



PLUS
Neuro Wellbeing

ACT Newsletter
February 2024

Our Values - Empowerment, Community, Expertise, Creativity and Spirited

THE MS WALK RUN + ROLL IS BACK IN 2024!



Join us this May 2024 for the must do charity event on the cardio calendar, the 2024 MS Walk Run + Roll!

MS Walk, Run and Roll has been designed so everyone can get involved, whether you're moving on your feet, using a wheelchair, or pushing a pram. Come join us and celebrate the resilience and diversity of our amazing MS community.

Registrations open on **Tuesday 6 February 2024.**

Register your interest for the 2024 MS Walk Run + Roll to gain access to **EXCLUSIVE PRE SALE** entry.

Walk Run + Roll your way to ensure no one has to face MS alone.

FIND OUT MORE>> www.mswalk.org.au

Happenings at Gloria McKerrow House

Tabletop Games

The group has been successfully running for more than a year — No prior knowledge required!

When: Saturday 9th March 2024, every 2nd Saturday of the month

Where: Gloria McKerrow House, 117 Denison Street, Deakin

Time: 1:30 —4:00pm, you can come and go at your leisure

Children, partners and carers are also welcome — hope to see you in 2024!



Come for a cuppa & chat - and/or learn a new game!

Annemarie Watson: transforming adversity into hope



Annemarie Watson didn't have the easiest life. Her once-happy childhood was scarred by World War II. Her first marriage ended sadly when her husband died of complications from multiple sclerosis (MS). These events would shape her personality and her desire to help other people in the future.

An only child, Annemarie grew up in a loving home in Sydney with her parents, Hans and Annele Eckardt. The Eckardts were from well-off families in Germany and had met in Australia. Hans was a successful wool buyer, and his daughter wanted for nothing.

But Annemarie's childhood was disrupted in 1939, when she was seven years old. Hans, along with other German nationals, was interned during the war. Wartime austerity and Hans's absence made life difficult for Annemarie and her mother. When Hans returned after six long years, he was a changed man. Annemarie was also affected. She had become resilient but also cautious.

"Those wartime experiences made her careful with money. This lasted all her life," recalled her cousin, Annele Schoeffel.

Educated at the Redlands school, Annemarie made life-long friends. She later trained as a stenographer. In the 1950s, she met Dr Keith Watson, a radiologist, and they found common ground as only children. They married and settled in Mossman but also travelled and lived overseas.



But they soon faced challenges when Keith discovered he had MS. It was the slow-progressing kind, so he was able to practice medicine and enjoy life for many years. **But by his late 60s, he was in a wheelchair.**



As Keith's health declined, Annemarie became his carer so he wouldn't have to go into a nursing home. She provided unwavering support throughout the various stages of Keith's illness. **He died aged 69, 40 years after his initial diagnosis.**

"She was devoted to him," said Annele. The couple didn't have children, so they decided to leave their respective estates to charities. Annemarie's frugality disappeared as she and Keith decided to generously support the MS cause. **"They wanted their respective estates to benefit MS Plus and local hospitals," explained Roger Blackwood, Annemarie's accountant.**

Annemarie found happiness in a second marriage, extensive travels and a busy social life. On her 90th birthday, she enjoyed a glass of champagne with Roger and Annele, her carer in her twilight years. Sadly, Annemarie died only a few weeks later. In her Will, she stipulated that most of her estate should go to MS Plus. This reflected her wish to transform Keith's experiences with MS into help for others with the condition.

"Annemarie didn't want others to suffer as Keith had. She knew her gift could help to accelerate MS research and bring us closer to finding a cure." said Annele.

Annemarie's incredible gift to MS Plus will help to improve the lives of people in the MS community. **Her resilience in the face of life-changing events and generosity at the end of her life is a shining example to others. Her generosity is also a testament to the difference people can make.**

For more than 60 years, MS Plus has been a leader in the battle against MS. Gifts in Wills from generous supporters have been vital to our efforts. Whether you choose to help those with MS access services or support research, know that your gift will be appreciated.

Contact the MS Plus Future Planning team on 1800443 867 to learn more. You can also email futureplanning@msplus.org.au, or visit www.mymslegacy.org.au

what's on

Exploring the latest programs and updates from client engagement and wellbeing



Keep an eye out in February for our webinar on progression and MS, available for registration soon! In this webinar, we will be talking to Associate Professor Anneke VanderWalt and Professor Helmut Butzkueven about the changing understanding of MS progression and the impact of Progressions Independent of Relapses (PIRA).

Upcoming MS Plus Webinars

Be Emergency Prepared!

The onset of summer in Australia means most of us give thought to some emergency planning. The climate has already challenged us in January with floods, fires, and winds, making us very aware of the need to be prepared to be in control.

To help you think about all the extra things you need to be prepared to manage an emergency and living with MS, in December we brought together experts from the Red Cross, Country Fire Authority, and specialist MS researchers who put together top tips and useful information that will assist you in creating a plan that will make sure you have as many bases covered as possible.

Here's a sample of top tips for thinking about your medications:

- Keep a list of all the medications you are on, including name, dose, reason for medication and prescribing doctor.
- Talk through your plan with your pharmacist for their recommendations.
- If you need to keep medications refrigerated, think of storage solutions if there is no power.
- Ask your medical team to be specific and detailed about what would happen if you cannot access your medication. Include questions like how long you can be without medications and what are medication options.
- If you need regular infusions, ask about options for timing and alternative locations.
- You may be eligible for scripts that will provide longer term, say six months' supply, check with your pharmacist what the options are.
- Share your plan with your GP so they have an updated record of your medications.

Watch this webinar to learn from the experts and be as prepared as you can via the [Resource Hub](#).

Information for people supporting someone with MS

Are you a close friend or family member of someone who has recently been diagnosed with MS and want to learn more about how you can support them?

The *Plus Navigate: Friends & Family* program is for people who support someone with MS.

Over two 75-minute sessions, an MS expert will guide discussions, provide information, links to resources and answer any of your questions.

We'll cover a range of topics including:

- * understanding MS
- * navigating the health system
- * getting the information and help you need
- * Your emotional wellbeing

Register now

Carers, Family & Friends

The MS Plus Carers Family & Friends [toolkit](#) is a comprehensive resource specifically for people who support someone with MS. We are regularly updating the tool so keep an eye out of new information.

Peer Support

We have two Peer Support Groups available in ACT who welcome new members any time. If you're interested in joining a group, contact Plus Connect on 1800 042 138.

People with MS Group

Meets: 12.30 to 2.00pm Last Friday of each month (exc Dec)

Venue: Gloria McKerrow House, Deakin

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Peer Support

ACT Weekend MS Peer Support Group

Meets: 2:00pm on third Saturday of each month **Venue:** ACT Café, Canberra

Peer Links: The MS Peer Links sessions are now available for registration. Keep an eye on your email or InTouch for dates!

Peer Links are held online and are short-term programs facilitated by our peer support coordinators.

Taking place over 4-6 week 90-minute sessions, guest speakers share information on topics to prompt discussion and learning for the group.

MS Plus ACCVS Volunteer Visitors

Do you know an older person in aged care or who has a home care package who could use some company?

Do you want to make meaningful connections and experience the joy and wisdom that can come from friendship with older people? Or do you know an older person who needs some company?

MS Plus are proud providers of the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme. The ACCVS is a national program where we coordinate volunteer community visitors (18+) from all backgrounds to visit older people at risk of social isolation and provide them with friendship and companionship.

If you know of someone who may benefit from the program, please contact our ACT program coordinator at ACCVSAdmin@msplus.org.au

People with MS (PwMS) Taking Control Group

Our group seeks to facilitate connections, and to share information and companionship among people living with MS in the Canberra region, with a focus on living well with MS. We host regular meetings twice a month. We meet every month on the second and last Friday at 12.30pm, for around an hour or so. The meeting on the second Friday is currently via Zoom. This is a good opportunity to chat and catch up with each other without leaving our homes and for people from outside Canberra to join us. On the last Friday of the month we meet face to face at Gloria McKerrow House in Deakin.

February meetings:

- Friday 9 February, 12.30, Zoom only
- Friday 23 February, 12.30, Gloria McKerrow House, 117 Denison Street, Deakin

If you would like to be on the email list to: receive reminders of monthly meetings, including Zoom/Microsoft Teams links; be notified about presentations by expert speakers; and share news, information and feedback with us, please email Mary Webb and Vanessa Fanning at pwmstcg@gmail.com to join our mailing list. Alternatively look for our page on Facebook: Canberra Region MSers.

We know that many people with MS do not necessarily wish to disclose their diagnosis, hence the names and email addresses of people who subscribe to our main mailing list are strictly confidential and are not visible to any other recipients. In line with privacy principles, you can unsubscribe at any time.

Mindfulness Meditation Group

A group of people with MS meets weekly via Zoom for mindfulness meditation practice. Our sessions are scheduled every Friday at 3:30pm and run for about an hour. We usually do one or two guided meditations. But it's also an opportunity to just chat and catch up. It's all very informal. If you're interested in mindfulness meditation and would like to join us, please email vanessa.fanning@gmail.com

