

Post-Polio Country conference

Polio may be seen by many as a disease suffered by those in the past ... but, there are people in our community still paying the price today. Gail Hassall, local convenor of the Port Macquarie Post-Polio Support Group, tells us more about the upcoming Post-Polio Country Conference, which will be held in Port Macquarie on September 22nd.



Hi Gail. What are your roles with both the Port Macquarie Post-Polio Support Group and the upcoming Post-Polio Country Conference?

The Port Macquarie Post-Polio Support Group is part of Polio NSW Inc. and one of many around NSW metro and country areas. I have been the local convenor since 2009.

Polio NSW conducts a Country Conference every two years in regional areas; this year I was asked to organise the conference for the Mid North Coast.

What is "Post-Polio", and how does it generally affect sufferers?

Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) or the Late Effects of Polio (LEoP) may occur years after contracting the initial Polio infection. Polio survivors may develop a range of symptoms, such as new or increased muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain, loss of strength, swallowing or breathing difficulties and fatigue. The time lag from original onset varies, but is commonly around 30+ years.

Symptoms may come on gradually or emerge after a period of physical or emotional strain, or following a period of immobility through disease or surgery.

It is estimated that as many as 400,000 Australians may be affected or at risk of developing the condition. Most of us are over 50, although more recently there is a younger cohort of Polio survivors who contracted Polio outside of Australia.

Port Macquarie will be the host location for

the Post-Polio Country Conference on September 22. Where will this be held?

The conference will be held in the Rushcutter Room, first floor at Panthers Port Macquarie. It is a full day, commencing with registration at 9am. Cost is \$35 and includes morning and afternoon tea and light lunch.

What is planned for the conference?

The conference will be opened by the Mayor, Peta Pinson, and speakers will include: Paul Cavendish, Clinical Educator, from Polio Australia; Dr Roslyn Avery, local Rehabilitation Physician; Stuart Leckie, local Clinical Nurse Consultant in pain management; Margaret Invernon, Exercise Physiologist from Armidale; Julie Haraksin, local Disability Advocate; Linda Walters, Occupational Therapist from Taree; Don Scott, Podiatrist from Grafton; Peter Clark, local Dietitian; Tania Powick, Certified Financial Planner from Kempsey; and Neville Parsons, CEO of Holiday Coast Credit Union and Rotary Member.

How can interested people register for the event?

Information and details of the conference may be obtained from Polio NSW, in Sydney, on (02) 9890 0946, or (02) 9890 0953. Details are also available on the

“
Each meeting is quite informal, combining social contact and morning tea with current issues of Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS), information and *ideas about local resources or practitioners, plus any topic that a member may bring for discussion.*”

Polio NSW website at <https://www.polionsw.org.au/port-macquarie-conference/>

People may also contact me on 6581 4759, 0432 881 237 or email portppsg@live.com.au

When does the local support group meet, and who is eligible to join?

The Support Group meets from 10:30am to noon on the first Saturday of every second month, commencing in February each year.

Because people come from areas outside Port Macquarie, we found Saturday works well for most.

Support Groups are part of Polio NSW, so Polio survivors are requested to become members of Polio NSW. Anyone is welcome to join us, and we often have partners come along to meetings. Each year we have a Christmas Lunch, where we include family and friends. If people are interested in joining the Support Group, they may contact me as above.

Each meeting is quite informal, combining social contact and morning tea with current issues of Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS), information and ideas about local resources or practitioners, plus any topic that a member may bring for discussion.

Thanks Gail.

Interview Jo Robinson.