



STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION NSW

CLUB NEWS

WINTER 2011

FROM MICHELLE'S DESK

Hi all,

It has been a very eventful time since the last Club News was distributed. The sad news was the passing of Anita Rosenberg after a long battle with cancer. Anita's loss was felt deeply here at the Association as her commitment to the Association has never wavered. Our thoughts are with Allen and her children and grandchildren.

I was humbled and honoured to have been awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the Queens Birthday Honours list. The award came out of the blue and I was speechless for at least 24 hours after I was notified. I will receive the award at a ceremony at Government House on the Thursday of Stroke Awareness Week which will make the award that little bit more special.

I love working in Stroke and it has been an absolute joy for me to work here at the Association. I love all the people I work with and it is an honour to represent you all wherever I go. This is an organisation built from the vision of Anita Rosenberg and her passing on the same weekend I received the award very much reminded me of the people who have put in the hard yards before I came along. I had a very strong foundation on which to continue to build this very special organisation.

I love that the very essence of this organisation is its commitment to people recovering from one of the most devastating events that life can throw at them. It is evident that from its very beginnings, everyone involved in the growth and development of this Association has supported and valued the strength and spirit of human endeavour required by individuals to regain their lives after their Stroke.

I love the comradeship, the support and the genuine affection that is evident in every Stroke Club. The irreverent humour, the laughter and sometimes the tears that we have all shared I believe to be invaluable in assisting individuals, both survivors and carers in their ongoing recovery from Stroke. No amount of medical treatment can replace the connection of the shared experience that is suffering a Stroke.

It is an absolute delight to work with you all and I sincerely thank the Robyn, the Board and staff for nominating me for such a wonderful acknowledgement. I would also like to thank each of you for allowing me the honour and privilege of working with you and for you for so many years.

In receiving Order of Australia Medal, I do so in memory of Anita Rosenberg (a truly inspiration woman) and on behalf of all the Committee members, staff, volunteers and members of the Stroke Recovery Association. What we have achieved could not have occurred without the dedication hard work and commitment of all involved. I certainly did not achieve this award without your generosity and support.

Warmest regards
Michelle



SUBMISSIONS WELCOME

The Stroke Recovery Association welcomes contributions to Club News, especially for our 'Around the Clubs' section.

Submissions should be addressed to:

The Editor

Club News

PO Box 3401

PUTNEY NSW 2112

Or send an email to info@strokensw.org.au

Please note that contributions may be edited, either to reduce size, to assist with readability or for legal/liability reasons.

Original photos sent through the post will be returned ASAP.

A STROKE FIARYTALE STORY by David Bostock (WAGS Club)

I picked up a short stay in Cooma from ebay, and had the idea to propose to my lovely partner Jane at the summit of Mt Kosciuszko, in an attempt to make it a memorable proposal, and also to test my boundaries since my Stroke.

I had done my research on the walk and saw that it was a chairlift ride half way up then a 6.5km walk on a raised boardwalk with a gentle incline. I thought 'I can do that', so off we set.

When we arrived in Cooma, the lady at the tourism centre informed us that the main chairlift was closed for its annual cleaning and maintenance. There was a secondary chairlift but there was a 500m section that contained boulders that required climbing to gain access to the boardwalk, definitely not something that a person with mobility issues should attempt. With my ambitions starting to feel a little dashed, she told us about another route up to the summit via a track that leaves from Charlotte Pass, an 18km round trip. We both agreed that we should give it a try, not really knowing our capabilities or how far 18km really was.

We picked a beautiful sunny day to set off, Thursday May 5. It was a little chilly, with the snowy river below us and wild flowers everywhere; truly beautiful countryside. The track was nice and wide, yet gravelly so I had to be very careful where I placed my feet. Both of us carried backpacks containing water and hot coffee, hot soup, bread rolls and muesli bars. We had our supplies so we were looking forward to a hearty lunch at the top.

At the 2km mark Jane sat down on a bale of hay for a rest. This was possibly the first time we began to doubt our abilities to finish, because all we could see in front of us was more steady inclined track and a series of mountains. This was when our goal setting kicked in. We could see a corner in the distance, so agreed we would walk to that corner then re evaluate when we got there. Once there, we could see a little bridge across the snowy river, we decided we would walk there and stop for a drink. By this stage we had already walked 5km, over halfway to the top! We had never seen another soul in that 5k, but a younger couple approached us as we sat by the river and we asked them if the mountain in front of us was Kosy. They said no, it was beyond that!

Up until this point the walk was an easy grade, and this is where it began to get steeper. On the horizon we could see what appeared to be a hut, that was our next goal point. Once there more incline lay ahead, so we carried on till we reached a place called Rawsons Pass. This is where the chairlift riders join the main walk for the final ascent to the summit, the 7k mark, so there was a fair bit of pedestrian traffic, all young, energetic and fit - so my fairly obvious limp certainly made us highly visible. This was the first place we got a glimpse of the summit, and we realised those tiny little specks at the top were actually people. Looking at how steep the final kilometer and a half was, I said to Jane 'I can't possibly do that!' We had all but given up hope of reaching the top when a young lady, having noticed my limp, came over for a chat. I quietly told her what I was going up there to do and it turned out she is a nurse in Brisbane. She was very complimentary about the walk we had just achieved; she had already been to the top and assured us both that we could get there. She added a reminder that we had come this far, so it would be a real shame not to continue. My main concerns were the steepness & the amount of traffic (I didn't want to hold anyone up).....*continued next page*

MEMORIAL GIFTS & BEQUESTS

A bequest is a gift for the future; please consider putting us in your will.

For information about how to include The Stroke Recovery Association in your forward planning, please contact the office on (02) 9807-6422 or 1300-650-594, or email info@strokensw.org.au.

We can also supply 'In Memoriam' donation brochures with pre-paid addressed envelopes for use at memorial services.

FAIRYTALE cont'd

.....and also coming down was a concern for me. As all our stroke survivors know the down hill run is often the scariest; I really didn't want to put Jane in an awkward situation.

Well it was a hard slog but we got there. It was so bitterly cold and windy at the top that we wanted to get down as soon as we could! The view was awe inspiring. I did the whole bended knee thing (actually my knee gave way!)asked Jane to marry me, gave her the ring, sang a little carpenters song (I'm on top of the world, looking down on creation), and down we came.

So many people congratulated us on the way down. There were lots of high 5s from the young ones, because they could see it was a bit of a struggle; it was just so uplifting! When we reached Rawsons Pass on the way down Suzanne the nurse from Brisbane was waiting for us because she wanted to see the ring and congratulate us. She is now a facebook friend in waiting.

We took shelter in Seaman's Hut, full of history. It contained a memorial to four young lads who perished in a blizzard in 1999 when their snow cave collapsed not 100 yards from this hut which contained bedding, a log fire, cooking facilities, food,etc, to be used in emergency. We heard a knock on the door whilst having our lunch, two guys were on the way up, they liked our story very much, once again were very complimentary. The last 2kms were the toughest. Fatigue had well & truly kicked in - I kept hoping every time I looked up that the car park would appear in front of me, while my left leg had begun to drag behind me.

We had set off at 8.15am, and arrived back at the car park at 4.15pm. It was a full day, but mission accomplished! One of the highlights of my life...came back with a wife to be & proved to myself what I was capable of. What a Great Day!!!

I would never have attempted this had I known what lay ahead, it makes me exhausted just thinking about it...In this case Ignorance truly was bliss.

It also really enforced to me what I have always known since my stroke, the biggest battle & the biggest limiter is what goes on between your ears.



DISCLAIMER

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AROUND THE CLUBS

GREAT LAKES AND MANNING STROKE RECOVERY CLUB

Lesley Watkin sent in news from the GLAMs:

As a result of our first teleconference with SRA, our club has decided to meet twice a month. The second meeting is designed to be a games/activity meeting. We were impressed with the Belmont Club's activities. We plan to have dominoes, housie (if we can purchase it) skittles and quoits and what ever else we can find. We may also be able to incorporate some of the SRA's Practical Exercises for Stroke Recovery. We have secured a venue at a local church and our first games/activity meeting will be the 4th Thursday of June. We are looking forward to further enhancing life after stroke!

SINGLETON STROKE RECOVERY CLUB

Trudy Farrell sent in news from Singleton:

The Singleton Stroke Recovery Group celebrated their 20th Birthday this May. The group celebrated at the local RSC Diggers Club on June 3rd. A great day was had by all, and was featured in the local paper, The Singleton Argus.

Photo at Right: Tracey Dagg, Melissa Crittenden, Diane Bailey, Annette McDonald, Nell Langdon, Lindsay Langdon, Sheri Beaumont, Bill Griffiths, Shirley Griffiths, Phyllis Bowd, Jean Taekata and Robyn Crittenden. Absent Mona Baxter, Leo Farrell, John Booth, Will Higgins, Lorna Stewart & Trudy Farrell.



MUSWELLBROOK STROKE RECOVERY CLUB

Lem Rose tells us the Muswellbrook Club recently held a farewell lunch for long-time Volunteer **Jeff Gill and his wife Rosemary**.

"Jeff has been a Volunteer Member for some 13 years as a driver on meeting days for members requiring transport and has been our bus-driver on numerous occasions, particularly to the Annual Stroke Olympics at Hexham. Always willing to do "that extra bit", Jeff will be sorely missed. The Club wish them well in their retirement."



CAMDEN STROKE RECOVERY CLUB

Christine Crooks sent in some photos from the Camden Club.

Back in May, the group held a display at the Narellan Town Centre. There, among other activities, they launched their lovely new club banner, shown in the photo at right.

Well done Camden, it is a great idea to have a portable banner to help publicise your group!

L-R: Chris, Doreen Napier and David Napier



ULLADULLA STROKE RECOVERY CLUB

As many as 100 people are expected to compete in a 'Stroke Challenge' at Conjola in September. The event is being organised by the Ulladulla Stroke Club with funding provided by the IMB Community Foundation. As reported in last week's edition of the Times, the IMB is providing \$2000 towards the running of the event.

President of the Ulladulla Stroke Club, Colin Cameron, confirmed last week that the event would be held at the Lake Conjola Community Hall on Friday, September 16. The local Parkinson's Disease group has already accepted an invitation to take part. Mr Cameron said invitations would also be sent to the local arthritis and diabetes support groups.

The challenge is expected to commence at around 10am and will continue through until 4pm with a hot lunch to be provided for all those taking part. Activities will operate on a rotational basis and will include indoor bowls, darts, dominos and quoits. All will be suitable for people suffering an on-going physical impairment or brain injury as a result of stroke. Mr Cameron said the event would provide a great opportunity for members of all the local support groups to come together and socialise.

While the Stroke Challenge will be a one-off event, it will possibly be used as a trial for a 'Stroke

Olympics' to be held at some stage in the future. Mr Cameron said a Stroke Olympics had been running successfully in the Hunter region for many years with great success and it was hoped something similar could be held locally.

The Ulladulla Stroke Club is extremely appreciative of the IMB Community Foundation's support.

Mr Cameron said it would have been impossible to get an event like the Stroke Challenge off the ground without grant funding.

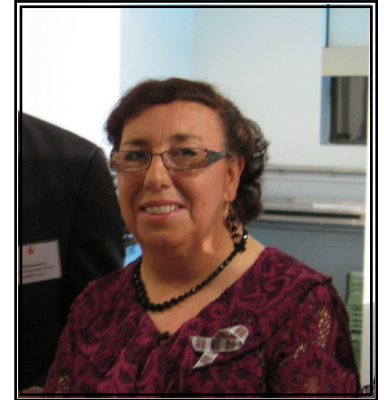
Milton-Ulladulla Times, text & photo Stuart Carless



ORDER OF AUSTRALIA FOR OUR FEARLESS LEADER

Michelle Sharkey, Executive Officer of the Stroke Recovery Association, was recently honoured with an Order of Australia, announced in the Queen's Birthday list, June 2011.

Michelle has been EO of the Association for Fourteen years and has worked tirelessly to advance the cause of Stroke-affected people every single day since she began. What impresses those who are connected with her, either as Board Members of the Association, associates on the various committees of which she is a member, and the staff of Stroke Recovery Association, is her dedication to the wellbeing of people affected by Stroke and their carers and advocating at all levels on their behalf. Michelle gives completely of herself, and often this includes a commitment of her personal time, energies and travel over and beyond that outlined as her role. She is a very hands-on EO, personally involved at all levels of provision of services. She is happy to be, and often is, whether it is stuffing envelopes for a membership mail-out, or advocating on behalf of stroke "consumers" at a meeting of the ACI (Agency for Clinical Innovation) of NSW Health.



As well as her outstanding contribution to Stroke Awareness and Recovery, it must be noted that Michelle still finds time to be mother to two wonderful teenagers, while remaining actively involved in their lives and volunteering at their schools, even now when they are both in high school. When they were in primary school, Michelle was the president of the Parents and Citizen's Association for two years. During that time she was the driving force behind the agitation for and acquisition of a pedestrian overpass for the students to safely reach their playground, which was located on the other side of a major state artery. She is still spoken of in tones of admiration and pride, by the staff and parents at the school.

Michelle has a commitment to everything in which she becomes involved – including her son's soccer club, of which she still finds time to be Secretary and even with this her dedication and time commitment is over and above that which would normally be expected.

All those who know Michelle agree that she is a worthy recipient of an award in recognition of her dedication to the communities in which she becomes involved and lives. On behalf of all our readers and members, Congratulations Michelle!!!!

WARNING - CARBON TAX COMPENSATION SCAM

The new Carbon Tax plan has already spurred on the scammers, so be on the lookout! They phone you up to offer a Carbon Tax compensation payment, or ask you 'survey questions' about the new tax. They have been offering \$5000 compensation payments directly to your bank account, though the amount offered could vary. Scamwatch, a service provided by the ACCC, advises that the Federal Government will never phone you to ask for your bank account details or to offer you carbon tax compensation. If you are not sure whether a call is a scam, you can check by using independently-sourced official contact details (not a phone number or email address provided by the caller—look it up in the white pages or google) and ask for confirmation.

CITY TO SURF STRIKES AGAIN

Readers may recall how last year we entered “Team Stroke Survivor” in the annual City To Surf race (hmmm, race? Not *quite!*), with sponsorship funds supporting the Stroke Recovery Association to the tune of more than \$1000. Participants included Eileen from the SRA offices, Board Member John Garbutt, and Wentworth Wood from the Hawkesbury Stroke Recovery Club. Wentworth was joined by several family members, while John and Eileen ambled together throughout the 14km course. Several other people walked (and even ran) as fundraisers for Team Stroke Survivor, through the Everyday Hero website.



“We have rocks in our heads”, says Eileen, “this year we are doing it again, can you believe it?!”

The gruelling course, which famously includes ‘Heartbreak Hill’, will test the stamina of even more walkers, this year including Celia Frost and our very own Michelle Sharkey.

Michelle notified friends and potential sponsors that she was joining Team Stroke Survivor in “walking/shuffling/crawling in the hope that I complete the City to Surf this year” - please support the team if you can, by visiting: http://www.fundraise.city2surf.com.au/team_stroke_survivor_0

Neuropsychiatry Service
Calvary Mater Hospital
Newcastle



Health
Hunter New England
Local Health Network

Are you over the age of 60?

Have you noticed any changes to your memory or thinking since your stroke?

If yes, you are invited to take part in a research project to investigate whether a new way to test the sense of smell can help doctors make a more accurate diagnosis for people with memory problems.

If you would like to know more please contact Sally Finnie on 4033 5702

You can also email eileen@strokensw.org.au (or phone 9807-6422) for a detailed patient information statement

TWO ITEMS FOR SALE

1) 1998 Toyota Hi Ace Commuter Bus, Diesel, 5 speed manual. Registered until May 2012, with new heavy duty battery (2yr warranty). Has been fully modified for 2 wheelchairs + 8 seats, or 12 seats only. Hydraulic lift on rear. Asking \$25,000 or nearest offer. Ring Margaret on 9622 1067 or 0408 414 778.

2) Brand new mobile Day Chair – easily moved , brakes on all wheels and hand brakes. \$1,600. Ring Margaret on 9622 1067 or 0408 414778.

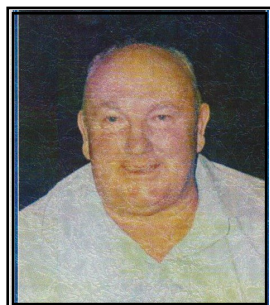


IN MEMORIAM



Lesley Watkin of the Great Lakes and Manning Club sent in the sad news of **Joan Ryan's** passing:

"Joan Ryan, our oldest member in years, 88, died on the 16th May. Joan was fortunately well and active up to the last several weeks of her life. She is survived by her lovely daughters who are a credit to Joan's wisdom, encouragement and strength. Joan had her Stroke several years ago, but never let up on doing her daily rehab exercises to keep her affected side strong, she was living proof of the benefits of ongoing rehabilitation exercises. Our sympathies to her daughters and families; in particular to Rosemary, who moved to Forster from Queensland to be close to Joan after Joan's then husband Jack died. Rosemary joined our club to support Joan. Joan and Jack joined our club back in 2008. Joan's happy demeanour will be well remembered and sadly missed."



Glenda Potts of the South Illawarra Stokers sent in some lovely words about **Eric McCarthy** who recently passed away. Eric and his wife Marie also attended the North Illawarra Stroke Recovery Club.

"The Stokers' Southern Illawarra Stroke Support Group was deeply saddened by the passing on 29/6/11 of one of the founding members, Eric McCarthy. Every group has a resident "wit" and Eric was ours. His cheeky sense of humour and loveable nature endeared him to all members of our group. Eric was a well known member of the community, having owned a dairy farm for many years before retiring to Oak Flats. Eric was married to Marie his devoted partner who ensured Eric could attend as many meetings and outings as possible. Although Eric was dependant on a Marie and required wheelchair for mobility, he rarely missed a meeting. For the last few months, Eric was moved to a Nursing Home, however he still managed to "abscond" to attend "The Stokers" meetings and outings thanks to his wife Marie. It will be Eric's cheeky grin and little one liners that we will all miss."

DONATIONS TO:
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E-mail: info@strokensw.org.au
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