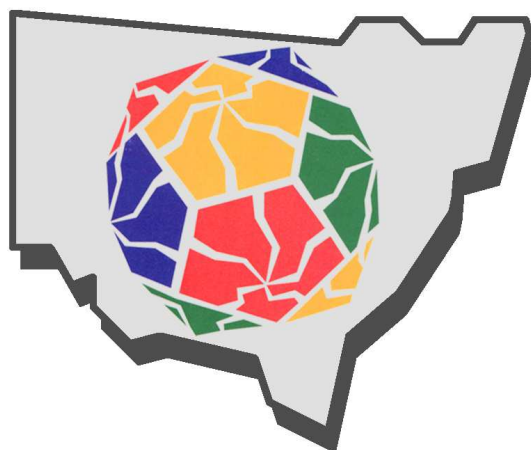


Gillian Thomas
President
Email: office@polionsw.org.au

PO Box 2799 North Parramatta NSW 1750
Phone: 02 9890 0946 / 02 9890 0953
Website: www.polionsw.org.au

Patron: Professor Emeritus Sir Gustav Nossal AC CBE FAA FRS

2011 / 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



A member of Polio Australia

President's Report

On 26 November 2011 the Network held a Special General Meeting, immediately preceding our 23rd Annual General Meeting, to consider changes to the Constitution. The most significant proposed amendment was for the Network to change its name to "Polio NSW Inc". Arguments for and against each proposed Constitution change were provided to members and all amendments were adopted. The new name generated a myriad of related changes which took some time to work our way through during the following months.

At 30 June 2012 membership numbers remained over 800. Although we again had a boost in new members during the year resulting primarily from contacts via the Australian Polio Register, twenty-five members also sadly passed away: Jeanie Ball (Beerwah, Qld), Peter Bobisch (Albury), June Hope (Kingscote, SA), Daniel Curran (Park Holme, SA), Elda Dalley (St Ives), Lionel Denmead (Pymble), Pat Dever (Narara), Bruce Dive (Narrabeen), Geoff Elgar (Waitara), Brian Evans (Surry Hills), George Galwey (Drummoyne), Jean Hall (Annangrove), David Harrower (Dudley), Val Heath (East Bentleigh, Vic), Len Hinde (Mosman), Robyn Keevers (Dee Why), Mildred Mills (Bribie Island, Qld), Evelyn Pyne (Higgins, ACT), Shirley Ralph (Turramurra), Margaret Rodger (Tweed Heads South), Ron Scaramuzzi (Normanhurst), Yvonne Stone (Wauchope), Pauline Terry-Beitz (Mossman, Qld), Jeanette Vogt (Maroubra) and Florence Warren (Ermington). *(Continued on page 3)*

Polio NSW Inc – 2011/2012 Management Committee



Gillian Thomas
President



John Tierney
Vice-President



Merle Thompson
Secretary



Alan Cameron
Treasurer



Charles Anderson



Anne Buchanan



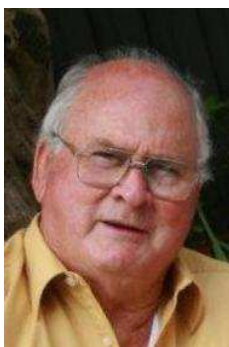
Nola Buck



Susan Ellis



Barbara Fuller



Gary Fuller



Ron Goodwin



Alice Smart

As noted in the following *Committee Report*, we have been fortunate to have had a full complement of Committee members during this review period which has enabled revitalisation of some member services. In particular, although only one issue of *Network News* was published during 2011-2012, strategies the Committee put in place early in 2012 to re-allocate Committee responsibilities will see four issues (in combination with *Polio Oz News*) published in the calendar year 2012, with a return in 2012-2013 to four issues each financial year.

Local Support Groups have continued to meet across the State although decreasing mobility is having an impact on numbers attending some Groups. Members are encouraged to participate in their local Group if possible as the interaction with fellow polio survivors and family members provides a wealth of ideas for managing the late effects of polio. The Polio NSW office can provide the contact details for your local Convenor.

Financially, the Network finished the year in a sound position. Together with the generous support of our members, we again benefited from the practical assistance offered by the Northcott Society, and gratefully received donations from NSW Lions Clubs, and a bequest from the estate of member Kevin Sheridan. Unfortunately our applications for additional philanthropic funding were unsuccessful this year and as a result we made a small operating loss overall. A detailed Financial Report, including the *2011/2012 Financial Statements, Independent Audit Report and Statement By Management Committee* has been circulated separately to members.

Our office staff once again put in an enormous effort this year, while no Annual Report is complete without paying tribute to the contribution made by the Network's volunteers. Our success over many years has only been possible thanks to the tireless work of many Management Committee members and other volunteers; our Support Group Convenors and Regional Representatives; the "Mail-Out Mob" and Pat Featherstone who for some years has made audio copies of *Network News* for members with vision impairment; and those many members who distribute leaflets throughout their local communities, put up Polio Awareness Month posters, organise local media coverage, mount displays and man information stands. Finally, we sincerely thank our partners, families, friends and carers without whose support many of us would not be able to contribute as effectively as we do.

Committee Report 2011-2012

Susan Ellis

The 2011 Annual General Meeting saw three Committee members take the decision for health and family reasons not to re-stand for election. We were very sorry to say goodbye to Neil von Schill (8 years service), Rebecca Rodwell (4 years) and Diane Bull (3 years) all of whom had contributed greatly. Thankfully a number of members stepped up to the mark and joined the Committee for 2012 to return us to full strength. The blend of old hands and new members (some of whom had previously served on the Committee) reinvigorated our desire and enthusiasm for Polio NSW to continue as the strong entity it has been in supporting polio survivors. There was a lot to impart and to learn and much was achieved towards our aims as the year progressed.

All Committee members gave of their time and contributed a considerable effort which has culminated in the reinstatement of regular newsletters; successful half yearly Seminars; support for Polio Australia's "*We're Still Here*" campaign leading up to October's Polio Awareness Month; updating of information booklets; achievement of tasks due to the change of name approved at the 2011 AGM, including the initial setup of a new website; a submission to the Mobility Parking Scheme enquiry; monitoring the Polio NSW office activities and supporting the staff and volunteers; plus numerous other behind-the-scenes tasks performed by the dynamic duo of Gillian Thomas and Merle Thompson.

Most of our current Committee members intend to re-stand for election at the AGM to further build on this work. However, it is expected that the **Treasurer** role will become vacant. Alan Cameron has served on the Committee in this role since first elected at the 2008 AGM and has given valuable service over the last four years. In 2013 Alan is planning to travel overseas for an extended period and with necessarily limited internet access during this time feels that someone more accessible would be better suited to the role. Our accounts are computerised (using MYOB) and the office staff undertake banking and data entry activities. The person we are looking for is someone with a

management or accounting background and with the time to give a few hours per week throughout the year – working from home is fine. With data entry support from the office staff the Treasurer’s functions are not overly challenging but they do require consistency and an eye for detail. If you can offer your time and skills to this position please let us know and come along to the AGM if possible.

We are also seeking a suitably talented person to take on the role of **Webmaster** (this can be either a Committee or a non-Committee position). The role of Webmaster is an extremely important one in that it provides the means for us to communicate with not only our Polio NSW members but also with those who are seeking information regarding Polio and its late effects in general.

The Webmaster will need to move the information from our old website (Post-Polio Network) onto our new website (Polio NSW) and, once this has been completed, to maintain the site and include up-to-date information on a regular basis. A knowledge of WordPress would be an advantage. The Webmaster would co-ordinate with Gillian Thomas for content and advice. Gillian can also provide the necessary training for this position.

We have also discussed setting up Facebook and Twitter pages for Polio NSW to extend our reach and be informative at all levels.

So if you are a computer enthusiast you are the person for the job!! Come along to our AGM or make contact with the Committee.

Committee Attendance Record 2011-2012

During the year the Management Committee once again convened in a meeting room generously provided free of charge by the Burwood RSL Club. Burwood has proven over many years to afford the most central location, but many Committee members still have to come considerable distances to attend – in particular, a number of the members (Merle Thompson, Alan Cameron, Ron Goodwin and John Tierney) travelled to meetings from outside the Sydney metropolitan area. Occasional absences by Committee members during the year were due to illness, bereavement or travel.

| | Meetings Held Jul – Dec 2011 | | Meetings Held Jan – Jun 2012 | |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|---------------------|
| | Attended | Possible Attendance | Attended | Possible Attendance |
| Charles Anderson | --- | --- | 3 | 3 |
| Anne Buchanan | --- | --- | 3 | 3 |
| Nola Buck | --- | --- | 2 | 3 |
| Diane Bull | 0 | 2 | --- | --- |
| Alan Cameron | 2 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Susan Ellis | --- | --- | 3 | 3 |
| Peter Frame ¹ | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Barbara Fuller | --- | --- | 0 | 1 |
| Gary Fuller | --- | --- | 0 | 1 |
| Ron Goodwin | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Bill McKee ¹ | 2 | 2 | --- | --- |
| Rebecca Rodwell | 1 | 2 | --- | --- |
| Alice Smart | 1 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Gillian Thomas | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Merle Thompson | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| John Tierney | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 |

¹ Peter Frame and Bill McKee were elected at the 2011 AGM but resigned due to ill health prior to meetings being held in 2012. Barbara Fuller and Gary Fuller (Associate Member) were subsequently appointed to fill the resultant casual Committee vacancies.

Support Groups

Merle Thompson

Support Groups continue to operate in a number of metropolitan and country areas and provide friendship and mutual support to members and carers within these areas. They vary in their style and operations, from small groups which are more like friendship groups, to more formal groups which invite speakers and may offer local newsletters.

The convenors greatly miss the help and encouragement provided by the Support Group Co-ordinator, Neil von Schill, whose ill health caused him to stand down from this position. George Laszuk, Office Manager, has been able to maintain contact with the convenors.

A number of Groups are experiencing decreasing numbers as members pass away or become less able to attend functions. The following reports have been provided by individual Groups.

ACT Post-Polio Support Group: The Group meets bi-monthly, starting February, on the first Saturday at the Pearce Community Centre. Convenors are Brian Wilson and Sue Wallis. Unfortunately Roger Smith is unable to continue as convenor due to ill health. Average attendance at meetings is 14. During the last year there were four guest speakers. Social activities are a Christmas Party in December and a mid-year luncheon at a local club. At these outings there are door prizes, quizzes, and prizes which everyone enjoys.

Albury Support Group: Convenor is Margaret Bennie. The Group was hit very hard by the illness of Neil von Schill, convenor of the Group, NSW Support Group Co-ordinator and Secretary. Other members have also had medical problems but the Group is keen to continue.

Hills District Support Group: The Group is convened by Elizabeth Woods. It meets on the second Monday of the month, at the West Pennant Hills Sports Club at 10:30 am. Members stay for lunch, if they can do so.

Members have forged strong friendships through the Group, and they always manage to have a few laughs when they meet. They greatly value the support, friendship, and ideas they share. Sadly two of their group passed away this year, Geoff Elgar and Ron Scaramuzzi.

Hunter Area Support Group: The Group celebrated its 20th year of operating successfully, since August 1992. Founding members still attend meetings or keep in contact; while there have been five newcomers during the year. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month (except January), with attendances of 18 to 24. There is a mailing list of nearly 100 for the Group's bi-monthly 12 page newsletter.

Meetings involve general input of ideas, with discussions on matters of interest and exchange of helpful information. Outstanding guest speakers this year included a journalist who had polio as a child in Kenya, and a doctor who has done volunteer work in Nepal. The Convenor since 1998 is Wendy Chaff.

Inner West District Support Group: The Group is convened by Claire Dawson. They meet every second Saturday of the month in Claire's home from 11:30 am to 3:30 pm.

There are currently five active members. Meetings are informal; without minutes or an agenda. Although the numbers are small, they hope to continue their monthly meetings as long as people are able to attend.

Northern Districts Support Group: The Group convened by Pat Featherstone meets on the last Thursday of each month (except December) in the coffee shop at Dee Why RSL.

There are eight polio survivors plus two spouses who attend regularly and support each other. Five rarely miss a meeting and others who can't get there every month keep in touch by phone. All are finding that they are deteriorating gradually, some faster than others, and they share information and experiences. Two members died in the last twelve months, Bruce Dive and Robyn Keevers, both of whom were regular attendees over many years. The Group keeps in touch with Bruce's wife and Robyn's mother.

Northern Rivers Districts Support Group: The convenor is Rosalie Kennedy. The Group only had one Meeting this year in August as they could not sustain any more due to illness, and other life matters. There have, however, been a few inquiries about the group including from a lady with Chronic Fatigue who thinks she may have had undiagnosed polio.

Three members, Rosalie Kennedy, Ron Hill and John Heaton were invited to be guest speakers at Lismore District Rotary Polio Plus meeting in May 2012. John could not attend due to ill health but the

others were able to speak about their personal journeys and how important it was to continue to try and eradicate polio.

Shoalhaven Support Group: Convenor is Dorothy Schunmann . The Group is continuing quite well. Usually, it meets each month at the Library meeting room in Nowra, however this year members are considering whether lunch is better if there is nothing to discuss - more get there!

Sutherland Support Group: Convenor is Ruth Hatton with Carolyn Summers sharing the leadership. Meetings are held at the Gynea Trade Union Club on the first Wednesday from February to November with a Christmas lunch in December.

The Group began in 2004 with 12 members, including spouses. Over time some have died, and others have become too frail to attend, but new members continue to join and average attendance for this year is nine. There have not been any visiting speakers this year, but the Group has provided a place where feelings and experiences related to polio/post-polio can be expressed and local resources shared. Reports of members' cruises and holidays appropriate for those with mobility issues have been gladly received. Each meeting also has its share of laughter and it concludes with afternoon tea.

Wagga Support Group: Convenor is Isabel Thompson. There are only six active members at present and three of these have not been well so unable to meet regularly but those who can gather occasionally.

Wollongong Support Group: Convenor is Dorothy Robinson. The Group meets on the second Friday of every second month, starting February, at the Illawarra Yacht Club for lunch at 12 noon. It is a social event, not a formal meeting, at which members share information from newsletters and media reports. The number attending ranges from 9 to 12 but health problems are becoming more frequent with the passage of time.

Network News

Nola Buck

During financial year 2011-2012 one issue of *Network News* (Issue 81) was produced and distributed to members as well as to libraries and to a range of government, health and community organisations.

At the 2011 Annual General Meeting concern was expressed by some attendees at the low number of newsletters being issued. For many members the newsletter is their only means of contact with the Network and it was felt that these members, many of whom are isolated because of their disability, were being further isolated. An overload of work placed on the previous editor, Gillian Thomas, who is also the President of Polio Australia and Polio NSW, regrettably led to the declining number of issues.

Having noted the concern of members, at its first meeting in 2012 the Management Committee appointed two co-editors, Susan Ellis and Nola Buck, with the aim of having the newsletter once more produced on a regular basis and at the same high standard as before.

Network News Issue 81 was the first effort of the new editorial team and continued the good work of the previous editor. Over recent years the horizons of the New South Wales newsletter have broadened by incorporating *Polio Oz News*, which is a newsletter compiled by Mary-ann Liethof, Editor and National Program Manager of Polio Australia, and which features national and international articles about polio.

The Polio NSW editors have also aimed to bring awareness to members of generic services available and the revolution which is taking place in the disability movement, such as the *National Disability Insurance Scheme* and the philosophy of a *Person Centred Approach*. This revolution may not change the lives of people who have had polio, but will change the lives of family members who have a disability.

The Newsletter editors would like to thank members for the articles they contributed to the newsletter during the year and also the many volunteers who came along and helped at member mail-outs. We would also like to acknowledge the efficiency with which the office staff prepares for each mail-out making the task so much easier for all.

It is envisaged that in the 2012-2013 Annual Report it will be reported that publication and distribution of the newsletter is on track and four copies have been produced during that financial year.

Seminars

Nola Buck

As has been the practice for several years, two Seminars were held during this financial year in the metropolitan area - on Tuesday 19 July 2011 (Parramatta) and on Saturday 26 November 2011 (Burwood). The Biennial Country Conference was held in Bomaderry on Saturday 17 September 2011.

The July Seminar was attended by 38 members and friends and included three presentations:

- 1) *Speech and Breathing*, by Senior Speech Pathologist at Concord Repatriation General Hospital, Nicola Clayton. Nicola has an extensive experience of treating post-polio and her presentation on the general aspects of speech and breathing were of interest and help to those present at the seminar.
- 2) *Living with chronic pain: thriving in the face of adversity*, by Clinical Psychologist, Professor Ashley Craig. Professor Craig spoke about the current thinking and approach to chronic pain and gave hints for adjusting to this condition which help people thrive in the face of such an adverse condition.
- 3) *Your Polio Story*, by Network members, Merle Thompson and Neil von Schill. This was a more light-hearted presentation to conclude the Seminar. Merle and Neil spoke about the reasons for writing your story, suggested strategies for starting this task, looked at the different forms of presentation and discussed some of the difficulties that budding authors may encounter.

The November Seminar was attended by 26 members and friends and followed the 2011 Annual General Meeting. This was an interesting presentation, entitled *Copenhagen Conference Perspectives*. It consisted of two presentations:

- 1) Polio Australia's National Program Manager, Mary-ann Liethof, who attended a European Conference entitled, *Post-Polio Syndrome – A Challenge of Today*, held in Copenhagen in August 2011, gave an overview of the presentations directed to the polio survivors at the Conference and included her presentation on Australia's Polio Health and Wellness Retreats.
- 2) Polio Australia's Patron and Polio NSW member, John Tierney, also attended the Conference and gave his perspective on the pros and cons of the format of both the 2011 Copenhagen and 2009 Warm Springs Polio Conferences which he attended and their relevance for Polio Australia's planning towards an international conference in 2014.

The Biennial Country Conference held in September was attended by 37 members and hosted by the Shoalhaven Support Group convened by Dorothy Schunmann. The day was officially opened by Gareth Ward MP, Member for Kiama. It consisted of three presentations:

- 1) *Safe and Effective Use of Medicines*, by Director of Arthritis NSW, Diana Aspinall. Diana spoke about the effects of medication on the mind and body and the effects of certain combinations of medication. She also emphasised it is the person's responsibility to be aware of the effects of medication and to periodically have one's medication reviewed.
- 2) The scheduled presentation on *The Polio Mind* by Diane Bull, Senior Lecturer in Psychology at University of Newcastle, was unfortunately unable to proceed due to Diane's ill health. Video presentations from the Copenhagen Conference played instead were well received.
- 3) *Polio Immunisation in the Third World*, by Bill Pigott, World Health Organisation. Bill spoke of his experiences in the polio eradication programs undertaken in Nepal and Cambodia. He also examined aspects of living with the legacy of polio.

Although it is appreciated that many members are unable to attend the Seminars and Conferences put on by Polio NSW, their value in assisting members experiencing post-polio effects cannot be measured. Considerable thought is given to the choice of Seminar/Conference topics and the presenters who are highly trained professionals in their field give their time freely. We therefore strongly encourage members to attend wherever possible.

Office Report

George Laszuk, Office Co-ordinator

Our office has now been in operation for nearly 10 years and we remain very grateful to the Northcott Society for providing us with our modern facilities. At year end we were awaiting relocation into another room, still on the Ground Floor but with better access to facilities. Having an office means Polio NSW is more accessible to members and more visible to the general public. The office has proven its worth as a valuable resource for Committee members and the broader membership, as well as for health professionals and the community.

Both our part-time staff and our volunteer staff remain extremely important to the efficient running of the office and to our ability to have it operational every week day. With ongoing training and support our team now has the knowledge and capacity to provide prompt assistance both to members and to the public. We are very grateful for the dedication of volunteers John, Nola and Shylie and the paid office staff, Carlie and Fatma, who unselfishly contributed their time and skills to the Network over the course of the year.

As a consequence of having this dedicated team who do a fantastic job we have been able to take on extra work that previously was performed by our overworked Management Committee. These duties include maintaining our membership database; maintaining our accounting system (MYOB); maintaining the Committee meeting minutes; filing documents, both financial and general correspondence; banking of monies received; assisting with mail-outs; and many more administrative tasks.

Over the course of the year we also responded to several hundred telephone enquiries, sent out more than 100 information kits and received a number of visitors to our office. Our ongoing collection of statistical data demonstrates that over 2,300 hours were spent performing the office tasks this year. These hours do not include those contributed to the office by Gillian, and Neil before his illness.

My efforts this year have again been focused on the overall co-ordination of the office, the training, supervision and support of the volunteers, and the consolidation and expansion of the office functions and activities. To raise the profile of Polio NSW, I have also attended and participated in several Disability Expos and conventions both in metropolitan and rural areas, for example, Rosehill and Penrith.

This year I also attended a Support Group meeting in the Central Coast and the Country Conference in Bomaderry.

I have also continued to explore funding options from different organisations and foundations. I am still capitalising on the opportunity afforded to me to approach Lions Clubs across NSW. During the year we received donations totalling \$8,000 from NSW Lions Clubs and as an active member of Lions I always keep my ear open for opportunities that might benefit us.

Don't forget to get in touch with us if you feel that you might be able to contribute to the team, whether it be on the Management Committee or in our office.

External Support

The organisation continues to maintain friendly relations with the Northcott Society. The Society provides Polio NSW with office space and some administrative assistance with respect to employment of staff, and each year provides one free use of the Northcott auditorium for a one-day Seminar (usually held in July). The Northcott Society's continuing commitment to assist with the production and distribution of Network publications, particularly *Network News*, is greatly appreciated. A *Memorandum of Understanding* now more formally describes the relationship between the two organisations.

Since January 2005 the Management Committee has been holding its meetings at the centrally located Burwood RSL Club. The Committee acknowledges with thanks the generosity of the Club in providing meeting facilities free of charge, and record in particular its gratitude to the Club's Operations Manager, Dave Viner, who so willingly and obligingly provides any assistance requested

In Conclusion

The Management Committee commends this Twenty-Fourth Annual Report to you. We wish the incoming Committee a successful year as they work to further Polio NSW's aims and continue to provide information and support services to polio survivors throughout NSW and the ACT.