

'GOD GIVES YOU A PATH... IT'S A JOURNEY'



Battler: Loye Achilles refuses to let her illness take over her life. **Inset:** In days when life was better. **Picture:** JAKE NOWAKOWSKI

Illness can't kill passion for ballet



IT would appear Loye Achilles's weakness can be found not in her heel, rather in the pituitary gland.

The 58-year-old former ballet teacher from Earlvile is one of dozens of people across Queensland suffering from a tumour at the front of her brain, affecting the control of growth hormones throughout her body.

As a result, several of her limbs have grown abnormally large in comparison to the rest of her body.

Loye's feet have grown from a size 7.5 to 10.5 in the space of a decade, affecting the way she walks.

Her lower jaw has grown larger, to the point Loye required surgery

Daniel Bateman
batemand@tcp.news1td.com.au

to help her eat properly. And her hands have increased in size with her thumbs being push out at severe 45 degree angles.

"I started to think the children's waists were getting tiny, when I went to correct their ballet stance," Loye said.

"In reality, it was my hands that were growing bigger."

Ms Achilles had been teaching in Papua New Guinea in 1998 when she first noticed her feet growing and a cyst developing behind her knee.

The problem was initially believed to be because of swelling from the tropical climate.

She was later diagnosed with a pituitary tumour and has since then required three operations on her jaw and a double knee replacement.

Loye is yet to find out whether she needs surgery for her feet and hands.

"It's like I've grown into another body and all the dimensions are out and you're bigger and more clumsy," she said.

Tragically, Loye's condition has prevented her from learning and teaching dancing – something she'd done for about 40 years – forcing her

on to a disability pension. But rather than succumbing to her illness, Loye has remained optimistic and is determined to help raise awareness of the condition through the Australian Pituitary Foundation.

The foundation is hosting a conference in Cairns on May 8, discussing the latest treatments and therapies for pituitary conditions.

"Of course, I miss the ballet, but I still keep in touch with my former students," Loye said.

"For myself, I mostly miss the energy and the fitness.

"But you can't mope around.

"God gives you a certain path and it's just a journey."

For further information, please contact the Australian Pituitary Foundation Ltd

phone: 1300 331 807

email: support@pituitary.asn.au

web: www.pituitary.asn.au

