

# ROMAC

Rotary  
Districts  
of Oceania



ROMAC  
Rotary Oceania  
Medical Aid  
for Children

## NOVEMBER 2024

Monthly Newsletter

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

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BY MAGGIE ALEXANDER

### The 2023-24 ROMAC Annual Report

The 2023-24 ROMAC Annual Report was adopted at the ROMAC AGM on 1 November in Queenstown, New Zealand. You will find it a useful overview of what ROMAC can achieve on behalf of Rotary, with just 25 volunteers and donations from benefactors. It details the volunteer, medical and patient activities for the year, summarises the financial accounts and provides reports from office bearers, including Regional Chairs. [Download 2023-24 Annual Report.](#)

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

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The Koru further serves as a reminder that renewal is a natural constant, guiding us as we adapt to the changing environment in which we work.

It is reflected clearly in the work of our ROMAC volunteers, who bring renewed hope and purpose to the patients we treat and care for. Equally, it is embodied in the steadfast support we receive from our loyal donors — private individuals, Rotarians, corporates and Rotary clubs alike.

For some, change comes easily; for others, it may take time to shift gears. Yet one thing is certain: when we work in a supportive team that respects our individual differences and lifts us up, we can only achieve greater collective success and fulfilment.

Ngo mihi aroha (Kind regards)

**Glenys Parton**

ROMAC Chair

## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As I begin my tenure as ROMAC Chair, and as the first female chair since the inception of ROMAC, I am filled with a strong sense of tūmanakotanga (hope, desire, aspiration). In this spirit, I share with you all the universal Māori motif of the Koru. The Koru's unfurling fern frond symbolises growth, rejuvenation and the cyclical nature of all life.



Photo: One of the ferns Glenys passes regularly on her walking circuit close to home.

## GLENYS FEATURES IN MAGAZINE

Glenys Parton, the new ROMAC Chair, is featured in the November edition of [NZGROWER & ORCHARDIST](#). Please read and get to know her and her story.

## ROMAC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The ROMAC AGM took place on 1 November, as part of the Zone 8 Conference in Queenstown, New Zealand. The meeting was held following the AGMs of RAWCS, ARH, ROSOPS and RDU, and it was enlightening to gain some insight into both the commonalities and the initiatives of these organisations. Thank you to those of you who were able to attend in person and online — your presence meant a lot.

Stephen O'Connell, our District Governor (DG) Representative, chaired the meeting with enthusiasm and guided us smoothly through the agenda. After noting attendees, apologies and approving previous minutes, the DG members proceeded with key votes. They adopted the 2023-24 Annual Report, the Financial Accounts and Budget, and the new ROMAC Constitution.

The DG members elected the following directors:

- Glenys Parton as Chair
- Michael Hetherington as Operations Director
- Nigel Stewart continuing as Medical Director
- Stephen Noble as Treasurer and Public Officer for his fourth consecutive year

ROMAC extended its heartfelt gratitude to D'Arcy Walsh, our outgoing Chair, for his dedicated service to ROMAC, and to Richard Woodburn for acting as Operations Director. Their contribution to the team has been immense and both were acknowledged in a presentation.

The AGM wrapped up efficiently in just 15 minutes. It was inspiring to witness the camaraderie, trust and respect displayed by the 2024-25 team of DGs for Stephen O'Connell and for each other. A big thank you to Stephen for his leadership during the AGM, and to his DG group members and DGE representative Ken Smith for their support and confidence in the ROMAC team.

Afterwards the Board convened to approve:

- New Zealand Regional Chair, Peter Garnett MBE as Deputy Chair (casual vacancy).
- Various draft policies that underpin ROMAC's operational and governance activities.

## RECRUITMENT

I am pleased to announce the following:

- **Australian Operations Manager: *Pam Wood***, from the Rotary Club of North Ryde, will take on this role starting 1 January. Pam brings with her a wealth of experience as a former school principal with expertise in managing large projects.
- **Communications Editor and Project Manager: Megan Marshall** has been appointed to replace Maggie Alexander in the Communications Editor role. Megan will initially focus on assisting with the E-Newsletter and developing documentation. She brings an editorial and publishing background to the role and commenced with us on 1 November.
- **IT Support: *Casey Wilfling*** has been appointed from 22 November to the IT Support role as Richard Woodburn steps back from this role. Casey is a Victorian resident who has volunteered his skills in IT support. His experience includes customer helpdesk, cybersecurity and music teaching.
- **Fundraising and Engagement Director:** Recruitment for this role has been deferred until the new year to allow time for the establishment of the new Board.

We continue to be inspired in our work by the children we treat. Please take the time to enjoy the stories we bring you of young lives we have succeeded in transforming and consider a volunteer role in this rewarding organisation.

**Glenys Parton**

**ROMAC Chair**

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## DAMIEN'S STORY

Damien, a two-year-old from Vanuatu, accompanied by his mother Ina, arrived in Auckland New Zealand on 18 October 2024. He began his medical work-up for corrective surgery for a coronary artery fistula (an abnormal connection between one of the arteries of the heart and another blood vessel).

His initial appointment for a diagnostic CT scan had to be postponed while he was treated with antibiotics for a skin infection identified upon his arrival. Damien's medical team, headed by [Dr John Stirling](#), Paediatric Cardiologist at the Starship Children's Hospital in Auckland, discussed his case on 14 November. The team decided the best option would be surgery rather than the cardiac catheterisation procedure initially proposed. Damien is expected to have his surgery date confirmed within the next month.

Damien's father Ken was able to spend two weeks in Auckland exploring the city with his family and hosts Sharon and Wayne Brewer of the Rotary Club of Newmarket.

Remuera Rotarian Deeanah Winders also took the family to visit the Auckland Zoo, which they thoroughly enjoyed.

Photo: Damien.

## PATIENT PROGRESS

Mike Hetherington, ROMAC Operations Director, and his wife, Maggie Alexander, made an all-day visit to Brisbane Airport on 12 November. Two ROMAC patients, Nayline from Sydney and Krisselda from Canberra were transiting through Brisbane Airport on their way home.

They needed assistance moving from the domestic terminal to the international terminal, which are quite a distance apart and serviced by shuttlebuses.


Nayline and her father Henry were returning to Santo Island in Vanuatu for a brief respite with family over Christmas until they return to Sydney for more extensive work on Nayline's scoliosis early next year.

Nayline's uncle, Donald, is the Vanuatu Consul-General in Sydney and has been very appreciative of the care organised by Regional Chair [Anita Robinson](#) and, of course, Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr Angus Gray at The Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

Photo: Nayline and her father Henry at Brisbane Airport.

North Shore Rotary  
14 Sep · 🌐

cial garden at North Shore Hospital that we ca  
roud to have helped make possible.



o.nz  
t felt magic': The space that could get patie  
hospital quicker

## PETER GARNETT'S GARDEN

Past District Governor Peter Garnett's dream of a healing garden at Auckland's North Shore Hospital became a reality, though he never expected to experience it as a patient so soon. In July, the first large-scale indoor Healing Garden in Aotearoa opened at the new Tōtara Haumarū medical building.

Spanning 110 square meters with over 500 plants, the garden offers a tranquil escape from the hospital's noise.

Funded by \$1.8 million in donations to the Well Foundation, the garden is designed to improve patient outcomes, potentially reducing hospital stays and pain.

Watch the [full story of Peter's garden](#) in this 2 minute video online.

Photo: Peter Garnett MBE in his healing garden.



## NAYLINE'S JOURNEY

After completing a series of specialist appointments and advanced imaging, Nayline and her dad, Henry, had the chance to relax and explore Sydney as tourists. With the support of District 9675 ROMAC Chair Jenny Connal and her husband Harold, along with Henry's brother Donald, they enjoyed some of Sydney's highlights before returning home to Santo Island, Vanuatu on 12 November.

Nayline's medical journey, however, is far from over. Nayline is scheduled to return to Sydney during the first weekend of February 2025 for further treatment, care and surgery at The Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick. Nayline's surgery will address her scoliosis, a condition requiring the expertise of the hospital's skilled medical team, led by Orthopaedic Surgeon Dr Angus Gray.

Thanks to the unwavering support of ROMAC, the dedicated medical team, and the generosity of supporters from the Eastern region, Nayline's journey toward better health is becoming a reality.

Photo: Group of photos of Nayline touring Sydney.





## A BUSY TRANSFER DAY

No patients are scheduled for the Northern Region until early in the new year.

Nonetheless, members of the Northern Region Committee have been active in assisting with transfers, both domestic and international as families return home, through Brisbane Airport. The airport is undergoing major renovations, and transfers can be daunting to the unfamiliar.

Northern Region Chair Wayne Litherland had the pleasure of hosting eleven-year-old Nayline and Henry from Vanuatu on an overnight stay on their way to Sydney for pre-treatment testing for scoliosis.

Operations Director Mike Hetherington was on hand to assist on a particularly busy day that saw two returns through Brisbane Airport, including Krisselda and her mother on their way home to Papua New Guinea.

Photo: Krisselda and Sonia return home.

## SLAVENIA'S STORY

The Northern Territory Timor-Leste (NT-TL) Committee recently welcomed their first patient, eleven-year-old Slavenia, and her mother Isabel, from Timor-Leste. They stayed overnight in Darwin before travelling to Melbourne's St Vincents Hospital, via Adelaide, for treatment.

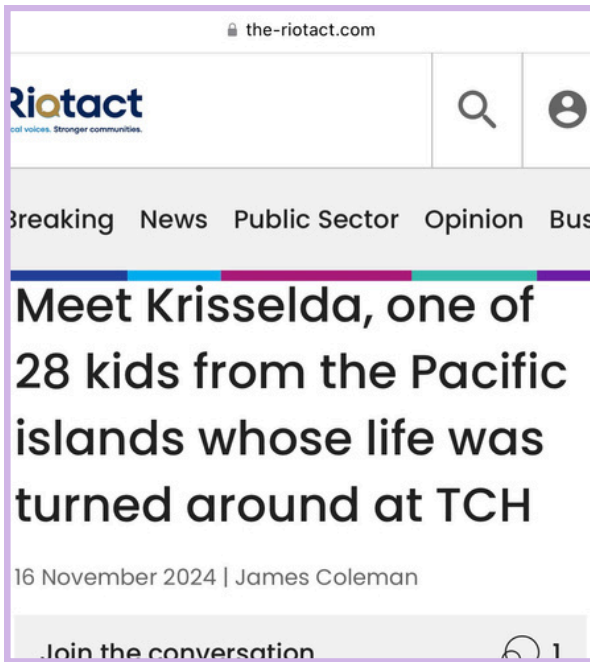
Slavenia was recently diagnosed with glaucoma, a rare condition in children, requiring urgent surgery not available in her home country.

Dili Rotary Club and NTTL Committee member, Mario de Jesus escorted Slavenia and Isabel from Dili. Their much-anticipated arrival was also generously supported by the Consulate General of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste Darwin, Jose Antonio Amorim Dias, who hosted the family for the night.

The Rotary Club of Darwin Sunrise also extended their support by providing the family with warm clothes for the cooler weather in Melbourne.

We all wish Slavenia the best on her journey and will be here to support her return journey following her eye surgery.

Photo left to right: NT-TL Regional Chair Judith McKay with Slavenia, Isabel and Consulate General Jose Antonio Amorim Dias.



**SUPPORT FOR ROMAC**

The article, Krisselda's story, has been published in the November Newsletter of Rotary District 9705 and on Canberra local news website RIOTACT.

Please click the links below to view more details and for a great read.

[District 9705 November Newsletter](#)

[RIOTACT website](#)

Photo: Headline from RIOTACT website.



**THANK YOU BOB RICHARDS**

We are sorry to announce the resignation of Past District Governor Bob Richards from his role as ROMAC Evaluation Consultant for health reasons.

Bob expressed that his "concentration span and enthusiasm for the work involved is increasingly depleted" but that he firmly intends to continue to support ROMAC within his Rotary Club.

Bob has had a long association with ROMAC including many years as Eastern Region Director and Chair, and lately as Evaluation Consultant, evaluating patient-related processes and procedures. ROMAC will make a special acknowledgment of his contribution at a suitable time.

We extend our best wishes to Bob. His dedication has been invaluable, and he will be missed by the team.





## THANK YOU!

ROMAC is continually humbled and grateful for the generous financial support it receives from individuals who truly believe in the life-changing, life-saving work ROMAC accomplishes.

Recently, at a Rotary fundraiser hosted by the Rotary Club of Gregory Hills Next-Gen where ROMAC was one of three recipients of the funds raised.

Sybra Hunt, a guest at the event, was deeply moved by the stories of children whose lives have been transformed through the medical treatment supported by ROMAC. Inspired by these stories, Sybra felt compelled to contribute funds to help ROMAC continue its vital mission.

ROMAC is very grateful for Sybra's donation, which will help ensure that ROMAC can continue providing critical care to children in need from our neighbouring South Pacific Island countries.

Her generosity is a testament to the power of community support in making a lasting difference.

Photo: Sybra Hunt at home.



## MEMORIAL DONATION

Northern Region presentations to our Queensland Rotary clubs are ongoing.

But at a recent special presentation, the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport presented ROMAC with a cheque for \$2000 in memory of Marc Brooke, who was a charter member of their Club when it started in 1980.

His widow, Dell Brooke, attended the donation ceremony, which recognised her late husband's commitment to Rotary and to ROMAC.

Photo left to right: Maggie Alexander from ROMAC with Baz Lane, Dell Brooke and Letitia De Lima at the Rotary Club of Broadwater Southport.





## BRIDGING HEALTH

ROMAC's Northern Region Chair Wayne Litherland was one of the guest speakers at Bridging Health Inc's annual dinner.

Wayne talked about ROMAC and was updated on Bridging Health's wide-ranging activities aimed at improving health in the remote regions of Vanuatu, including updates on several children who are receiving care from both organisations.

Photo left to right: Ricco Yasso, President of Bridging Health Inc. with Wayne Litherland, ROMAC Northern Region Chair.



## CHARLIE UPDATE

Twelve-year-old Charlie and his mother Rachel from Vanuatu arrived in Adelaide in late September.

As a result of a very mild case of Cerebral Palsy at birth, Charlie was born with a unilateral talipes (a clubfoot) and needed surgery to correct it.

This month Charlie is making great progress towards wearing shoes. His foot improved significantly after his first surgery. He has been having weekly physiotherapy sessions and spending time with his friends at school. Next week, Charlie will undergo another operation, which will require six weeks of rest without putting weight on his foot.

The Central Region Committee is excited to have Rachel and Charlie celebrate an Aussie Christmas with us.

Photo left to right: Charlie, Rachel and Paul Duke, Central Region Committee member, at the Adelaide Zoo.



[AUSTRALIA - DONATE NOW](#)

[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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