



Past Chairman of The Rotary Foundation Bob Scott joins Rotary and Scout volunteers vaccinating children on a National Immunisation Day in India.

Taking the polio message to the public

By Bob Aitken

February next looms as a major celebration month for Rotarians “down under” as clubs and Districts prepare to take the *End Polio Now* campaign to the public.

PDG Rob Crabtree, Area Coordinator of the RI Public Image Resource Group, announced recently that a special meeting of the Committee in Evanston, USA, last May endorsed the concept of major *End Polio Now* celebrations in February, 2010, – to coincide with Rotary’s birthday on February 23.

Many special events are already being planned to highlight Rotary’s final push towards total eradication of the polio virus.

PDG Rob, and Rotarian Felicity Anderson and PDG Dick Garner (Zone coordinators for the respective Public Image Resource Groups in New Zealand and Australia respectively) are keen to

give Rotary a presence and impact in the community like never before.

In New Zealand, Rob and Felicity have been part of a successful national Rotary Public Relations group for several years but, across the ditch, Australian Rotary has struggled to establish a similar, single national public relations body – and goals – with most Districts preferring to do their own thing to cater for specific regional needs.

The combined contributions from New Zealand Rotary Districts to a single public relations promotion fund has seen establishment of a national telephone number and production of excellent promotional resources from television/movie theatre messages to generic “people like you and me” posters and flyers.

The *End Polio Now* campaign coupled with the Gates Challenge seems likely to

provide the impetus to achieve a form of national unity in Australia.

A number of Australian Districts have combined resources to apply for RI Public Relations grants – with a view to funding a national telephone answering service for Rotary – and bulk supplies of generic Rotary promotional posters and flyers.

However, Dick Garner and his team have now developed a master plan to capture the attention of primary school children and families right around Australia during February next year.

Objectives of the plan are to–

- Create a national awareness and fund raiser for *End Polio Now*, including a range of promotional ideas which all Rotarians and clubs may access to promote the cause.
- Provide a National Program in which all Rotary clubs and Districts can participate.



- Organise the program centrally to minimise the work that individual Clubs need to undertake.
- Provide a new donation income stream that is outside our normal Rotary fund raising boundaries.
- Raise \$200K to \$500K for the Gates Challenge and 'End Polio Now'.

PDG Dick's plan focuses on the 6,000 primary schools in Australia with a combined roll of 1,900,000 students, and the fact that primary schools often have special days to support worthwhile causes. The plan depends on Rotary clubs and Districts convincing primary schools that the *End Polio Now* campaign is a worthwhile special cause – and for all schools to conduct a promotional *End Polio Now* day for students on February 23, 2010.

The aim is to create a five to six minute television newscast for primary school students – to explain the deadly impact of polio and to promote the vital nature of Rotary's *End Polio Now* campaign. The special newscast will feature two primary school students as the 'anchor newsreaders' and cover a series of information 'spots' on Rotary and Polio.

Our junior newscasters will emphasise that the *End Polio Now* campaign is the big opportunity for the world to be rid of the deadly polio virus forever.

Primary school children will be invited to help sponsor the campaign by making a gold coin donation and will be rewarded with a small adhesive *End Polio Now* spot on their fingernail. The original concept of "painting a pinkie" contravenes school requirements in some states.

The promotional *End Polio Now* Newscast will be distributed to all 6,000 schools via DVD. Rotary clubs will be invited to liaise with Primary School principals to ensure they are aware of the delivery of the pending resource – and to assist with the organisation of a special information day, assembly, walkathon or whatever event is compatible with the various schools.

Dick Garner and his Public Image Committee have done their homework and estimate that the cost of the high profile exercise will be in the area of \$25k – including DVD production, manufacture, mailing and web site support. The committee will be looking for financial support from Rotary clubs around Australia in the near future.

Further promotional plans include opportunities with national television breakfast programs, especially the opportunity for weather presenters to broadcast from various school playgrounds. You Tube and all the modern social media techniques will be brought into play in every way possible.

All donations received will go towards booster *End Polio Now* targets in the applicable Districts and Rotary clubs.

Whilst Primary schools are the main thrust of the campaign, high schools will certainly not be ignored where interest is evident. Interact clubs in all schools are certain to be involved.

The word spreads

From RI Past Director Ken Collins in Perth, WA, comes the news that acceptance of special celebrations to mark *End Polio Now* and Rotary Week in Perth next February is already obvious.

Ken is one of six RI Past Directors in Australia who have been working on plans for special *End Polio Now* fund raising celebrations next February.





Left: Mobile billboards are a little different in Pakistan! This one spreads the word about the *End Polio Now* message near Karachi.

Below: Rotary volunteers at work in Pakistan.



He reports recent visits to principals of five schools (three state schools and two colleges) in his area to explain the concept of Rotary Day/Week and each principal agreed immediately to the “Paint Your Pinkie” fund raiser to be carried out in their school.

All Rotary clubs around Australia – and New Zealand – are urged to arrange meetings with schools in their respective areas NOW.

The concept and requirements are very simple –

1. Meeting between Rotary club and school officials.
2. Agreement on type of *End Polio Now* activity, ie: walkathon, “paint your pinkie”, and children to make voluntary gold coin donation to the cause.
3. Rotarians to assist with the painting of finger nails (where allowed) or provision of colour finger nail adhesive stickers as a substitute.
4. News on the special “*End Polio Now* Newscast” by junior news readers will be shared – as soon as details are finalised.

Celebrations, fundraising

RI Past Directors Brian Knowles, John Carrick, Barry Thompson, Ken Collins,

John Thorne and Ian Riseley are actively promoting Rotary Week and Rotary Day – February 2010 – throughout every District in Australia.

Following a recent meeting in Sydney, NSW (*Rotary Down Under*, July 2009), the Past Directors made a united call for a national *End Polio Now* fundraiser in Rotary’s birthday (February 23) week in 2010.

They also agreed to present a united call for support from all then Governors Elect, who are now of course incumbent District Governors.

Chairman of the group, Brian Knowles, is liaising with staff of The Rotary Foundation at RI World Headquarters in Evanston, USA, to arrange provision of special *End Polio Now* posters, flyers and other promotional material for distribution at collection booths in shopping centres and other public venues like railway stations and airports.

They agreed to support the initiatives of RI Public Image Resource Group – especially in regard to celebration of Rotary Week/Day in February, 2010 - and believe that Dick Garner’s primary schools plan is the perfect “cornerstone” for a successful community fund raising promotion.

However, the group also support the concept of Rotary clubs planning their own individual *End Polio Now* celebrations to suit the culture and environment of their special districts.

Free community breakfasts or barbecue lunches in the main streets of towns and villages, special community and vocational awards nights, major youth events, art competitions, *End Polio Now* light shows on major buildings and landmarks are all suitable projects to place Rotary and the eradication of Polio to the attention of the public.

The RI Public Image Resource Group has produced an impressive list of “100 ways to celebrate Rotary Day/Week”. Rotary clubs and Districts may obtain a copy of the list by contacting PDG Dick Garner on 0425 803 137.

The list is also available on the *Rotary Down Under* website – www.rotarydownunder.com.au

Bob Aitken is the Managing Editor of *Rotary Down Under* and a member of the Rotary Club of Lower Blue Mountains, NSW. He is a Past Governor of District 9690 and immediate past General Coordinator of the RI Public Image Resource Group. ■

Polio program progress

By Jenny Horton

Rotary Club of Kenmore, Qld

SToP program Volunteer

(Stop the Transmission of Polio)

Great progress has been made since the beginnings of The Polio Eradication Initiative.

From 1988 with an estimated 350,000 polio cases a year in 125 countries to a total of 1651 cases in 2008 and only four countries that have never interrupted virus circulation. This is a 99 per cent reduction in the number of cases with over five million disabilities being prevented. As we strive to reach the goal of a polio-free world we must never forget how far we have come both in the reduction of cases and the development of a strong infrastructure in many countries that is already being utilised to combat other diseases.

We know that there are three strains of Wild Polio Virus (WPV) types 1, 2, and 3. Of these type 2 wild virus has not been seen in the world since 1999 and is considered eradicated. It is type 1 (the most virulent type) that is targeted next for eradication with type 3 as a second focus.

Previously there was widespread use of trivalent Oral Polio Vaccine (OPV) or OPV

containing all three strains of weakened polio virus but now the focus is to target the particular strain of virus that is problematic in a given area, so the use of monovalent OPV has been integrated into the planning (monovalent meaning the vaccine contains just one strain of attenuated polio virus). Monovalent vaccine is shown to nearly triple the effect of one dose of vaccine due to a higher seroconversion rate.

In 2009 (to August 25) there is polio virus in 20 countries. Outside of the four endemic countries 16 have had reintroduction of virus. India has shared virus with Angola, while Nigeria has shared virus across northern Africa with persistent outbreaks in Sudan and Chad. This is understood better when one visits these countries and sees the mobility of the populations and the often very low routine immunisation rates.

Current situation

India: There is highly focal but persistent type 1 virus in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

- A Kosi River Taskforce is focusing on the stronghold of type 1 virus in the Kosi River Basin with support from World Health Organisation medical officers from the low risk areas.

- Indian government has set aside \$US240 million in its budget for polio eradication.
- Bill Gates met the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare and the Union Secretary of Health as well as the Director of the Indian Council of Medical Research and has also video conferenced with the Chief Minister of Bihar to pay tribute to the work done in Kosi River Basin.

Pakistan and Afghanistan: Highly focal transmission in Pakistan – North West Frontier Province and Karachi and southern Afghanistan.

- Polio virus reservoirs reflect a combination of operational and security problems,
- Several areas of NWFP, Federally Administered Tribal Areas and Hilmand and Kandahar are inaccessible due to insecurity however “Days of Tranquility” are being negotiated and every opportunity to vaccinate children is taken.
- The Minister for Health is actively involved in the Inter Provincial Committee on Polio and chaired the last meeting in Karachi.
- PolioPlus Chair Bob Scott presented the Pakistan President, Asif Ali Zardari, with “Polio Champion Award” in recognition of his support for polio eradication.
- Pakistan government set up a highly successful “Polio Control Room Cell” during campaigns from which live TV coverage was maintained with 11 TV and radio channels answering questions from the general public and dealing with reports of non-arrival of teams in the house-to-house campaign.

Nigeria (northern states): low level type 1 spread but having a type 3 outbreak and also type 2 cases of circulating Vaccine Derived Polio Virus (cVDPV).

The middle belt and southern states: persistent type 1 outbreaks and sporadic importations of type 3 WPV and type 2 cVDPV.

- Increased government participation with active support from governors, National

Jenny Horton administers vaccine in Pakistan.





A pinky is painted purple to indicate that this child has been vaccinated.

- Synchronised OPV response to virus is being carried out.
- Horn of Africa Coordination Committee is addressing necessary steps to tackle operational gaps.
- Increased training of team leaders in micro planning and house-to-house activities.

West Africa: virus in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Niger and Togo (mostly type 1 with type 3 in Guinea and Niger)

- Synchronised OPV response to virus is being carried out with a multi-country approach

Central Africa: virus in Angola (type 1), DR Congo and Central African Republic (type 3).

Chad: type 3 cases mostly in n’Djamena

- Ongoing immunisation activities are being carried out in these areas.

Finance: 1988-2010 Polio Eradication has become a \$US7.13 billion program.

- Rotary International has already donated over \$US800 million.
- There remains a funding gap for 2009-2010 of \$US345 million.

New Actions in 2009

- Independent evaluation of major barriers in endemic countries.
- Clinical trials and licensing of bivalent OPV (types 1 & 3 combined).
- Finalisation of a new multi-year strategic plan.
- Ongoing personal visits to endemic areas by spearheading partnership heads and Bill Gates to support and encourage leaders.
- OIC Secretary General Professor Ihsanoglu has written to the Presidents of Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan thanking them for their commitment to polio eradication.
- President Obama announced support for polio eradication at the OIC.
- WHO announced that “ Travellers who are resident in a polio infected country should have a full course of OPV before leaving to reduce risk of international spread”. ■

Total cases Wild Polio virus	2008	Jan1-Aug25 2008	Jan1-Aug25 2009
Globally	1651	1088	884
Pakistan	117	37	42
India	559	372	236
Afghanistan	31	15	17
Nigeria	798	597	368
No of Countries with the virus	18	14	20

Primary Health Care Authority, Emirs, traditional leaders, religious leaders and Chairman LGAs.

- Visit of UNICEF Executive Director Ms Ann Veneman meeting the Vice President, various Sultans, Emirs and relevant ministries in support of polio eradication.
 - Public sacking of a focal point and team which did not perform.
 - Zero dose children in the northern states fell below 10 per cent for the first time, which is a great improvement.
 - Reports show improved quality campaigns with increasing high level involvement.
- Horn of Africa:** persistent type 1 outbreak in Sudan which has spread to Kenya and Uganda.