



FACE-TO-FACE TREATMENTS FOR PEOPLE WITH LATE EFFECTS OF POLIO

Position Paper

Polio Australia is the national peak body representing people affected by polio and its late effects. Polio Australia's member organisations are the State Polio Networks, who interact directly with the polio community across Australia.

Post-Polio Syndrome and its umbrella condition Late Effects of Polio are neuromuscular conditions that are progressive in nature. Many people benefit from a variety of regular maintenance treatments to slow this progression and maintain optimal function. These treatments may include, but are not limited to: physiotherapy, including physiotherapist-supervised hydrotherapy, balance retraining and falls prevention, strength and conditioning, Feldenkrais and Clinical Pilates, as well as massage and occupational therapy services.

Ceasing face-to-face services is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on the physical condition of people with post-polio conditions. This can lead to an increase in falls risk and a reduction in functional independence. Short-term impacts of this could include higher health service utilisation and increased risk of unplanned presentation to hospital (including ambulance attendance, presentation to emergency departments and unplanned admission). Longer-term, there could be an increased need for care and services on an ongoing basis due to permanent functional decline. The need for continued maintenance treatments for people with post-polio conditions should be taken into consideration in the context of repeated, and often prolonged, restrictions and lockdowns.

It is important to note that many people with post-polio conditions may also be more susceptible to severe illness from COVID-19 infection than the general population, particularly as this is predominantly an older demographic. It is therefore important to ensure that any face-to-face services include high-level COVID-safe plans and practices.

In light of the above, Polio Australia calls for consideration of the need for ongoing services, conducted in a COVID-safe manner, for those with Post-Polio Syndrome and Late Effects of Polio.

Polio Australia

Representing polio survivors throughout Australia

Endorsements:



Polio Network Victoria



Polio SA



Polio NSW



Post Polio Victoria