

ANNUAL REPORT 2021-22

Rotary
Districts
of Oceania



ROMAC



Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children

The ROMAC Story

ROMAC (Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children) commenced in March 1988 out of the actions of an Australian Rotarian who, with a group of surgeons, visited Lambasa in Fiji. They found the child mortality rate as high as 25% in some places. They quickly identified that lack of medical and surgical facilities and skills for children of the island nations in Oceania, was a major cause. Rotary faced the challenge to assist an 18-year-old Fijian girl whose right leg was threatened if immediate surgery was not performed.

During the next four years, eight children were brought to Australia for major, often lifesaving, surgery. Soon 20 Australian Rotary clubs were caught up in the success of each case and assisted in various ways. ROMAC established five regions representing clubs in the west, east, south, north and centre of the country.

A New Zealand region was formally established in 2004 and treated its first patient, from Vanuatu, in December 2005. The inaugural New Zealand region representative was Trish O'Reilly and Dr Max Morris, the first New Zealand Medical Director.

It was a slow and steady process to promote the objectives and raise awareness of ROMAC in the New Zealand region, but the number of patients treated in New Zealand has risen to more than 25 patients per year.

ROMAC in New Zealand and Australia enlists assistance from medical experts, hospitals, nurses, physiotherapists, pathology and radiology services, airlines, sponsors and other supporters. Today ROMAC is providing surgical

treatment to around 40-50 children from Oceania every year – we are making a huge difference in their lives.

Mission Statement

ROMAC provides surgical treatment for children in Australia and New Zealand from developing countries from our Pacific region in the form of life giving and/or dignity restoring surgery not accessible to them in their home country.

Objectives

- Provide hope and restore dignity to transform a child's life
- Provide the best possible surgical and medical expertise
- Engage Rotary and the community at all levels to fund and support the ROMAC cause
- To maintain and improve the quality of the management process and ensure high quality governance of the ROMAC project.

Contents	P
The ROMAC Story	2
Chair's Report	3-4
Treasurer's Report	5-6
Medical Director's Report	7-8
Communications Report	9
Fundraising 2021-22	10
The ROMAC Management Team	11
Thanks to our Sponsors	12



Harold Sharp OAM Chair

Chair's Report

Because of the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and the (correct) decisions of both the Federal Governments of Australia and New Zealand to close their borders to any international travellers, ROMAC was unable to treat any children in Australia during the 2021-22 Rotary year. We were, however, able to bring three patients from Tonga in to Auckland for urgent heart surgery during a brief period when borders between Tonga and New Zealand remained open.

Thankfully, international travel restrictions have now been lifted, and new patients are currently being processed for medical treatment. In both Australia and New Zealand.

During the COVID shutdowns, many Clubs opted to hold regular club meetings via Zoom which enabled ROMAC volunteers to join these meetings and update members on the work of ROMAC and to show our new 11 minute video.

Often, these clubs were in more remote areas not easily accessible to our volunteers and consequently had not had a presentation on ROMAC for quite some time. This resulted in an increase in the number of clubs donating to ROMAC during the year compared with recent years, and amazingly, our income for the 12 months was almost the same as in the previous year.

Special thanks must go to Marc Charette from Work Pics 360 Virtual Tours who produced our new promotional video free of charge, and to Past President David Bacon from the Rotary Club of Gosford City who provided the voice-over. The video has been well received and has enabled all volunteers to impart a consistent message

ROMAC cannot exist without an incredibly dedicated group of Rotarian volunteers who 'go beyond the norm' in promoting ROMAC and I sincerely thank each of you for your commitment and willingness to give up your personal leisure time to ensure ROMAC obtains the exposure it desires and operates as



Penny, from Tonga, was one of only three patients treated by ROMAC during 2021-22.

Chair's Report (contd.)

successfully as it does.

I'd like to offer my special thanks to ROMAC's Communications Chair, PDG Gina Growden who has worked tirelessly throughout the year to keep our donors and supporters updated on ROMAC activities. Through her efforts the active database of ROMAC donors and supporters now stands at more than 7,000 who have received regular e-newsletters Chairman's updates and Tyrrell's wine offers during the year.

Regrettably, due to medical reasons I had to step down as Chairman in late May 2022, and I am extremely grateful to Deputy Chair, D'Arcy Walsh who, on short notice, took over the role of Chair for the last month of my tenure.

To all members of the ROMAC Board, and the Management Team. I sincerely thank you for your support and your dedication to ROMAC over the past year. Without your hard work and commitment ROMAC would not exist.

Harold Sharp OAM
ROMAC Chair



Junior



Stephen Noble
Treasurer

Treasurer's Report

I am delighted to submit my report as Treasurer for ROMAC for the year ended 30 June 2022. This is my first year as Treasurer and I acknowledge the contribution of former Treasurer Michael Carrigan who continued as Treasurer up to the 2021 AGM. Michael was Treasurer for a term of four years and fulfilled this role with distinction.

The overall result for the current financial year was a surplus of \$403,268, this being a reduction from the surplus of \$535,252 for the prior financial year. These surplus's have resulted directly from the fact that for these two financial years the impact of COVID-19 was such that we were not able to care for any children. The current year's results are after a write-down on the value of investments following a share market correction of \$24,817. In the prior year there was a revaluation upwards of \$108,903. If these market valuation adjustments are ignored, the surplus for the current year is \$428,085 compared to the prior year surplus of \$426,349.

In my opinion this is a very good result in a period of continued disruption due to COVID-19 across Australian society, and Rotary Clubs across Australia.

Donations from Rotary Clubs within Australia have again been impacted by COVID-19 with total

contributions received of \$253,217 (2021 \$277,472). A total of 112 Clubs made donations during the year – who had not donated in the prior year. The total number of Clubs who donated during the current year was 137. I also note that several Clubs were late in making their donations prior to 30 June 2022. A review of the history of donations from Clubs over the last few years indicates that past patterns of regular donations may have been impacted by the ability of Clubs to make donations. The change on society impacted by COVID-19, lockdowns, and consequent impacts on the ability of some Clubs to firstly raise funds and then competition for these funds within the community almost certainly had an impact.

In addition, ROMAC has continued to benefit from other donations and bequests, this year receiving \$172,760 (2021 \$147,404). ROMAC continues to be indebted to those individuals and organisations who contribute year after year.

Income from investments for the current year (dividends and interest) totalled \$53,729 (2021 \$43,327).

In relation to expenses I comment:

Rotary Oceania
Medical Aid
for Children

Treasurer's Report (contd.)

Medical expenses for the current year were \$4,400 (2021 \$6,393). These compare with the 2020-year medical expenses of \$419,215. Now that Australia is opening up to international travel, and we are able to bring in patients we can expect that the medical costs will increase significantly. Fortunately, we do have significant reserves available.

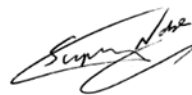
Indirect costs (Administrative, promotion and development costs and donations) for the current year are \$46,722 (2021 \$46,958).

Meeting costs of \$15,637 (2021 \$915) arose through the first *face to face* meeting for the Board and regional Chairs in two years. This was seen as a necessity to ensure preparedness as Australia opened after the years of COVID-19 lockdowns.

The ROMAC Board is focused on being prepared for an increase in patient case load in the coming year. This is why ROMAC was established. The

Medical Director together with those assessing individual cases prior to acceptance, have a focus on maximising patient outcomes – whilst minimizing the risk of cost “blow out”, thus ensuring that ROMAC maximises its beneficial impact across the countries and regions that we serve.

I would like to thank and acknowledge all the Rotary Clubs and individual Rotarians and non-Rotarians who have contributed to ROMAC during the last twelve months. The ongoing support of Rotary Clubs and Rotarians is critical to the ongoing success of ROMAC.

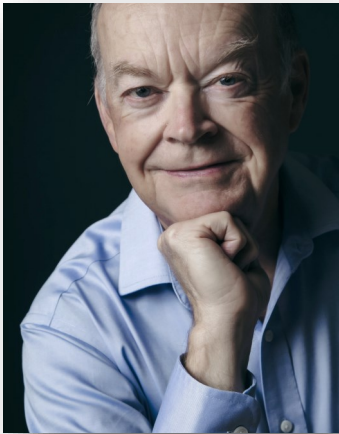


Stephen Noble
Treasurer

ROMAC. Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children Ltd
Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children Pty Ltd as trustee for ROMAC Gift Fund.



Leonia, from Timor Leste—then (2000) and now (2022)



Dr Larry Roddick OAM Medical Director

Medical Director's Report

As everyone knows, borders were closed through all of 2021.

The borders, to some degree, are now open and we have had our first (post-Covid) ROMAC patient receive successful surgery for a large benign tumour. After the tumour had been removed from a neonate, both the tumour and the baby had the same weight. Not surprisingly, this surgery was extensive and difficult. The surgery took many hours and ROMAC is extremely grateful for the expertise of the paediatric surgeons, and the district chair, in Canberra.

We have many children “in the wings” and they have a variety of conditions.

We shall commence sending our ROMAC medical consultants to do clinics in the “home countries” as this will make it easier for us to triage those children and decide who will best benefit from ROMAC support. Money, which only comes from Rotarians and their clubs, is not limitless and there is considerable time required for “setting up” a trip to Aust or NZ. We need to find a suitable hospital (and surgeon) and we need to ensure the cost is not prohibitive. As well, we need to ensure the disruption to the family by ensuring the time

away from home is not going to be too long.

During the lockdown we had zoom meetings both with Interplast and East Timor Hearts. Interplast is a College of Surgeons’ initiative which has government funding. It funds Australasian surgeons to voluntarily go to, and operate within, Pacific and Oceania countries. Children referred to us with a cleft lip or palate are referred to Interplast and children with burns can be initially assessed by them to decide as to whether a child requires “a trip down”. It



Rosie was ROMAC's 5th patient. She is now a ROMAC Ambassador and shares her story at District and Club events around Australia. She also mentors other ROMAC patients like Sieli.

Medical Director's Report (contd.)

is good to have a good working relationship with them.

East Timor Hearts organises adult cardiac surgery in Australia but not for children. They have requested, and are keen for, ROMAC to manage Timor Leste children who require surgery for cardiac conditions and for whom the children cannot receive the surgery in Timor Leste.

Understandably, we have a backlog of children who could not come down for over two years. We are already "busy" sorting out logistics, particularly as many referrals are from over two years ago and we need updated information so we can assess the child's current situation.

ROMAC would like to thank the Rotarians, and their clubs, for the continuing support of ROMAC's voluntary work in Oceania and the Pacific. We look forward to your continuing support of ROMAC.

It would be remiss not to thank our recently retired Chair, Harold Sharp OAM. ROMAC is indebted to Harold for his enthusiasm, guidance and mentorship of us during his time as ROMAC Chair.

Laurence (Larry) Roddick OAM FRACP
Medical Director



Vinna was first treated by ROMAC in 2017 for a very badly fractured leg, and returned to New Zealand in 2021-22 to have the plate removed to complete her treatment.



Gina Growden Communications Chair

Communications Report

The ROMAC Communications team consisting of Maggie Alexander, Michele Ellery and Gina Growden is responsible for all aspects of marketing, communications and public relations. The team produces the Annual Report, brochures, promotional flyers, Rotary Down Under advertising and articles, website and newsletter content and social media stories.

Keeping our supporters informed about patients and relevant activities within ROMAC encourages ongoing commitment and financial support which is vital for our survival, and despite no ROMAC patients being treated in Australia this past year, every effort has been made to engage with the 7,000 plus people on our database. Bi-monthly e-newsletters and Chairman's updates have been circulated with a resultant increase in the number of Clubs seeking presentations from a ROMAC representative. Our new 11 minute video provides our volunteer speakers with a vehicle for imparting a consistent and informative message to Clubs and this has been well received. Thanks to our volunteers around Australia and New Zealand, well over 150 presentations, many via Zoom, have been carried out this year, far exceeding the number that would normally take place in a face-to-face environment.

The Communications committee is grateful to the many Rotarians and Friends who have supplied stories and images for our use in the past year.

These contributions are the cornerstone of ROMAC's marketing and communication strategies and are essential tools for encouraging active engagement and ongoing commitment from our supporters. Thank you!

Gina Growden
Communications Chair

ROMAC
SAVING LIVES FOR MORE
THAN 33 YEARS

SINCE its inception in 1988, Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC) has changed the lives of more than 537 children from the Pacific Islands through life-saving and dignity-restoring surgery, performed in Australian and New Zealand hospitals, which they are unable to receive in their home countries.

Leonia Matos Benito recently contacted ROMAC via Facebook, having lost contact with her sponsoring family, to express her appreciation to ROMAC for saving her life.

In 2000, as an 11-year-old from Timor-Leste with serious heart problems meaning she could die at any moment, Leonia was flown to Melbourne, Vic, by ROMAC for urgent surgery.

Now 32, Leonia is a university graduate, is married, has a five-year-old son and a full-time job at World Vision.

"Here I am sharing with you my story of a tough moment in my life back in 2000, when I was 11 years old," Leonia posted. "I had a diagnostic cardiac problem (dysfunction of heart or slow function of heart). I was hospitalised and did not spend my normal life as other children, most of the time I was in local hospitals here in Timor-Leste."

PICTURED: Eleven-year-old ROMAC patient Leonia in 2000.

RDU are always very supportive of ROMAC, publishing stories when available and when space permits. This is Leonia's story—a patient from 2000 who recently recontacted ROMAC via Facebook.

Fundraising 2021-22

With COVID-19 restricting Clubs' ability to fundraise, the number of events conducted during 2021-22 in support of ROMAC was limited. However, some special functions were held resulting in much-needed funds to prepare ROMAC for the expected influx of patients once the borders reopen.

Central Region held a very enjoyable luncheon in August, raising over \$16,000 on the day.

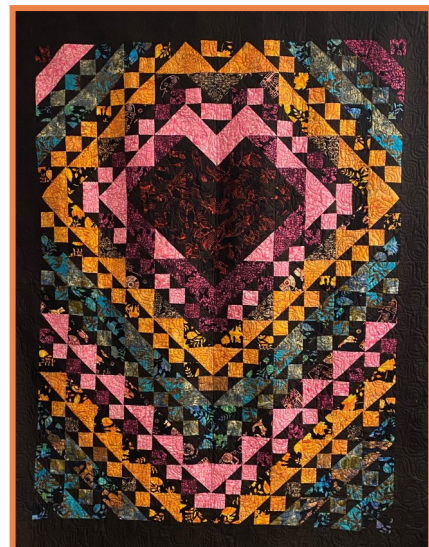
Regular sales of beanies knitted by the Rotary Club of McLaren Vale members and friends raised hundreds of dollars for ROMAC during the year.

And the annual quiz night organized by Brian Mason & the Rotary Club of Caloundra, which was held in June, was again a great success raising over \$12,000. Congratulations to the winning team, from the Rotary Club of Mooloolabar.

Our sincere appreciation goes to those Clubs and ROMAC volunteers who conducted special fundraising events during the year. We know how difficult this has been, particularly in our current COVID environment, and appreciate the time and effort required. Thank you!



Some fundraising events: Pacific Island Cultural Group provided entertainment at the Central Region Luncheon in Adelaide in August (above); the annual trivia night held in the Sunshine Coast in June— collecting the trophy was Vicki Stewart, Past President of the Rotary Club of Mooloolaba; Beanie sales were a successful fundraising initiative of McLaren Vale Rotary members, and a quilt raffled by New Zealand Regional Chair, Glenys Patron raised valuable funds for ROMAC NZ.



The ROMAC Management Team



Role	Name	ROMAC Email	Club
Chairman	Harold Sharp OAM	chair@romac.org.au	Gosford City
Deputy Chair	Ian D'Arcy Walsh	deputy@romac.org.au	Adelaide
Medical Director	Dr Larry Roddick OAM	medical@romac.org.au	Charlestown
Operations Director	Judy Holland	operations@romac.org.au	Redlands Bayside
Treasurer	Stephen Noble	treasurer@romac.org.au	Adelaide
Secretary	Jim Prokhovnik	secretary@romac.org.au	Albert Park
Communications Chair	Gina Growden	communications@romac.org.au	Terrigal
IT Support	Richard Woodburn	itsupport@romac.org.au	Randwick
Communications Coordinator	Maggie Alexander	editor@romac.org.au	North Ryde
Alumni & Patient Evaluation	Bob Richards	evaluation@romac.org.au	Sutherland
District Governor Rep (Zone 8)	David Mayne	david.mayne@wesmold.id.au	Port Macquarie
District Governor Elect Rep (Zone 8)	David McPherson	dmcpherson2710@gmail.com	Deniliquin
Operations Manager (New Zealand)	Sue Smith	opsnz@romac.org.au	St Johns
Regional Chairs			
Northern D9550, D9570, D9600, D9630, D9640, D9650	Wayne Litherland	northern@romac.org.au	Rockhampton South
Eastern D9670, D9675, D9685, D9700, D9710	Helen Ryan	eastern@romac.org.au	Nelson Bay
Southern D9780, D9790, D9800, D9810, D9820, D9830	Jill Oliver	southern@romac.org.au	Alfredton
New Zealand D9910, D9920, D9930, D9940, D9970, D9980	Peter Garnett OBE	newzealand@romac.org.au	East Coast Bays
Central D9500, D9520	Ian D'Arcy Walsh (June-January) Elizabeth Davis (January – June)	central@romac.org.au	Adelaide, Adelaide
Western D9455, D9465	Phil Cordery	western@romac.org.au	Southern Districts

Thanks to our Sponsors ...



TYRRELL'S



The new ROMAC video has been well received whenever it has been shown. One comment from a Rotarian who viewed the video recently was **"A powerful message ... one of the best promotional videos I have seen in 42 years of Rotary. Graphics, text and voice presentation outstanding"**. Many thanks go to Marc Charette, from Work Pics 360, and PP David Bacon (who provided the voice-over) for preparing the video —at no cost to ROMAC!



Give a Little, Help a Lot

Donate now!

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NEW ZEALAND

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