

SEPTEMBER 2024

Monthly Newsletter

VOL.08

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ROMAC is a project of Rotary Clubs in Australia and New Zealand



Making a Difference One Child at a Time

BY SARAH HUANG

At ROMAC's Central Region Fundraising Luncheon, Adelaide Rotary member, Rob Motteram, bought a thoughtful gift for our patient, Charlie. It brought a smile to Charlie's face and lifted his spirits during his challenging time ahead having surgery on his club foot. Thank you Rob, your kindness and generosity mean the world to him and his family. ROMAC is deeply grateful for everyone's support and care.

Consider making a donation to help a child live a healthy, happy life at <https://romac.org.au/donate>.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

September has been a busy time for ROMAC. In addition to our dedicated team managing the treatment of five children across Australia and New Zealand, we have been involved in:

- A very successful 3 day workshop for 17 of our ROMAC volunteers in Sydney - [read more](#).
- Finalising our two new constitutions: the one for our operating company and the other for its wholly owned subsidiary company which acts as the trustee of our Gift Fund.

These constitutions not only have to meet the Rotary International's requirements for Multi-District Organisation like ROMAC but also the legal requirement placed on it by regulatory authorities such as the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission and the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Both Constitutions will be presented to the ROMAC members at the AGM to be led at the Zone Conference in Queenstown, New Zealand, on 1 November.

We remain a large and very active charity without any paid staff so as we identify more tasks to continue to provide the best service possible to the children from the Oceania area, we are always looking for more volunteers to join our team.

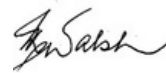
We have the following opportunities:

[HR, Training and Recruitment Chair](#): looking after the human resources of our organisation.

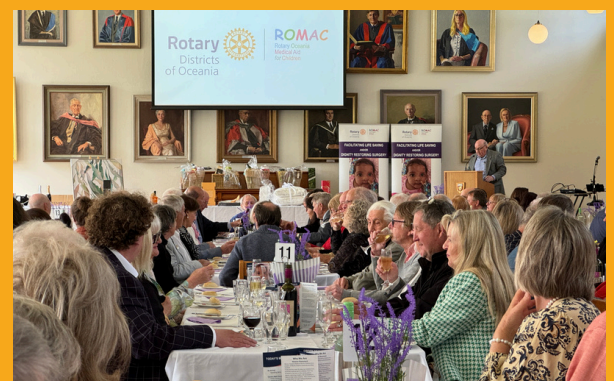
Communications Editor and Design: We need someone to edit our material for communication to our stakeholders. This role can include design and layout or purely editing, depending on the applicant's preference. Please search your networks for someone who can help. Please put them in touch with Maggie Alexander, Editor, at editor@romac.org.au.

Web Developer: The ROMAC website needs updating, in partnership with our IT service provider. We need someone who has skills to share in developing website functionality and integration with our patient electronic health record system and our financial application Xero. Please put them in touch with Richard Woodburn, IT Support, itsupport@romac.org.au.

Yours in Rotary



Ian D'Arcy Walsh
Chair



To all at the ROMAC Fundraising Luncheon in Adelaide, thank you so much for joining the Central Regional Committee in this special event. Everyone had great conversations, delicious food, and it was enjoyed by everyone. Without you, we could not have done it.

Photo: ROMAC Fundraising Luncheon at St. Mark's College, Adelaide.



CHARLIE ARRIVES

It was the first time Mike Hetherington and his wife Maggie had greeted a ROMAC in-coming patient at the Brisbane International Terminal. Mike described how they were waiting for Charlie with a badly deformed club foot, and his mother Rachel, to arrive from Vanuatu, in transit to Adelaide where Charlie would receive surgery to change his life.

Mike said: "We thought about how it would be their first time on an aircraft and in a foreign country. Would they be unsure, tentative, shy? Sure enough, after almost everyone else had emerged, they appeared hesitantly, with Charlie dragging his foot but wearing the biggest smile. They were carrying just one small suitcase between them.

Quickly negotiating the shuttle to the Domestic Terminal and having dropped the bag off, we faced the security screen. Charlie's leg attracted attention and he was called aside to be frisked. It was just as well that I was too, otherwise Charlie may have thought he was being singled out.

The biggest challenge, however, proved to be the escalators. Both Charlie and his mother froze at the bottom and could not bring themselves to place their feet on the moving stairs. After minutes deciding when was the right time to move, they managed their first ride. We take these things for granted but escalators will be just one of the strange things they will be confronted with in Australia.

Their nervousness also extended to walking down the jet bridge to their Adelaide-bound plane and they asked if we could come too. We reassured them that everything would be OK as they disappeared down the corridor that had no obvious end. Their miracle will come in Adelaide."

Photo left to right: Australian Operations Manager Mike Hetherington, Rachel and Charlie at Brisbane International Airport.



TAISHA'S JOURNEY

After a long journey, 2-year-old Taisha and her mum Lily arrived in Sydney from Port Vila, Vanuatu. Their trip is part of a life-changing medical mission to repair Tasha's frontal encephalocele, a rare congenital condition. It is made possible through the collective efforts of ROMAC volunteers and dedicated Rotarians.

Arriving in Brisbane, Rotarian Judy Holland met them at the International Terminal and quickly facilitated their transfer to a domestic flight to Sydney. There, Taisha and Lily were greeted by ROMAC Eastern Chair Anita Robinson and D9675 ROMAC Chair Jenny Connal.

Taisha and Lily have been staying with Anita for the past week while attending preoperative medical appointments. The Rotary Club of Parramatta in D9675 has continued its ongoing support for ROMAC, with members such as Maggie Thorn assisting with appointments, and PP Graham Cook and Marilyn, and Rotarian Malcolm Brown and Inge, kindly offering home hosting and other support.

Taisha underwent surgery on 27 September in the skilled hands of Neurosurgeon Dr Gemma Olsson, Plastic Surgeon Dr Damian Marucci, a Specialist Paediatric Anaesthetist and a complete medical team at the Children's Hospital at Westmead.

This journey highlights the incredible impact of compassion, teamwork and collaboration. Thanks to ROMAC, dedicated medical professionals and the unwavering support of Rotarians, Taisha has been given a chance to have a brighter future. We are confident of a successful outcome and we appreciate the kindness and generosity of everyone involved in making this journey possible.

Photo left to right: Neurosurgeon Dr Gemma Olsson, Plastic Surgeon Dr Damian Marucci, Taisha & Lily.



CASTRO'S STORY

Castro, from the Solomon Islands, is a teenage boy with nasopharyngeal angiofibroma, a rare tumour within the nasal cavity found almost exclusively in adolescent males.

Scheduled for surgery in Australia in early September, Castro's condition declined before his departure on 25 August. But Dr Ella Malatugu travelled from Honiara with Castro and his dad Alfred to ensure Castro's safe arrival in Adelaide, where he was admitted to the Women's & Children's Hospital for treatment. After successful surgery, Castro returned home a month later.

Photo: Castro and his father Alfred at the W&C Hospital.



ELINA'S STORY

The ROMAC Southern Regional Committee is celebrating the return home to Vanuatu of Elina Napuram, a 5-year-old girl with a club foot turned 180 degrees, and her mum Enneth, after 3 months of treatment in Melbourne.

It was a long and cold period for both of them to be away from an island village that they had never left before. But it was well worth the endurance because Elina went home with her previously distorted foot now straight, like her other one.

Photo: Joy and Dr Kevin Ng.



KRISELDA UPDATE

Krisselda, a 9-year-old Papua New Guinea girl who arrived in Canberra in March, has been having multiple surgeries at the Canberra Hospital for caudal duplication syndrome, a very rare genetic condition in which internal systems are duplicated.

Krisselda is making good progress with her medical issues under the care of A/Prof Celine Hamid and A/Prof David Croaker.

Apart from regular outpatient checkups, Krisselda only requires one more major surgery to close her stoma with the wonderful surgical team, Celine and David, with Anaesthesia Consultant Simon Robertson.

Krisselda's final surgery is planned for 17 October and will require another 4 weeks post-surgery and checkups before she, and her mother Sonia, will be able to return home to PNG. In the meantime, they are staying with Rotarian Gordana, and Krisselda is attending Gold Creek School in between surgery and outpatient appointments.

Photo: Krisselda with her mother Sonia.



ROMAC TEAM WORKSHOP

The ROMAC team of volunteers held its annual face-to-face workshop in Sydney in September 2024, meeting for 3 days at the Pullman Sydney Airport. The 17 team members, from all across Australia and from New Zealand, attended a full program of workshops, meetings and training sessions each day.

It was a productive three days in that we addressed our issues and concerns, continued updating and redeveloping our systems and processes, looked at how best to recognise our major supporters and considered how best to structure and operate ROMAC going forward. We also welcomed our latest Regional Chair, Judith McKay, from our new Northern Territory / Timor Leste Region.

At night, the team dined together, enjoying getting to know each other in a less formal way. At the Welcome Dinner, everyone was presented with a lei as a greeting and a symbol of the love and hope all ROMAC volunteers have for their patients.

The Celebration Dinner was attended by several District Chairs and other special guests, including former ROMAC Chair Rob Wilkinson and his wife Carolin and Rosie Lotawa, who is a ROMAC Ambassador and former patient.

Photo above: The ROMAC Team listening to a presentation. Below left to right: Central Region Chair Elizabeth Davis, Western Region Chair Phil Cordery and Deputy Chair Glenys Parton enjoying a South Pacific feast at the Welcome Dinner.



SOUTHERN REGION UPDATE

The Jared Dunscombe Foundation, which financially sponsored 2 ROMAC patients, Elina and Janet, held a fund-raising dinner in August, at the Melbourne State Library, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its establishment. Southern Region Chair, Minh Nguyen and his wife Kim, attended on behalf of ROMAC on the evening.

The charity work of this foundation, including supporting ROMAC patients, was displayed at the function with photos and accompanying stories.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all donors like the Foundation, all Rotary clubs and the Rotarians who have supported ROMAC in many ways, including putting us into contact with surgeons, medical teams and all the people in the community who have been supporting us in many ways.

The ROMAC Southern Committee recently received a good feedback email following presentations at various clubs. A presentation is not just about telling a story, but also creating an opportunity for others to share in it.

Peter Roger said: "It was also useful to have this update in my role as a Director of Regional Council, and to consider opportunities to strengthen our relationship with ROMAC.....".

Photo: ROMAC on display at Jared Dunscombe Foundation's 10th Anniversary dinner.



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[NEW ZEALAND - DONATE NOW](#)

How Can You Help ROMAC?

Give a little, care a lot.

Refer a patient. It's easy. Just follow the [Refer a Patient Link](#) on our website and make a difference to a child and their family.

Every day Rotarians and Friends are providing funds to cover travel, accommodation and treatment for children and their carers. But we could help more children if we had more donations. Donations all go directly to children and their care. ROMAC funds its administration costs through investment and other income.

Volunteers run our organisation. Please volunteer yourself to help.

Rotary Clubs: If every Rotarian in Australia and New Zealand donated \$20 and every club matched with \$20 for everyone of their members, we could cover the costs of all the children referred to us annually.

Friends of Rotary: If every Friend donated \$20 we could help even more children.

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