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

CREATING NETWORKS | IDENTIFYING NEED | TAKING ACTION

Chair Harold Sharp's Message

My ROMAC Friends

Despite the dreadful natural disasters that have savaged our two countries over the

past few months, I, on behalf of the ROMAC Board and volunteers, wish you all a Happy and Healthy year in 2020.



I know the Board and our many volunteers join me in expressing our condolences to all Australians who have been affected by both the bush fires and drought that have decimated our country in recent weeks, and also to the New Zealanders who have been affected by the tragic White Island volcanic eruption.

We are indebted to all the volunteers and emergency service personnel who have been risking their lives to keep us safe. Our prayers and best wishes go to all of you during this especially difficult time and hope we will find some relief soon.

The disasters that we have experienced have prompted the establishment of numerous fundraising appeals and, rightly so, the efforts of clubs and Rotarians is currently focused on supporting those appeals in every possible way. I know you all realise that ROMAC only exists through the generosity of clubs and individuals and that you will do everything in your power to continue to financially support us in the coming months. I, and our ROMAC patients whose lives we change, thank you sincerely for your ongoing commitment to us.

Stanley

Harold Sharp

Getting to know our Volunteers

Associate Professor, David Croaker



Originally a country boy from Scone, A/Prof David Croaker has been involved with paediatric surgery since 1985. He went to high school and university in Sydney, and started specialty training in the field in 1988 (also in Sydney). He completed a Ph.D. in the genetics and physiology of Hirschsprung's disease in 2001. By that time he was in full time consultant practice in the NHS, having moved to Britain at the end of 1998.

In 2003 he returned to Australia to take up his current post as a consultant specialist paediatric surgeon at the Canberra hospital and the Australian National University. He has since also taken up a conjoint appointment at the University of NSW. His practice encompasses all areas of paediatric surgery, with a particular interest in gastroenterology, and a research interest in both Hirschsprung's disease and constipation.

He has been involved with third world surgical practice beginning with a student elective in Nepal in 1977; visits to the United Mission Hospital, Tansen in Nepal since 1987; to AI

Awda Hospital in Gaza since 2006; to the National Referral Hospital in Honiara since 2015; and to several other places (from Zambia to Ulaan Bataar) on a one off basis. At other times he enjoys (and desperately wishes to preserve) the natural environment through a variety of outdoor activities from (inter alia) gardening, skiing, cycling and walking to flying sailplanes.

Photo: A/Prof David Croaker with District 9710 ROMAC Chair, Sandra Goldstraw in Canberra, December 2019.

Farewell, Rob. And thanks!

The role of Chairman of ROMAC is a demanding, time consuming and often arduous one, involving overseeing the entire organisation, managing volunteers, and ensuring that everything runs smoothly, and ultimately ensuring the ROMAC patients and their carers receive the best possible treatment whilst they are in Australia or New Zealand. And it's a three year commitment.

Rob Wilkinson's involvement with ROMAC spanned many years and culminated in his role as Chairman from 2016 until the AGM held in Christchurch in September 2019, when he handed the baton to incoming Chairman, Harold Sharp.

In appreciation of Rob's long and significant contribution to ROMAC, especially during his term as Chairman, and on behalf of the ROMAC Board, Harold presented him with a desk clock during a lunch at Mooney Mooney on the NSW Central Coast held just prior to Christmas.

Thanks, Rob for all you have done for ROMAC over the years! Enjoy your retirement!



Communication Team

Members Recognised

ROMAC would not exist without the many volunteers who give freely of their expertise and time to enable the organisation to function effectively.

There are no paid staff on the ROMAC 'staff' register and everyone involved in running the organisation - from the Board, the support team, the doctors and hospital staff who identify and treat the patients, to the Rotarians who arrange transportation and hosting of the children and their carers during and following their surgery do so without remuneration - many incurring significant personal costs in the process.



The change of Chairman from Rob Wilkinson to Harold Sharp, which took place in September, created an ideal opportunity for ROMAC to acknowledge the significant contribution to the Organisation by a couple of Volunteers who have carried out duties in the Communications portfolio - including developing and distributing regular newsletters to supporters, managing the website and social media posts, and preparing the Annual Report. Ann Burleigh and Maggie Alexander, who served under Rob for a number of

years, were thanked by Rob and presented with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the Board. Maggie is continuing to manage the ROMAC website. Thanks, Maggie!



Photos: Top Rob with Ann Burleigh, and below Rob with Maggie Alexander

ROMAC is extremely grateful to Maggie, Ann and Rob for their significant contribution. Thank You!

ROMAC FEATURED AT CONFERENCE

Mario DeJesus will be a keynote speaker at the District 9550 / 9570 Conference in March this year. Mario, along with Fellow Rotarian, Judite Martins, of the Rotary Club of Dili, Timor-Leste, runs the small but vital program Rotarians Helping Timor. A major component of their work is accepting sea containers full of goods from Australia for distribution to people in Timor-Leste. They have an agreement with a business in Dili, which allows them to hire a truck, forklift and drivers at a discounted price to remove the containers from the wharf and unload and store them at their premises, free of charge. This huge effort is managed within three days of the container landing at the wharf, in order to save a large daily holding fee. Mario and Judite then distribute donated goods to the many people, groups, schools and others in need throughout Timor-Leste. The Rotary Club of Melbourne, Vic, helps to cover administration and removal costs to support Mario and Judite's efforts.

Mario has taken on the role of managing the ROMAC program in Timor. He liaises with families of children and medical officers and coordinates the paperwork, including passports, customs declarations, airfares and transport to ensure the children arrive at their allocated destination. So far, Mario had organised for 20 children to travel to Sydney, Melbourne and New Zealand under the ROMAC umbrella.



The Miracle of ROMAC

From this



..... to this



Our ROMAC Boy: Reedly's story

by Sandra Goldstraw, D9710 ROMAC Chair

Our ROMAC boy Reedly from Vanuatu

Date Of Birth: 19th March 2000

Life in Vanuatu before ROMAC - Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children

Can you imagine all your life up to 14 years – This was life for Reedly

- Having no energy to join in with other young boys
- All food needed to be pureed or liquid
- Having a grossly distended abdomen with thin wasted arms and legs
- Going to the toilet only once a month, sometimes only second month.
- Being in constant pain.

Can you imagine the life of Reedly's mother – Juliette

- An only son with 4 daughters.
- Needing to puree all food to keep him alive
- Aware her son might die and worrying about him every single day.
- Life has been a struggle from the day Reedly was born.

A miracle happened when educators from Sydney university visited Vanuatu with nursing students and referred Reedly to ROMAC.

Reedly had Hirschsprungs Disease, which means there is a partial large bowel obstruction.

2014 - Reedly's Journey begins:

- Arriving at the Canberra Airport on the 2nd April 2014 from Vanuatu with his mother, Juliette. Having never been on a plane before or leaving Vanuatu.
- Needing faith and trust in people they do not know.
- The first words I remember Juliette saying to me after a big welcome hug was:
 - “Reedly is my only son and I love him dearly! Thank you so much for helping us!”

This is a mother's love - Juliette deserved my highest praise in keeping her son Reedly alive for 14 years.



On arrival in Canberra Reedley weighed only 27.5 kg

Following surgery by Prof David Croaker at the Canberra Centennial Hospital for Women and Children, with a new flat abdomen and a temporary colostomy (need to rest the bowel for 12 months due to the floppy bowel). Reedly then weighed 21.4kgs.

Reedly had a very big smile!



And an even bigger smile than usual as his front teeth were also corrected during surgery!

Reedly then needed building up as his arms and legs were so wasted.



He started to eat and keep eating healthy food. Juliette was just so happy and thankful knowing her son was finally going to get better.

Stoma education was provided and reinforced with a suitcase full of donated stoma products to last until they return to Canberra the following year to have the stoma closed.

They returned home to Vanuatu on the 30th May, Reedly then weighed 27.3 kgs on the airport luggage scales.

2015 - Returned to Canberra aged 15 to have his stoma closed.

Reedly was a new boy. Confident and happy.

Finally returning home healthy to live a normal life again to Vanuatu.

2017 – 3 years after surgery aged 17

Now eating very well!



2019 - 5 years after surgery

Where is Reedly now – in 2019 aged 19 years old?

Graduated from College in Vanuatu. Proud parents Kal and Juliette Gershom





Juliette's proudest day for her son who was her only child to graduate from college.

ROMAC makes such a difference not only to the children but to parents and families who love their children just like us.

Rotary's humanitarian program of ROMAC changes lives, changes families and changes countries.

I am so proud to be a part of ROMAC, this wonderful humanitarian program of Rotary.

Sandra Goldstraw ROMAC chair D9710 from 2006- 2020

December 28, 2019

Hold a Barbecue for ROMAC



Southern Regional Chair, Jill Oliver, has responded to Chairman Harold Sharp's suggestion that clubs who conduct regular Saturday Barbecues at Bunnings consider donating the profits from just one of those events each year to ROMAC. On Saturday, 4th January Jill teamed with members of the Rotary Club of Alfredton (District 9780) to do just that, and as a result raised \$2060 for ROMAC. Pictured with Jill are President elect, David Sanders (on left) and new member Malcolm Roberts.

If all other Clubs in Australia and New Zealand followed Alfredton's example, imagine the incredible impact that would have for ROMAC - the increase in community awareness and vital funds that are raised as a consequence would enable us to change the lives of so many more children from our neighbouring regions. I encourage all clubs to seriously consider holding a special BBQ for ROMAC.

Please contact me on chair@romac.org.au or on my mobile 0411 044 691 for more information about this.



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