

GPSG NEWS

INFORMATION FOR POLIO SURVIVORS IN THE GEELONG REGION AND BEYOND

MARCH 2020 EDITION

Next Meeting:

Monday 2nd Mar - 10:30am

In The Chair:

Humphrey B. Bear. 😊

Meetings are usually held on the 1st Monday of every month Main Conference Room, McKellar Centre, Nth Geelong.

March Guest Speaker: *Darby Munro Geelong Council re Waste Management*

What a LOAD of RUBBISH!

Recycling and rubbish that is...

City of Greater Geelong provide a residential kerbside recycling and rubbish collection service to encourage responsible disposal, recycling and reuse of unwanted household stuff.

As of Monday 16 December, Cleanaway took over the

processing of the G21 region's kerbside collected recyclable materials – including paper, glass, metals and plastics.

They're calling on us to put the right thing in their yellow lid bin, to avoid contaminated recycling going to landfill.

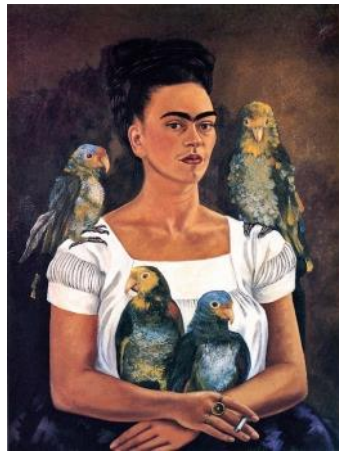
Like to know the list of what can go in your recycling bin and what can't?

What's in? What's out?

Find out at our March meeting when **Darcy Munro** from Waste Management, City of Greater Geelong joins us to fill us in!

Got a question about a specific item? **Darcy Munro** will answer it for you. Be sure to join us at our next meeting on March 2nd.

Convenor's Corner



It was great to catch up with most of you at our last meeting. It looks like we will have a variety of speakers for the year so it should be enjoyable.

This month I thought I would tell you a little bit about one of my

favourite artists. Her name is Frida Kahlo and some of you probably know of her but you may not know that she had polio at the age of six.

She is a Mexican lady who struggled after getting polio. Like most of us she had one leg shorten then the other and the muscles in her left leg were smaller. She was in isolation for months and was bullied a lot by her young friends.

This experience made her become reclusive except for spending lots of time with her father who taught her literature, philosophy and even encouraged her to play sport to build up her muscles in her legs.

Eventually she attended school after being home schooled for some time. She went on to study science so she could become a doctor but this was cut short by a horrific accident.

She was travelling in a wooden bus when it collided with a tram. The injuries she received were two broken legs, broken ribs, broken collar bone and a broken pelvis from a pole on the bus which pierced right through her pelvic area.

Because of this accident she would spend most of her life in and out of hospital after many operations and eventually totally bed ridden.

Despite all of this pain and suffering she went on to marry, become a social and political activist and eventually becoming one of Mexico's most famous artists.

At one time she was even connected to Leon Trotsky through her connections with communism.

At the end of her life after losing her leg to gangrene and becoming addicted to pain killers and alcohol she finally decided it was time to die. Some say she may have overdosed on pain medication to finish her life. Whatever happened she will still be remembered for her fantastic art works.

Maybe if we do some more research we can find other famous people who have had polio. Let me or Gary know and we can put their story in a news letter. Till next time!

Sharyn

Happy
BIRTHDAY!
to you.

March

Les Madden - 2nd



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From The Editor's Desk

Greetings everyone!
 WOW! 3 months of the year gone already and only a bit over 9 months til Christmas! I know...I hear you! **"Stop it! Chrissie will be here soon enough!"**

Below you'll find a fabulous piece from one of our regulars, **Jan McDonald**. Jan sent me this 'letter to her legs' recently after another painful and semi-sleepless night. It's a great read, well thought out

and poignant. I'm sure many of you will relate to it.

Over the next few months I want to concentrate on some of the polio/life stories out there. Everyone has one but not everyone thinks it's worth telling but I can assure you it is. Imagine you could pick up a book today and read the thoughts, hopes and activities of your great, great, grand parents. Well in another several decades that's what someone who may not even be born yet will have to savour

and explore if you write YOUR story.

Where you lived as a child, what you did for a living, your family, your struggles and hardships etc, etc. will all prove fascinating reading to someone down the track. I encourage you to get busy and share those stories with me and our readers. The address for sending is on page 1. Till next time...stay well

Sally

A Letter To My Legs, and Anti-Vaxxers! By Jan McDonald

Dear Legs,

It is 4am, and after hours of sleeplessness, I thought I would write you this letter and tell you exactly what I think.

As you know, we have had a long association – over 65 years. In the early days we had a little setback – polio, I think they called it. Didn't make much difference initially, I was a baby so not particularly mobile. Then of course, when problems were noticed, you, Legs, were cosseted and fussed over – there were callipers, plaster casts and a special Foster frame to sleep in at night, weekly visits to the Royal Children's Hospital and Dame Jean McNamara, and stays at Lady Duggan for more physio. Yes, Legs, you had it all. After all, we were blessed to be lucky people living in the lucky country.

Well, years went by, Legs, and admittedly, you pulled your weight more or less. I totally agree that you did get knocked around a bit due to a lot of childhood falls, but as a body we appeared to be relatively "normal" to the untrained eye.

But now, Legs, what are you doing to me???

For the last twenty years you have been letting things slip. You have become lazy. You are intolerant and fussy. Things are either too hot, too cold, too far to walk, or too difficult to remain vertical. I say, "Legs, it will be okay." We'll just keep doing the exercises, some form of which we have been doing all our lives. We'll just keep trying a little harder, as we have always done. We'll try more turmeric, magnesium, olive oil, anti-inflammatory

foods, witches' brew from darkest Peru. We'll refuse the nasty foods that could inflame you more. We'll do hydrotherapy, buy a roller, use heat packs, exercise more, exercise less, meditate, do Pilates, yoga, tai chi, investigate whether we're imagining pain. Just work with me.

But what did you do, Legs? You let me down. For the last ten years you are not even happy if I lie down to sleep at night. You wake me up after a couple of hours. You tell me this muscle hurts, that muscle hurts – hurts too much to get back to sleep. If I ignore you, sometimes you even start throwing electric shock parties. So we stay awake for most of the night – and I have to tell you, Legs, you are not good company at 2 in the morning.

Now, Legs, this is not all about you. There is a whole body here that has to get on with itself. You are starting to play havoc with Brain. Brain is now often brain-dead. Not to mention Personality!! I don't like to say it but Personality has become quite staid and boring. Initiative, fortunately, is just a temporary tenant here, so Initiative did the only thing possible in an uneasy body, and flew out the door. And as for Imagination! – Imagination is long gone – I think Concentration and Endurance left at the same time. Energy tries hard to stick around, but now can't be depended on.

As these tenants move out Body is more likely to become a ghetto with unwelcome stayers – Frustration, Insomnia, Disillusion, Weight Gain and Depression are constantly applying for tenancy – after all they can see that there's a vacant space where Energy used to live. It's hard to keep stalling them!

Have you ever thought, Legs, that the rest of us have things that we would like to do – see more of the world, go on bushwalks, attend concerts, learn more via short courses, read more, spend more time with family and friends. Because of the damage that you have done to some of the other tenants (Brain, Initiative, and Energy, in particular) these things are not on. Besides, we already know that YOU don't like standing in queues, YOU aren't happy if we stay a little longer at an outing. YOU need a rest.

So, Legs, the rest of us are here together in the body corporate. We can't just run away. We have come to the conclusion we are stuck with you. But we would like to tell you a few home truths:

- 1. You are not a team player – blow all the other body tenants.*
- 2. You are princesses – you think you are the most important.*
- 3. There is very little we can do to make you happy.*
- 4. You are not even grateful for the extra help you get.*
- 5. You are very demanding and controlling – life has to revolve around your wants.*

In conclusion, Legs, though the body corporate generally puts on a pretty good front, you are letting us down. We dissociate ourselves from you and your demanding ways. Everyday life is a struggle, and often a real challenge. You made it that way. I just wonder how your contemporaries are allowing their bodies to get by in countries with less health assistance. Life is hard enough here with the help that we get.

- Jan McDonald, Geelong Polio Support Group

Remember this event in June!
It's not too late to BOOK

3rd EUROPEAN
CONGRESS ON

POST POLIO

SYNDROME



Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain June 10 - 12th, 2020.

A conference that aims to promote, better care and attention for the nearly 700,000 European citizens who suffer the late effects of polio, sharing knowledge and experiences among doctors, researchers, polio survivors and all types of health specialists of Europe and of the whole world.

Get more information on the Congress visit <https://postpoliocongress.com/en/>

DID YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAVE POLIO?

FREE COMMUNITY INFORMATION SESSIONS

MARCH 2020

BALLINA - 16th March Indoor Sports Centre, 10.30am
COFFS HARBOUR - 17th March Cavanbah Centre, 2.00pm
PORT MACQUARIE - 18th March Panthers, 10.30am

THE INFORMATION SESSIONS WILL COVER:

Current information about the Late Effects of Polio
What to tell your health professional
Self-management strategies
Q&A
Local connections

MORE INFO/REGISTER:

ONLINE: www.polioaustralia.org.au/community-information-sessions/
CONTACT STEPH: 0466 719 613 OR steph@polioaustralia.org.au

Polio Australia
Supporting polio survivors throughout Australia

Joining a choir helped me combat anxiety and find a meditative state of pure joy

Kate Corbett-Winder
The Guardian Newspaper

Faced with panic attacks and depression, I looked to my creative past for inspiration on how to improve the present. Rediscovering singing proved the turning point I needed.

When it comes to looking after your mental health, there is a lot of advice about what to start doing and what to stop, but sometimes the remedy is something that has been in the background all along. Which poses the question: what have I stopped doing that once made me, me?

About six years ago I started having panic attacks. I began my journey to crack them with traditional tools, including therapy, keeping active, meditation and medication, all of which were a great help. Thankfully, a year later medication was no longer needed and neither was therapy. Problem solved.

Frustratingly, about a year after that, when I was seemingly happy and healthy, I started to



develop depression and began to have panic attacks once again, and this time they were far more debilitating. I tried what I knew best and went back to my previous toolkit, but I was still struggling and far from feeling well again. Until I got some new advice.

My childhood had been filled with creativity. School and, later, university burst at the seams with music, art and dancing, yet for most of my adult life these outlets had been neglected. A

therapist I had been seeing told me that mental health issues are incredibly common among the creative minds of the world, the so-called "tortured artist"; no surprises there. Yet what we explored was the opposite: what happens when your creativity is suppressed, when you hold back an energy that is ingrained in you? I began to wonder if part of my mental health struggles could be due to the neglect of my creativity: dormant self-expression going nowhere and morphing into anxiety.



CONTRIBUTIONS WELCOME.

If you have anything you would like to contribute or share with the GPSG community in upcoming issues please contact g.newton@iinet.net.au

Disclaimer: The aims and objects of the Geelong Polio Support Group is to gather and disseminate information on Post-Polio Syndrome and Late Effects of Polio, to support each other in any way we can. This newsletter is written for interest and information only. Information of a medical nature in this newsletter is not authorised in any way. Please contact a medical professional before adopting or acting upon anything contained herein. The writer of this newsletter accepts no responsibility for the authenticity of services and does not warrant they are either accurate or true. We do not purport to be medically qualified. Consult your doctor before trying any medication or new form of exercise. Please give relevant information to your doctor and help them to help us. We do not endorse any product or services mentioned.

JOINING A CHOIR (continued)

I love to sing and, when I was younger, I did what a lot of teens did in the 90s: formed a band, learned every Spice Girls routine out there and performed them at school assembly (or the occasional after-school concert with our soon-to-be-famous signatures on the back of each ticket). To rekindle my creative side, I decided to get back into singing and audition for every top established Renaissance chamber choir. Not very Spice Girls. Not so smart.

Then I discovered a group called Sound, a pop, funk and soul choir that sings the likes of Beyoncé, Janelle Monáe and Queen. Much better. And in what was a particularly dark patch for me, I found the courage to audition. I was amazed that I managed to put myself through such a high-stakes situation and not have a panic attack. The audition itself was a win for me, never mind how I did.

I remember clearly the day I got the email saying

they would love me to join them. I was on the top deck of a bus and let out a loud squeal of jubilation. I could not stop smiling to myself for the rest of the journey. It meant a lot.

I have now been a member of the choir for three years, rehearsing every Tuesday. I love the community, the challenge, the performances and the fire it lights in my belly. It reminds me of who I was at school. My path back then was always "do what you love and do what you're good at". I studied dance because I loved it and sang because I loved it, and my entire education was filled with fond memories because of that, and I was now starting to build that back into my adult life.

Although my job is in the creative industry, the day-to-day skills I use are not so I have had to learn the importance of finding time to include creativity in my life. I sing, go to dance classes and make my own Christmas cards. I fear that if these creative outlets stagnate I may relapse and if keeping healthy means doing things I love all

the time, I am certainly not going to complain.

My anxiety attacks came out of nowhere and, to this day, I am still clueless as to what sets them off. Now, though, I am feeling a lot better. When I am anxious, distraction is key and singing does exactly that. It sends me into autopilot, a state in which my body works without instruction, but with pure passion and joy – a meditative state.

Don't get me wrong, there are weeks when the last thing I want to do after work is go to choir practice and I long to go home to bed. But I go because I know I am guaranteed to come out feeling great. I will leave having loved every second, learned something new and progressed my vocal skills. More importantly, I will have exercised my creativity and held my anxiety at bay. What more could I ask for?

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AGE TEST

