



# POLIO AUSTRALIA INCORPORATED

Representing polio survivors throughout Australia

ABRN 142 977 053

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## 2009 / 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

### The Launch of *Parliamentary Friends of Polio Survivors* – 10 March 2010



L to R: Neil von Schill, Mary-ann Liethof, Fran Henke, Gillian Thomas, Dr John Tierney, Mark Coulton MP, Peter Garde

## Polio ... forgotten, but not gone

National Patron: Dr John Tierney, PhD, Federal Senator for NSW 1991 - 2005

**Polio Australia Inc – Management Committee 2009-2010**



**Gillian Thomas (NSW)**  
*President*



**Arthur Dobson (Tas)**  
*Vice-President*



**Tessa Jupp (WA)**  
*Secretary*



**Neil von Schill (NSW)**  
*Treasurer*



**Marcia Baron (Vic)**



**Brett Howard (SA)**



**Trevor Jessop (SA)**



**Jenny Jones (WA)**



**Michael Judson (Vic)**



**John Mayo (Qld)**



**Margaret Peel (Qld)**



**Billie Thow (Tas)**



## THE YEAR IN REVIEW

2009-2010 has seen a major improvement in Polio Australia's finances which has provided a great impetus to our activities. This is the first full year that Polio Australia has operated and there have been a number of significant developments which are detailed in this Report.



In September 2009 we were fortunate in gaining \$30,000 in philanthropic funding through a successful submission to the Trust Company. This enabled us to secure the services of the first paid employee of Polio Australia. At the beginning of January 2010 we welcomed **Mary-ann Liethof** who took up the position of **National Program Manager** for two days per week on an initial one-year contract.

Mary-ann has brought a wealth of experience and expertise to the position with skills that enhance our work. Her enthusiasm and dedication to furthering the interests of polio survivors makes her a staunch advocate and valuable addition to our work team. We now have a permanent office and headquarters in High Street, Kew, in Melbourne.

Administratively, Mary-ann was ably supported by **Shylie Little**, a volunteer working out of the NSW Post-Polio Network office in Sydney. In her two days a week Shylie helps with banking, scheduling payments, bookkeeping, and a myriad of clerical tasks which free up time for both Mary-ann and the Management Committee. We are grateful for Shylie's dedication to polio survivors.



Since July 2009, Polio Australia delegates made a further three visits to Parliament House, Canberra, to both raise awareness amongst the politicians about the late effects of polio and the current lack of services for Australia's polio survivors, and to lobby for funding to implement Polio Australia's programs. Visits took place on 26 November 2009, 10 March 2010 and 16 June 2010.

On all these occasions, we were ably guided (pro bono) by

**Dr John Tierney**

*Partner, Government Relations Australia Advisory  
Former Federal Senator for NSW  
National Patron of Lifeline Australia*

From these and earlier visits, a number of key outcomes eventuated this year:

- Four bi-partisan parliamentarians became "*Parliamentary Patrons*" of Polio Australia.
- A Motion (Private Members' Business) calling for the recognition of the plight of polio survivors and their needs was debated in the House of Representatives.
- The "*Parliamentary Friends of Polio Survivors*" group was established and launched.

## Polio Australia's Four Parliamentary Patrons



### **Jill Hall, MP**

*(Australian Labor Party)*

Federal Member for Shortland (New South Wales)  
*and*  
Government Whip in the House of Representatives

### **The Hon Greg Hunt, MP**

*(Liberal Party)*

Federal Member for Flinders (Victoria)  
*and*  
Shadow Minister for Climate Action, Environment and Heritage



### **Catherine King, MP**

*(Australian Labor Party)*

Federal Member for Ballarat (Victoria)  
*and*  
Parliamentary Secretary for Health  
Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Transport  
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Development (Victoria)

### **Mark Coulton, MP**

*(The Nationals)*

Federal Member for Parkes (New South Wales)  
*and*  
The Nationals Chief Whip in the House of Representatives



In June 2009 Catherine King had moved a Notice of Motion (Private Members' Business) calling for the recognition of the plight of polio survivors and their needs. Catherine's Motion was debated in the House of Representatives on Monday, 17 August 2009. Besides Catherine, speakers to the motion were Jill Hall (who seconded the Motion), Darren Chester and Mark Coulton.

## Canberra Lobbying and the Parliamentary Friends of Polio Survivors

When we journeyed to the national capital in November 2009 we took with us a submission detailing a costed four-year program totalling \$8.9m and presented it to our Parliamentary Patrons, and to the Parliamentary Secretary for Disabilities, The Hon Bill Shorten. We also met with and presented our submission to Dr Meredith Arcus, Senior Adviser to the Health and Ageing Minister (The Hon Nicola Roxon) and representatives from the Health Department. Out of these meetings it was agreed that we should form a Parliamentary Friendship Group in support of polio survivors.

Subsequently we returned to Canberra on 10 March 2010 to launch the *Parliamentary Friends of Polio Survivors*. Jill Hall and Greg Hunt agreed to be co-Chairs of the Friendship Group and were responsible for introducing our guest speaker and thanking invitees for their attendance. The launch took the form of a morning tea hosted by Polio Australia and was held in the Members and Guests Dining Room.



*Pictured (standing, L to R): Neil von Schill (Treasurer) Mary-ann Liethof (National Program Manager) Dr John Tierney (Government Relations Australia) Seated: Gillian Thomas, President*

Our President, Gillian Thomas, gave a short speech on *The Challenges Facing Polio Survivors* and, following this, the *Parliamentary Friends of Polio Survivors* group was officially launched by The Hon Bill Shorten who gave a very focussed address.





The morning tea was well attended by our patrons, parliamentarians, senators, ministerial advisers and representatives from the ACT Support Group, led by convenor Brian Wilson.



Following the launch we were invited to meet with officers from the Department of Health and Ageing. Whilst sympathetic to our cause we were informed that our funding request “*did not fit into any box*” from which monetary support could be provided. We subsequently received a written response which claimed that our polio-specific needs could be met from existing generic Department of Health programs. As our more than twenty years experience shows this definitely not to be the case, we arranged another sortie to Canberra in June 2010 to specifically engage with our Parliamentary Patrons prior to the impending Federal election. We met with government patrons Jill Hall and Catherine King followed by a meeting with coalition patrons Greg Hunt and Mark Coulton and sought their assistance in furthering our cause with the Health Minister and with the Health Department. Further visits are planned in the new year.

## **Resourcing Polio Australia**

Besides the substantial donation from the Trust Company (Fred P Archer Trust) which allowed us to fund a part-time employee and establish a head office, and a grant from GlaxoSmithKline towards the nation’s first *Polio Health and Wellness Retreat*, Polio Australia was also the beneficiary of a very generous personal donation from Victorian polio survivor, Jill Pickering, towards our office operations, and a number of donations from Dr John Tierney, as contributions towards our Canberra lobbying activities. This funding has been critical to our success during the period under review and we are extremely grateful for the confidence shown in our organisation.

During the year, a number of new applications for philanthropic funding were submitted. These covered a range of projects including website development (unsuccessful), media publicity for *Polio Awareness Month* (unsuccessful) and the planned *Polio Health and Wellness Retreat* to be held in Victoria in 2011 (outcomes pending at year end).

We have also prepared and presented numerous papers and submissions to federal politicians and government departments detailing the rationale for a national approach to developing and funding polio services. In particular, in January 2010 a detailed submission *Health Services for Polio Survivors* was prepared for the Budget Policy Division of the Department of the Treasury, following a call for submissions from the Treasurer, while in May 2010 we prepared a comprehensive submission to the *Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry* into planning options and services for people ageing with a disability.

## **Polio Australia on the World Stage**

Through ongoing communication with Post-Polio Health International, Polio Australia has maintained a strong connection with the international polio community which enhances the credibility of the organisation as the national voice for Australian polio survivors.

## Inaugural Polio Health and Wellness Retreat – April 2010 – NSW

The first major activity planned and conducted by Polio Australia was the organisation (in conjunction with the NSW Post-Polio Network) of a three-day residential *Polio Health and Wellness Retreat* at St Joseph's Centre, Baulkham Hills, which attracted more than sixty participants. The purpose of the Retreat was to provide a holistic approach to managing the late effects of polio and finding life balance, within a framework of complementary themes of Body, Mind and Spirit. We had excellent keynote speakers and a great variety of activities, workshops and experiential learning.

As well as the grant from GlaxoSmithKline, Polio Australia and the NSW Post-Polio Network were also successful in a joint funding application to the Marian and EH Flack Trust. The availability of this funding gave us the financial flexibility to provide the Retreat at an affordable cost. We are most grateful to these two funding bodies for their support of the post-polio community.



The Retreat was voted by those in attendance to be an enormous success. A detailed Report on the Retreat can be downloaded from the NSW Post-Polio Network website.

## The Year Ahead

The concerted effort to raise the profile of Polio Australia throughout the nation will continue, with activities planned for later in 2010 including:

- conducting the first ever national *Polio Awareness Month* campaign in October 2010;
- setting up a comprehensive and interactive website;
- preparing and widely distributing (both nationally and internationally) monthly e-Bulletins;
- establishing a multi-disciplinary *Clinical Advisory Group* to provide direction to Polio Australia in the creation of standardised information and education programs for both polio survivors and health professionals; and
- conducting a second *Polio Health and Wellness Retreat* in Mt Eliza, Victoria, in April/May 2011, for which arrangements are already well in hand.

Polio Australia will also continue its lobbying initiative in Canberra. We are hopeful that with this and our other fund-raising initiatives we will be able to obtain sufficient funding to enable the employment of full-time staff to ensure that our full suite of nationally-consistent information and education programs can start to be rolled out across Australia.

President

28 November 2010