



ABRN 142 977 053

“We’re Still Here!”

Polio Survivors takes fight to Canberra

Forgotten disease still impacts unsupported polio survivors today.

Today more than 50 polio survivors and their family members take their fight for support services to Canberra, most meeting with their members of parliament and presenting a petition to fund services to support the survivors of a forgotten disease.

Before polio was eradicated in Australia the number of people with polio inundated Australian hospitals and children in callipers were a common sight in schools. Now this disease is forgotten with polio eradicated from Australia in 2000.

However, the disease has left a legacy of complex health issues for many who survived it as children. In March this year, a Federal Department Health and Ageing Committee acknowledged that the impact of the Late Effects of Polio / Post-Polio Syndrome is significant, not only for sufferers but also for their families and carers. Following this *Australian Medicine Online* acknowledged that, “*Polio survivors are going undiagnosed*” (16 July 2012).

Despite these findings, there has been no commitment to provide the urgently needed Federal funding for comprehensive, consistent and specific health, disability and peer support services required for Australia’s polio survivors.

“I am going to Canberra to support all those who have put in so much effort on behalf of polio survivors nationwide. Polio survivors once fought to remain anonymous in their communities but now have a daily struggle to keep going. Our campaign about getting financial support and recognition of the many needs of the polio survivors throughout Australia”, says polio survivor and campaigner, Susan Ellis.

Gillian Thomas, President of Polio Australia states, “*Polio survivors don’t complain. They have quietly carried on with their lives. But now, more than ever, they need our support and it’s time to give them a fair go by funding the health and support services they need. We’re not asking for a handout, just a fair go. Australians can support this by signing the petition and visiting Polio Australia’s website - www.polioaustralia.org.au.*”

Polio Australia is calling for action on the three recommendations made by Government this year:

- **Recommendation 1:** That the ABS and/or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare establish mechanisms to estimate and report on the size of the population of polio survivors living in Australia, and the proportion of that population experiencing the late effects of polio/post-polio syndrome.
- **Recommendation 2:** That the relevant national boards seek to ensure curricula for medical students includes information on the late effects of Polio/post-polio syndrome, to raise awareness of the condition as a possible diagnostic outcome and of best practice for treatment and management.
- **Recommendation 3:** That Medicare Locals actively engage with Polio Australia and the state-based post-polio associations, with state and territory government departments of health, and with general practitioners to promote activities to raise awareness of the late effects of Polio/post-polio syndrome.

Note to editors:

- Photo opportunity: will be held on the steps of Parliament at 10:00 am on Wednesday 31st October. Polio survivors will holding childhood photos of themselves, and will be wearing “We’re Still Here!” T-shirts.
- Interview and photo opportunity: polio survivors will be available for media interviews at 11:15 am on the 31st October, following the launch of the “*Late Effects of Polio*” *Clinical Practice Introduction* resource in the Sire Richard Baker Room, off the Members and Guests Dining Room on Level 2, Parliament House.

For enquires and further information: Mary-ann Liethof – National Program Manager, Polio Australia - Mob: 0466 718 222 / www.polioaustralia.org.au