.

It is a privilege working alongside such a gifted, talented and committed team here at Polio Australia.

FINANCIALS



OUR BOARD 2019/20



Gillian Thomas OAM
President

Representing NSW and ACT polio survivors through Polio NSW.



Peter Wierenga
Vice President

Representing SA polio survivors through Polio SA.



Gary Newton
Secretary

Independent, rather than State representative, Board member.



Alan Cameron
Treasurer

Representing NSW and ACT polio survivors through Polio NSW.



Arthur Dobson
Board Member

Representing Tasmanian polio survivors.



Ross Duncan
Board Member

Representing Qld polio survivors through Spinal Life Australia.



Peter Freckleton
Board Member

Representing Vic polio survivors through Post Polio Victoria.



Robyn Grote CF
Board Member

Representing Qld polio survivors through Spinal Life Australia.



Jenny Jones
Board Member

Representing WA polio survivors through Polio WA.



Maryann Liethof CF
Board Member

Independent, rather than State representative, Board member.



Sue Mackenzie
Board Member

Independent, rather than State representative, Board member.



Billie Thow
Board Member

Representing Tasmanian polio survivors.



Bev Watson
Board Member

Representing Vic polio survivors through Polio Network Victoria.



Noel Will
Board Member

Independent, rather than State representative, Board member.

Notes:

- Robyn Grote (Qld) replaced Dr Christine Tilley at the 2019 AGM
- Brett Howard (SA) sadly passed away in June 2020 and is yet to be replaced
- Tessa Jupp (WA) retired in June 2020 and is yet to be replaced

OUR TEAM AND VOLUNTEERS 2019/20



Gillian Thomas OAM
President & Business Manager



Darlene Felsch
Resource Manager



Steph Cantrill
Community Programs Manager



Michael Jackson
Clinical Health Educator



Paulette Jackson
Administrative Officer



Shylie Little
Finance Officer



Michael Lynch AO CBE
National Patron



Jill Pickering
Volunteer



Maryann Liethof CF
Volunteer



Board Members and Rotarians, Gary Newton (Victoria) and Sue Mackenzie (Queensland), continue to volunteer as Polio Australia representatives at Rotary Club forums