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

CREATING NETWORKS | IDENTIFYING NEED | TAKING ACTION

Issue No. 7: March 2020



Chairman's Message

My ROMAC Friends



These are certainly unprecedented times!

Since taking on the role of Chairman of ROMAC last September Australia has faced ongoing drought, devastating bushfires and now the Corona Virus which has virtually shut down the world. It has certainly been a challenging period for me, and all involved in ROMAC!

Rotary Clubs are cancelling meetings or opting to meet on-line, service projects and fundraising events - even the obligatory Bunnings Barbecues - have been suspended as Governments enforce social distancing in order to limit the spread of the virus as much as possible. It is very hard to imagine that the world will not be irrevocably changed as a result of this latest situation.

Of course, this has been devastating for ROMAC - and indeed for all other not-for-profit organisations - as Rotary Clubs around Australia and New Zealand cancel or postpone fundraising events which were organised to support our organisation. The consequential downturn in financial support for ROMAC will have a large impact on our ability to continue to our vital work in treating sick children from our neighbouring regions. Please refer to the message below from our Medical Director, Dr Larry Roddick.

What can you do to help?

- **Firstly, circulate this e-news and all regular communications from us to all your members and friends.**
- **Encourage your members and friends to become a ROMAC friend - a commitment of just \$100 per person per year.**

- Ensure that any funds from events held in the past get remitted to us as soon as possible.

And finally, stay active and stay well!

Regards

Harold Sharp, Chairman

ROMAC Board's Message

Dear friends and supporters of ROMAC

Unfortunately, Covid-19 has had a major effect on ROMAC. This week we were intending to do a ROMAC medical triage clinic in Honiara but this, of necessity, had to be cancelled.

You would all be fully aware that

1. Only Australian citizens and residents can enter the country. NZ is similar. These returnees will require self-isolation for a fortnight.
2. The number of new Covid-19 cases in Australia is going up daily and exponentially.
3. Australasian ICU's are expected to be full reasonably soon and there will need to be overflow beds.

4. The overflow ICU beds will be in operating theatres.
5. The only way this overflow can occur is for the operating theatre rooms to be empty which will require cancellation of all elective surgery.

For these reasons, in the foreseeable future, it will be impossible for ROMAC to accept any patients from our referring countries.

We are still accepting referrals. Please ensure all referrals are made on-line. If a referral is made other than this way, the referrer will be directed to the website referral pathway.

We hope you all remain free of the virus.

Larry Roddick (Medical Director)

Carol Bourne (Operations Director)

Vincent

“To have a new ROMAC family is exciting and very satisfying.”

These are the words of Sandra Goldstraw, ROMAC Chair for District 9710 who has been one of the many volunteers involved in ensuring Vincent and his mother, Cosinta, received the best possible support whilst Vincent underwent his lifesaving surgery at Canberra's Centenary Hospital for Women and Children in August last year.



Vincent and Cosinta were flown by ROMAC to Canberra from their home in the Solomon Islands so that Vincent could undergo surgery to repair an Esophageal Atesia – a blockage between the oesophagus and the stomach requiring him to be fed through a catheter in the stomach – an operation which, because of its intricacies, was not possible in the Solomons.

At just two months of age when he arrived in Canberra and undernourished, it was a couple of weeks before Vincent was strong enough to endure the lifesaving operation. The surgery was successful, but recovery was slow and Vincent required regular hospital visits to dilate the oesophagus and to monitor his progress.

Vincent's follow-up operation was held on 22nd February and he is currently out of hospital but being kept under observation as an out-patient during his recovery. Sandra advised: "He is now feeding much better and is taking 'solids' as well as milk".

He has been having regular dilations and is due for the next one on 26th March.

It is hoped that he will be well enough to return home to the Solomon Islands in July.

Caring for patients like Vincent whilst they are undergoing treatment and during their recovery in Australia and New Zealand is a logistical challenge involving a large number of

volunteers, and ROMAC is extremely grateful for the dedication and enthusiasm of Sandra, her husband Brian, and her team who have been hosting Vincent and his mother since their arrival in Canberra in July – and to similar teams throughout Australia and New Zealand who have supported other ROMAC patients.

Gabriella



Three and a half month old ROMAC patient, Gabriella has just returned to her home in Fiji following successful surgery in New Zealand.

Gabriella had congenital heart disease requiring urgent surgery to save her life. She was operated on in February at Starship in Auckland and is now putting on weight and is a very happy, healthy and contented baby.

ROMAC is very grateful to all the medical staff at Starship, and to all the volunteers who made this possible. Our sincere thanks go to all involved.

Germaine

Germaine is a 12 year-old from the Solomon Islands. She has been living in Wollongong with her mother and siblings since July. Her mother is studying nursing at Wollongong University. Germaine had rheumatic fever when she was younger and this has left her with heart disorders. She had an episode of breathlessness shortly after they arrived here and her mother took her to Wollongong Hospital. They initially referred her to St George Hospital in Kogarah but they referred her on to Westmead Children's Hospital. She was seen by the new Senior Cardiologist, Dr Philip Roberts. He advised surgery and referred her to Dr Ian Nicholson who has operated on several of the ROMAC heart patients over the years.

Germaine's operation is scheduled for Tuesday, 24 March and, hopefully, the COVID-19 situation will not deteriorate and prevent that happening. There is an outside chance that it might.

**Patients who have been accepted for
treatment,
or are currently undergoing treatment**

are:

Marie-Gabriel

Vanuatu

Heart ACCEPTED Appointment

Penny Kitter

Tonga

Heart ACCEPTED Appointment

Itinerary received from travel agent - flight 1st April.

All docs sent to Dr Toa for the Visa application

Gabriella

Fiji

Heart CURRENT Surgery

Vincent

Solomon Islands

Tracheo-oesophageal Fistula

CURRENT

Germaine

Solomon Islands

Heart

CURRENT Operation scheduled for 24 Mar 2020.

Walk for Jared benefits ROMAC



Remembering and commemorating the short, inspirational life of Jared, and supporting ROMAC at the same time

Jared's story is an inspirational one but also a tragic one. Jared first defied the odds when he was hit by a car at the age of 7 sustaining life threatening brain and other injuries. Doctors gave him no chance of survival and he spent three and a half weeks in a coma. Doctors said he would never walk or talk again but he defied medical odds and Jared not only survived but lived a remarkable life – he finished school, went to University, started a retail sports store, trekked the Kokoda Trail— to name just a few achievements. Jared also supported many local charity and community groups including his involvement in a group called TRAG – Teenagers Road Accident Group – which saw him visiting schools

and speaking to Year 11 students about the dangers of modern driving. Jared was a member of the Casey Concert Band as a trumpeter, where he was the bands' longest serving member.

Jared was chosen to take part in the Queens Baton Relay in the lead up to the 2006 Commonwealth Games, aged 24. At the time, he said he hoped his story and his run with the Baton showed people they could overcome obstacles and achieve success.

In an unbelievable tragedy, Jared was killed on 22nd February 2013, aged 31, when he fell from his bike while taking part in a charity cycling event and was struck by a truck and trailer travelling in the same direction. Jared loved riding his bike and he was taking part in his second Rotary Ride to Conference charity bike ride.

The ride raised \$66,000 for three Rotary projects.

Since his passing, Jared has been awarded a Paul Harris Fellow by Rotary District 9820. This is one of Rotary's highest awards and was awarded for Jared's contribution to the community.

Jared was the oldest child of John and Kathy Dunscombe and had one sister, Jonelle. His family was the world to him – his parents, sister, brother in law and most especially his two nephews, Kalen and Makai. Jared was the most doting of Uncles and Kalen adored him. Makai was just 11 days old when Jared passed.

All who knew Jared remember his big smile, his loving personality and his zest for life. He always went out of his way to help others. He was determined, courageous and an inspiration to all who knew him.

Jared's mum Kathy and Jared's sister Jonelle hold the annual walk to remem



ber and commemorate the short life of Jared. They've decided to give the funds this year to ROMAC and hope to follow and maybe host a cardiac patient being treated in Victoria in the near future

This year's walk was 5kms around the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens followed by breakfast.

Southern Region Chair, Jill Oliver, who participated in the Walk, took the opportunity to explain briefly about ROMAC before starting on the 5km walk (pictured at right).

Main Photo: Jared's sister, Jonelle Dunscombe addresses supporters of the annual Walk For Jared at the commencement of this year's walk.

Out and About

Club Visits



Visiting Clubs and spreading the word about ROMAC has been a priority of Chairman, Harold, since joining the organisation. In the past couple of months he has made presentations at the Rotary Clubs of Beecroft, North Sydney and Gosford.

The new video presentation which outlines the work of ROMAC which Harold has shown as part of his presentation has been well received by Rotarians around the country.

Following his presentation to the Rotary Club of Gosford the Club pledged \$3,000 to support current ROMAC patient, Vincent. Regular updates on Vincent's progress are

being forwarded to the Club

District ROMAC team members are available attend club meetings and make an informative and entertaining presentation to club members. Harold encourages all clubs who haven't had a presentation on ROMAC recently to contact your District ROMAC Chair who will be delighted to organise a visit to your club when 'normal' meetings resume.



Following his address to the members of the Rotary Club of Walkerville, South Australia, ROMAC Central Region Chair, Brett Dalton, thanked the Club for their continued support of ROMAC.

Brett updated the members on the latest ROMAC patients from the Solomon Islands, Georgina and Asiri, who attended Adelaide's Women and Children's hospital in 2019.

Central Region are expecting more children from the Solomons to come in 2020 for life changing heart surgery in Adelaide.

Quiz Night Supports ROMAC

The Rotary Club of Caloundra Pacific held a very successful Quiz night with proceeds supporting ROMAC. During the evening a short presentation on ROMAC was made and the new video clip shown.



Facebook post from RC Caloundra Pacific: *"In spite of the wet weather, we had a great number of trivia enthusiasts join us, to not only raise much needed money for ROMAC, but to enjoy a fun night*

of fellowship and brain-teasing. Thank you to everyone who helped make this another successful event."

Become a ROMAC Friend



You can help support the vital work of ROMAC by becoming a ROMAC Friend. A commitment of just \$100 per person per year is all it takes.

By becoming a ROMAC Friend you can help us:

- Give hope and restore dignity to transform a child's life
- Provide the best possible surgical expertise
- Engage Rotary and the Community at all levels to fund and support surgery for children
- Maintain and improve the quality of the management process and ensure high quality governance of the ROMAC program.

For more informaton visit our website www.romac.org.au, or contact ROMAC Chair, Harold Sharp at chair@romac.org.au or telephone 0411 044 691. Donations are tax deductible.

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Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC)

PO Box 779

Parramatta, New South Wales 2124
Australia

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