

Stroke Recovery News

Volume 25, Issue 01

Summer / Autumn 2025

Travelling with a disability

For many, travelling is one of the great joys of life. Hans Christian Andersen said that “to travel is to live”. Travelling is one of the ways you may notice your life is affected when living with a disability. Although there are factors that you have to consider, with planning, and understanding of your needs, travel can be a rewarding experience. Throughout this article we will examine challenges to consider when travelling with a disability, your rights as a traveller with disability, and accessible resources and services available.

The most important thing to do before travelling with a disability or health condition is to consult your doctor. They will be able to determine whether you are fit to travel. They will then be able to speak to you about how to manage your health while you are away as well as any vaccinations, health checks, or medication you may need to obtain.

Air Travel

Air travel, like travel in general with a disability also requires forward planning to allow for an accessible, safe experience. Explaining your needs to airline staff when booking your flight is the best way to ensure this. Discuss when booking if you will:

- be travelling alone or with a carer?
- need help navigating the airport?
- need help with baggage and boarding?
- be able to use the toilet on the plane?
- be able to understand safety briefings and instructions from staff? (Some airlines have braille or large-print books available).
- be able to board the plane via stairs in the absence of an aerobridge, or whether you will require access to a lift
- be able to travel with your electric wheelchair (most airlines will require electric wheelchairs to be checked in. Some will disconnect the battery and some may not carry them at all)

Airlines and airports are bound by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) to provide services for people with disability. Trained staff should be able to assist with: getting around the airport, handling baggage, getting on and off the plane, getting to and from the plane toilet (in the case of a semi-ambulant person), opening packages and identifying food on board the plane, and delivering safety briefings in a way that all passengers can understand.

Airline staff are generally not required to assist with eating, administering medication, using the toilet or lifting or carrying a passenger.

It is important to remember to declare your accessibility needs, especially if you are using a wheelchair at the time of booking, as some airlines have a limit of how many wheelchairs they can carry on any one flight.



STROKE RECOVERY
ASSOCIATION NSW

1300 650 594

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Travelling with a disability cont.

Destinations

Your travel destination is also an important factor to consider when travelling with disability. Many countries have poor infrastructure that makes getting around with a disability difficult. This may include poorly paved or cobblestone roads and footpaths, absence of ramps or elevators, minimal signposting, and lack of accessible toilets. Discrimination can also be an issue for those travelling with disability. In some destinations people with disabilities have little or no legal protection or rights. It is important to thoroughly research the destination you intend to travel to to see if it is suitable for you and your needs.



Insurance

Travel insurance is imperative when travelling with a disability. The Australian Government won't pay your medical bills, or other costs if things go wrong. It's your responsibility to have the appropriate insurances that covers any health conditions that may arise or that you are being treated for currently. You must declare your health conditions and existing disability to your insurer. Even if you don't think it will affect your travel. If you don't declare your disability, your insurer can deny any claim you make.

Resources and Services

ClubMates Travel is Australia's leading disability travel company. They offer both group and individual supported getaways domestically and internationally. Individual trips can be tailor made, whilst group holiday itineraries can be flexible to suit your unique needs. The ClubMates are also a registered NDIS provider with their trips aligning with specific NDIS goals such as social participation, skill development, and increasing independence.

The ClubMates 2025 brochure can be found here:

<https://clubmatestravel.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ClubMates-Travel-Brochure-2025.pdf>

You can contact ClubMates via telephone or email:

- Phone: 1300 158 003
- Email: info@clubmatestravel.com

Travel Without Limits is Australia's first and only disability specific travel magazine. The magazine is published bi-annually and contains features, interviews and reviews on all things accessible travel. Their website also offers an array of information, covering locations all across the globe. They offer information based on destination, your specific accessibility needs and type of holiday, as well as general tips and tricks and resources to plan your dream holiday. These resources as well as information about how to subscribe can be found here: <https://travelwithoutlimits.com.au>

Acknowledgements:

Baulch, E., Bird, J. (2014, November 5). *Travelling with a disability*. Choice. www.choice.com.au/travel/on-holidays/advice/articles/travelling-with-a-disability

Smartraveller. (2023, May 19). *Advice for travellers with a disability*. <https://www.smartraveller.gov.au/before-you-go/who-you-are/disability>

Travel Without Limits. (2025). <https://travelwithoutlimits.com.au/>

ClubMates Travel. (2025). <https://clubmatestravel.com/>

Mental Health Crisis

As you may be aware, a significant number of psychiatrists within the NSW public health system indicated their intention to resign from their positions from the week beginning 20 January 2025.

Although there may be changes to how services are delivered in some areas, dedicated and highly skilled mental health staff are there to care for you. There are plans in place to support you or your loved ones. The main priority is the health and safety of the community. If you are worried about how the resignations may affect your care or someone you support, you are encouraged to reach out to your care team or service provider. If you are a patient or consumer that feels as though things are getting worse for yourself or the person you are caring for, please ask to speak to the team leader or nursing unit manager about your concerns.

Note: *The above is a message from Sydney Local Health District. If you require information specific to your area please contact your Local Health District. Please also note that this is an ever changing and developing issue.*

It is important for anyone experiencing mental health distress or concerns at any time to reach out for help and care. Please don't delay – help is available if you need it. There are numerous support resources available.

- Lifeline - 13 11 14
- Lifeline Chat (text line) - 0477 131 114
- NSW Mental Health Line - 1800 011 511
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467
- Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636

A full list of mental health services and support contacts in NSW can be found here: <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/mentalhealth/services/Pages/support-contact-list.aspx> or at Head to Health for information on helplines, apps, digital programs and resources on 1800 595 212

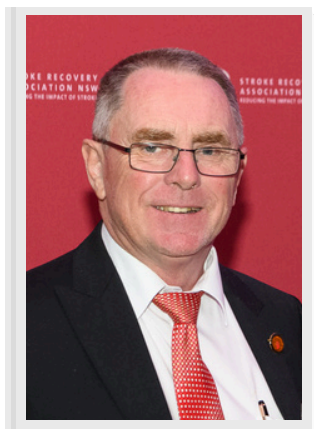
The Stroke Recovery Association's telephone counselling line is also available for anyone within our Stroke community. Call 1300 650 594 for assistance from the Association's staff. The free hotline operates from 9am-4pm most days but please note this is not an emergency service. If your call is not answered please leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as a counsellor is available (within 1 – 2 business days).

2024 Annual General Meeting

On Friday 1st November 2024 The Stroke Recovery held its Annual General Meeting at Woonona Bulli RSL. We would like to thank the RSL for their hospitality as well as the North Illawarra Stroke Recovery Club for their assistance in organising the day.

Congratulations to our 2025 Board! As there was not a fourth Stroke Survivor running, this position may be filled as a casual vacancy by the Board.

Stroke Survivors



John Garbutt



John Tass



Professor Shih-Chang
(Ming) Wang

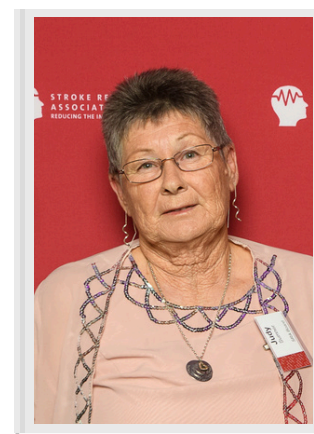
Non-Stroke Survivors



Karen Felton



Kylie Tastula



Judy Sumner

All changes to the constitution were passed - contact the association if you want an updated copy of the constitution or an outline of the changes made. Please note that your Club/Group/Choir coordinators and executive have received a digital copy of the updated constitution. Should you require a paper copy please contact the Association on 1300 650 594

Membership prices were not a motion at the AGM, and therefore will remain the same for the 2025/2026 membership period.

2024 Annual General Meeting

Judith Thornley

Judith's contributions to the Association have been innumerable. Judith and her husband Ray joined the Association in 2009 after Ray's Stroke and have since been involved with the Hornsby/Ku-ring-gai Stroke Recovery Club. Shortly after joining Judith became a club executive, serving up until 2024. Judith first became a member of the Stroke Recovery Association Board in 2015, serving as Vice President and Secretary in her final term. Judith was also a founding member of Aphasia NSW, serving as its president until it merged with the Stroke Recovery Association in 2019. As our dominoes aficionado Judith is also a member of the Hunter Stroke Olympics Committee. We would like to sincerely thank Judith for the incredible impact she has had on the Association and advocating for those with experience of Stroke. Judith's attention to detail and knowledge of policy and procedure has been integral to the running of the Association and she will be greatly missed on our Board.



Amy Jennings

We would also like to thank and farewell Amy Jennings. Serving on the Board this past year, Amy's representation of and advocacy for young Stroke and Aphasia has been pivotal for the Association. Amy with the support of the Association established the Port Macquarie Stroke Recovery Club in 2018, of which she remains president. Amy is highly involved with research studies related to Stroke and aphasia, and continues to support local Stroke survivors in their transition home from the medical system. Amy chose to not run again for a position on the Board. Thank you Amy.



Judy Sumner

We would like to welcome Judy Sumner back to the Association's Board. Judy became a member of the Association in 2004 after her husband Alan experienced a Stroke. Judy is the current President/Treasurer of the Tamworth Stroke Recovery Club and has previously sat on the Association's Board of Management. Welcome back Judy!



Life Membership - Alan Sumner

Alan first joined the Association in 2004 as a member of the Tamworth Stroke Recovery Club after experiencing his first Stroke that same year. Alan held the position of Junior President of the Club for 5 years.

A large part of Alan's legacy has been encouraging the Tamworth Stroke Recovery Club to attend all of the Association's events. From Olympics to conferences you'll seldom find a Stroke Recovery event without Alan present. His enthusiasm has encouraged other members of the Club to seek out new experiences and make the most of what the Association has to offer. Alan has also been able to broaden others' opportunities by introducing them to the Association's online groups. You'll also find Alan at every information table or raffle ticket stall hosted by the club.

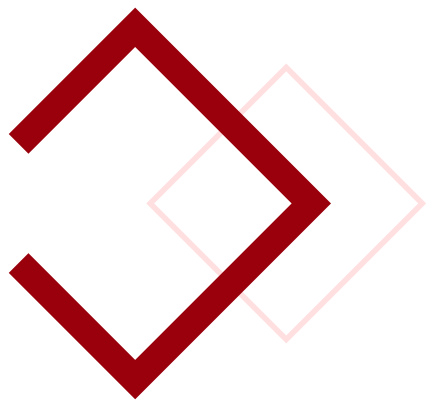


Alan is a crucial advocate for aphasia awareness. He has helped members of the Tamworth Club understand how to hear the voices of those with aphasia and how to engage everyone in decision making processes.

Alan has not only been a valuable member of the Stroke Recovery Association but an advocate for the broader Stroke and aphasia community. 20 years ago, Alan started a men's group with the assistance of his speech therapist. It is open to all men with aphasia and meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month in conjunction with a speech pathologist from Tamworth Hospital. Alan was also involved in the Tamworth Stroke Recovery Club's Sensory Garden donation to the Tamworth Base Hospital. Alan consistently attends each working bee for the garden.

Aside from his contribution to the Stroke Recovery Association, Alan is also a valued member of the Tamworth community. He is a member of West Tamworth Bowlo fishing club, Tamworth men's group, Men's shed, Southside men's Choir, and Tamworth pensioners group just to name a few. He also recently took part in an Art show in Tamworth entering items he made at men's shed.

We would like to thank Alan for his dedication and spirit through announcing him as the Association's newest life member. Thank you Alan!



PRESIDENTS REPORT

The past year saw a very strong growth in services for the Association.

In 2023/2024 Staff at the Association continue to achieve well in excess of what is expected. The Stroke Project Officer and Community Liaison Projects continued to progress over the year. With extra staff it meant we had more visits out to Clubs and the ability to provide a Stroke Education and advocacy focus as well.

Stroke Advocacy is a key focus of our work. The Association continues to reach out into the health and disability sectors to build partnerships with like-minded organisations who may have a broader reach within the sectors.

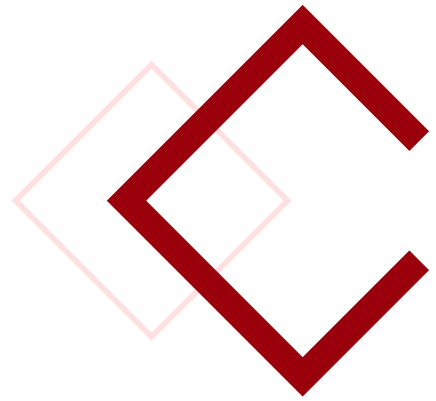
We are very ably represented at Health Consumers NSW, the primary consumer organisation consulted by NSW Health on matters impacting health in NSW, the George Institute for Global Health Consumer Research committee, the Ability Access Transport Committee (Transport NSW); NSW Health Agency for Clinical Innovation Stroke and Rehab Networks (NSW Health), NSW Disability Advocacy Network, and NSW Health Consumer Taskforce.

We were closely involved in the development of the NSW disability sectors response to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability and many other community consultations that have occurred throughout the year.

Clubs/groups and choirs are progressing exceedingly well with the support of the Community Liaison Officer position. Accessing funding and supporting the development of new and struggling clubs continues as a focus of this position over the 2022/2023 financial year with \$135,000 being raised from Club Grants over that period.



PRESIDENTS REPORT



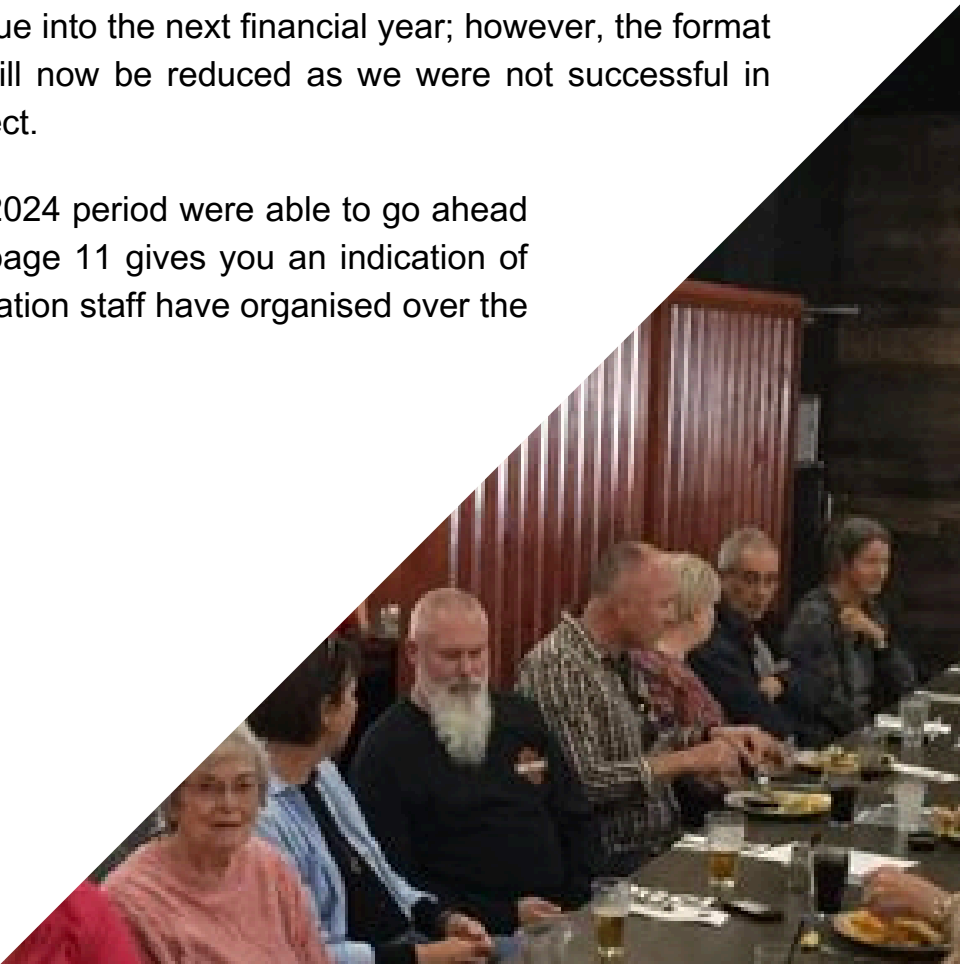
Monthly online governance training for Clubs/groups/choirs has continued. Both the Community Liaison Officer and Stroke Project Officer have found this to be an invaluable tool to educate members on the roles and responsibilities of running their respective groups. We have now completed the required criminal record checks for all executive and this process will be repeated for every new Club executive who takes up a role.

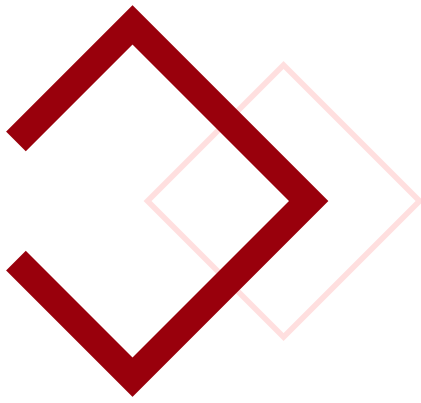
The Project Officer continued to travel around to all the Clubs/groups/choirs, educating members on issues to do with accessing technology. Accessibility to the Associations online resources, accessing personal essential services and E-Safety were key target areas. This is a major issue for our members.

Online groups play a vital support role for many of our members in rural and remote communities. The Association has worked with many of our partners in both the health and disability sectors to continue the Topical Thursday education Group.

The online support groups will continue into the next financial year; however, the format will be changed. This programme will now be reduced as we were not successful in receiving further funding for this project.

All the planned events for the 2023/2024 period were able to go ahead with great success. The outline on page 11 gives you an indication of the number of events that the Association staff have organised over the past year, twelve (12) in total.





PRESIDENTS REPORT

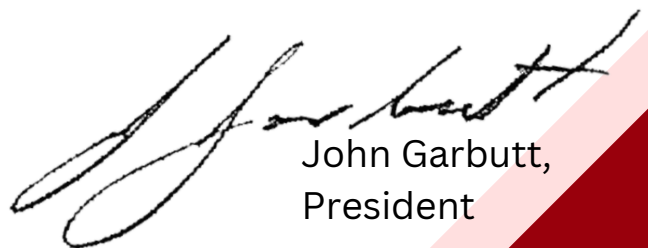

The Creating Connections Stroke Conference September 2023 was again run as a hybrid, face to face and live streamed event. The conference was attended by eighty (80) people face to face and over one hundred and forty-five (145) online. The Building Capacity Conference, May 2024 reverted to the larger format of bringing clubs/group and choirs executives together for training in Sydney over a two-day period.

The Associations Social Media presence has increased considerably. Sharing information through Facebook and Instagram has become a vital form of communication.

This report contains a summary of statistics on the services and events organised by the Association and as you can see, we are meeting all Key Performance Indicators set by the funding bodies and the board at the Strategic Planning meeting. We are a small organisation that continues to punch above our weight in all areas.

The Board has managed the organisation to be in a stronger and more cohesive position than ever before. I applaud my fellow Board members for all they have contributed to and supported the work of the Association over the past twelve months. I commend the work of our very committed and diligent staff. We have been a great team.

The long and the short of it is, the Association is well run, and your voice grows stronger at all levels of decision making that matter in NSW. I look forward to working with you all going forward to continue to build on and develop the programmes of the Association in the 2024/2025 period.



John Garbutt,
President



TREASURERS REPORT

The financial overview on the following pages gives you a compact picture of how monies have been received and expended over the past year and a comparison with the previous financial year.

The income and expenditure report indicate that there has been a decrease of just over \$150,000 in monies received from funding bodies and interest received on our investments. However the monies for the Stroke Project Officer Grant was prepaid in the 2022/2023 financial year which can explain that shortfall. The Association received substantially less in bequests over the past financial year.

The Board has reinvested the considerable reserves in February 2023, and the increase return from interest payments is reflected in the 2023/2024 period. The overall annual expenditure in 2023/2024 has again increased due to higher staffing levels.

Staff continue to work diligently to source alternative funding, and this has resulted in the extension of the grants received from NSW Health and NSW Department of Communities and Justice for the 2024/2026 period. This means more stability and security for both the Association financially and staff.

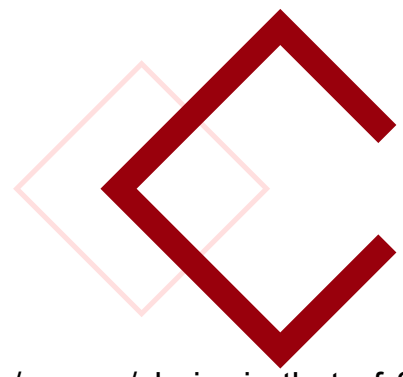
We have unfortunately not been able to secure further funding for the Stroke Project Officer Position and the contract was finalised as of 30 June 2024. The Association will continue to receive funding of approximately \$360,000 for the 2024/2025 period.

This is being utilised to retain the staffing at its current level and provide support services to members, particularly those who attend the Stroke Recovery Clubs/groups/choirs.

Staff have again been successful in working with Clubs/groups/choirs to source monies from the various Grant programmes. In the past financial year, the Community Liaison Officer has successfully acquired approximately \$135,000 for the ongoing use of Clubs/groups/choirs for the benefit of members.



TREASURERS REPORT



The expenses amount noted in the auditor's report for Clubs/groups/choirs is that of \$123,035, considerably higher than the previous financial year of \$107,998 indicating that they are fully operational again. These figures continue to be incorporated into our audited statement, as required by the Australian Not-for Profit and Charities Commission.

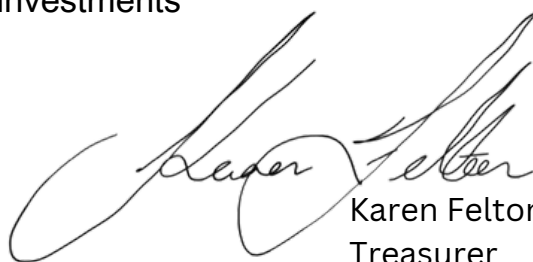
It is imperative that the Board monitors the spending of monies diligently to ensure that our legal obligations are fulfilled. I have included on page 24 an overview of the compliance requirements that we have fulfilled over the past 12 months to ensure you are fully informed of the extent of what is involved for your staff and Board.

With more funding there are more reports to write and very stringent financials acquittals to complete, all of which add more to the workload of staff. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the extra work undertaken by the financial manager, Cheryl Smith, and the treasurers of the Clubs and choirs.

It is vital that we maintain our status as a charity and strictly comply with all processes of the Australian Not-for Profit and Charities Commission. Financial diligence remains a primary concern of the Board. A full financial overview of the Association is reviewed monthly.

The staff and Board express our appreciation for the outstanding work of our honorary auditor Vishal Modi from Nexia. A copy of the independent Auditor's Report is included on page 25 of this report. As we move into the 2024/2025 financial year, we are in a very strong and viable financial position with a total equity of \$1,216,475, a decrease of \$224,060 (15%) on last year's position. Our retained revenue will be managed carefully to enable the Association to continue to grow and move forward. Some of this cash reserve has been used to employ administrative support for the Association's office. This is an expense we will continue to incur in future years.

At the conclusion of the 2023/2024 financial year, the Association is in a very sound financial position. The monies we have in reserve are being carefully managed by the Board and staff to ensure the most effective return on investments

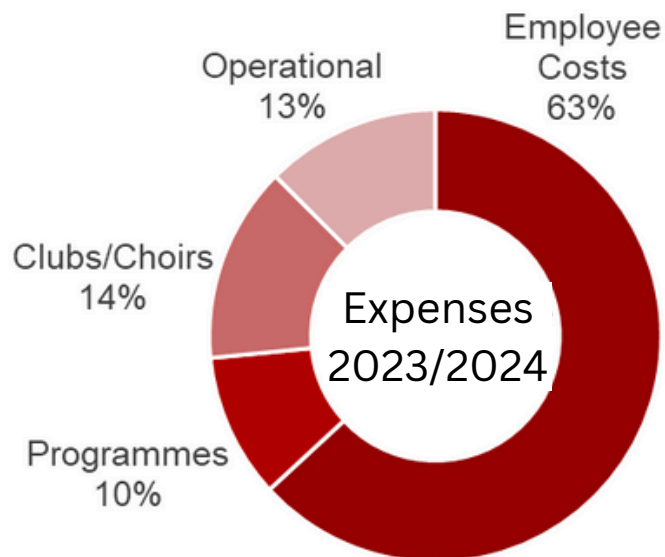
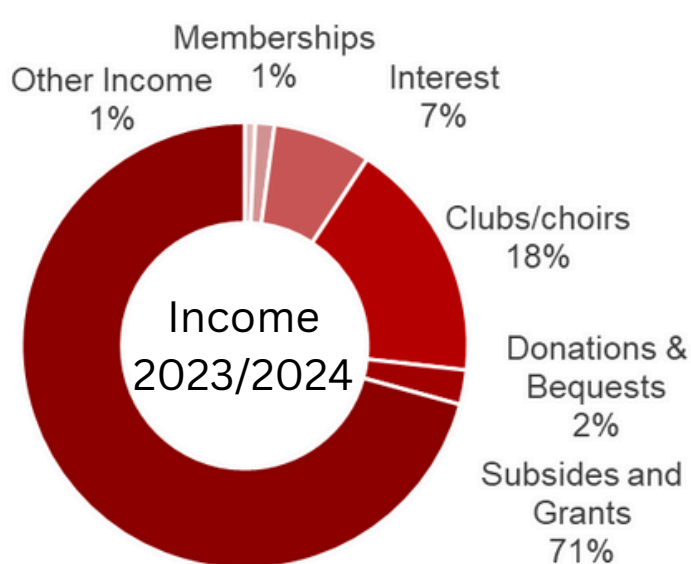


Karen Felton,
Treasurer



FINANCIAL POSITION

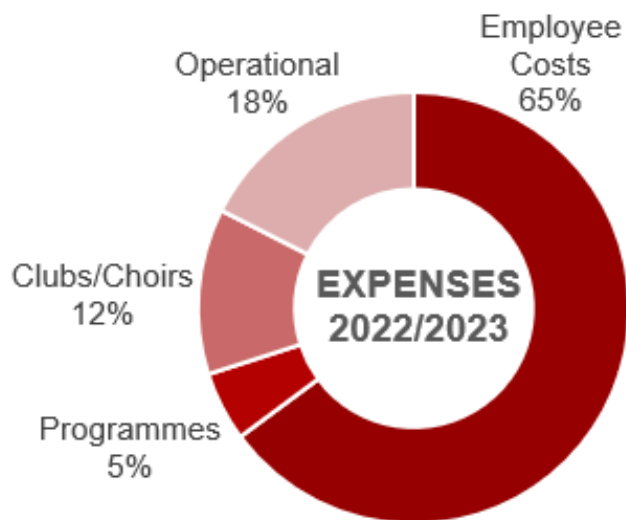
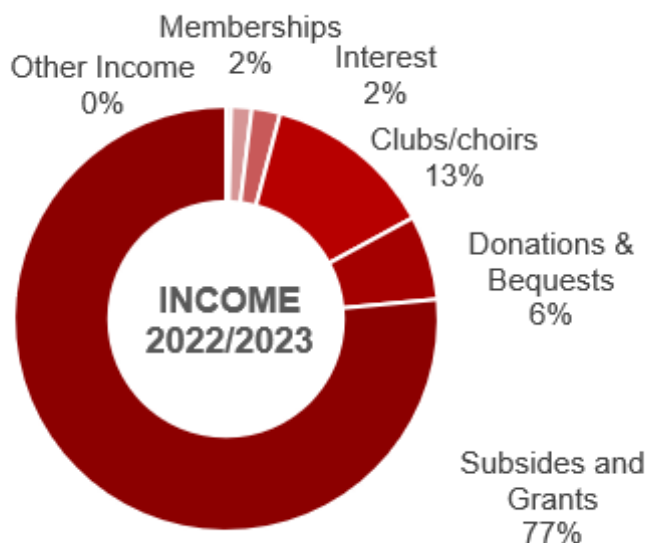
This financial year - 2023 / 2024



Net position 2023/2024

- \$ 224,060

Last financial year - 2022 / 2023



Net position 2022/2023

- \$ 100,417

In Memorium - Ray Thornley

It is with deep sorrow and a very heavy heart that I advise you of the passing of the long-time member of Hornsby Ku-Ring-Gai Stroke Recovery Club and Association Life Member Mr Ray Thornley.

Ray passed away from a massive heart attack in Hornsby Hospital on Friday January 24, surrounded by his loving family.

There are no superlatives that I can find to adequately describe this lovely man. He was a devoted family man and one of the truly old school gentlemen that lived a life of service to his community. One of those truly rare individuals who was always giving back.



Ray along with Judith was a founding member of Aphasia NSW and although his communication complications impacted his life, it did not stop him working to improve the quality of life for those with whom he shared this condition.

Ray was universally loved and respected by all whose lives he touched within the Association whether that be as a stalwart of the Hornsby Stroke Club, a member of Aphasia NSW, an organising committee member of the Hunter Stroke Olympics or as a member who attended every event, AGM and picnic which the Association organised. Ray had not been well for the past few years and had not been able to attend our events, and his presence was very much missed.

Ray and Judith's devotion to each other after more than six decades of marriage was legendary.

He was a genuinely loyal, dedicated and resilient man who had the capacity to rise to any challenge life threw at him. Ray will be missed by many but none more than his loving family.

I know Ray had many, many friends in our Stroke community, who like all of us here at the Association will feel his passing deeply.

Rest in Peace, the sublime Ray Thornley, a great gentleman. An inspiration to many, and whose legacy with the Association will live on particularly in the Aphasia Community of which he was a pioneer, actively advocating for services before many were aware of the extent of the need in the aphasia community.

Our sincere condolences go out to Judith and Rays' children. We know they will miss him dreadfully.

Membership Renewal

If you have not yet paid your membership for the 2024/25 year (due 31st August 2024) under the Privacy Act 2001, we can no longer keep your personal details on our database. We are therefore will be unable to continue to send you any publications or information unless you are a current financial member of the Association.

If you attend one of our Stroke Recovery Clubs/groups/choirs and are not a current financial member, please note that you are not covered by our insurances and may be asked to leave the Club/group/choir meeting. If you are unsure if you have paid your membership, please contact us on 1300 650 594.

A membership form and letter has been included with this issue for you in the event you have not paid your membership OR if you have paid for 2024/25 but need to update your details for the Association.

Membership payments may be made in the following ways:

- Scan the QR code below;
- Pay online via our website: <https://strokensw.org.au/home/become-a-member/>;
- Pay via your treasurer/coordinator if you are a member of a Stroke Recovery Club/group/choir;
- Complete and return the membership form attached to the Association by mail to: PO Box 3401, Putney NSW 2112, or email to: admin@strokensw.org.au; or
- Pay over the phone by calling 1300 650 594.



Research Opportunities

Discourse, Interaction, Support and Communication Outcomes in Virtual Reality for People with Post-Stroke Aphasia (DISCOVER Aphasia)



The project is looking to understand how people with post-Stroke aphasia interact with, and feel about, virtual reality technology. The research will involve people with Aphasia trying some games and a video in virtual reality, then answer some questions about it. People will need to travel to UTS for this, and they will be reimbursed \$50 for travel costs. This does mean that people will need to be in Sydney to be involved.

The involvement for each participant is 2.5 hours. That time is made up of:

1. A 20-minute Zoom or phone call - before the participant comes to the University for the VR session.
2. A 30-minute aphasia assessment. If the participant has already had an aphasia assessment in the last 6-months and can provide a report, they can skip this step
3. A 1.5-hour virtual reality session. During this session, the participant will play 4 short virtual reality games of about 10 minutes each. After each game, The Researcher will ask some questions about the VR technology. This will help them to understand what people with aphasia do and do not like about the technology.

For more information please contact **Dr Lucy Bryant** Graduate School of Health UTS **02 9514 7189**

Events



2025 EVENTS

26 JUNE THURSDAY	SYDNEY STROKE OLYMPICS Club Burwood RSL	
2 AUGUST SATURDAY	COMBINED CLUBS MORNING TEA Diggers The Entrance	
STROKE AWARENESS WEEK NSW SUN 7 - SAT 13 SEPTEMBER		
12 SEPTEMBER FRIDAY	CREATING CONNECTIONS STROKE CONFERENCE Club Burwood RSL	
14 OCTOBER TUESDAY	HUNTER STROKE OLYMPICS Raymond Terrace Bowling Club	
7 NOVEMBER FRIDAY	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Club Burwood RSL	
14 NOVEMBER FRIDAY	COMBINED CLUBS PICNIC Wentworth Commons, Homebush	



STROKE RECOVERY ASSOCIATION NSW

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www.strokensw.org.au



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Did you know that you can receive your newsletter by email? By switching your preference to email, you can access our newsletters instantly from your computer, tablet, or smartphone. By switching to email, you're assisting in reducing our environmental impact and our costs associated with producing these publications. If you would like to change your mailing preference, please contact the Association on 1300 650 594 or by email to: admin@strokensw.org.au

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

The passing of a family member, friend or loved one is a very sad and stressful time. Sometimes, symbolic gestures and actions provide great comfort to those who are grieving.

It is with gratitude that the Stroke Recovery Association receives donations in memoriam. These donations, which assist us to continue our valuable work, are a wonderful remembrance of the person who has passed away. All donations received by the Association are tax deductible and can be forwarded to our postal address above. Acknowledgement will be sent to the family of the deceased.

The Association is happy to provide memorial donation pamphlets, which can be made available at a funeral service, with pre-paid addressed envelopes. Thank you for your support.

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Karen Felton

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John Tass
Kylie Tastula
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Community Liaison Officer:
Lani Cutuli

Events Officer:
Aurora Carter

Financial Manager:
Cheryl Smith

Information & Administration Officer:
Alex Wells