



## Guide for Hosting Families

For information related to hosting ROMAC children and their carers please consult the following guide.

---

“Caring for a ROMAC child as a parent/guardian is a rewarding and satisfying family experience.”

When considering the Caring program, recognise that the ROMAC patient and family member, to whom you are making your home available for the period of their stay, is likely to be from a different culture, although we do strive to place children with like cultures to make an easier transition.

You will be supported at all times by the member of the Regional and District ROMAC Committee. Contact phone numbers for these will be given to you so that you can contact us, at any time, should a query or problem arise.

Carers and their families in the home to be occupied by the ROMAC child must satisfy the requirements of the relevant State Child Protection Act, or equivalent legislation. A member of the ROMAC Committee will discuss this with you – it will be necessary that you fill in complying application forms and sign appropriate declarations to enable processing in accordance with the legislation.



The intended stay may have to be extended for medical reasons, but we are obliged by our Border Protection authorities to make every effort to return the child to their home, as soon as possible. It is not possible to estimate the length of stay until after surgery, or during recuperation, when it will become evident if the duration of stay will vary from the original estimate.

In the event that the patient looks likely to be here for an extended period of time, ROMAC will liaise with you as the Carer family to see if you are still able to host the patient. If you are not, ROMAC will find an alternative Carer.

Your visitors will be so grateful for what you and ROMAC are doing for them and you will have an abundance of rewarding and happy moments.

**ROMAC has the infrastructure in place to save and improve the lives of the unfortunate children in the Oceania Region, who are brought to Australia and New Zealand by ROMAC, with life threatening problems that cannot be corrected in their own country, and we cannot continue this good work without the support of the Carer families.**

---

## 1. The Arrival

Be available to meet the Child and Guardian with members of the ROMAC Committee and the Sponsoring Rotary Club at the airport on arrival. This instantly creates a warm bond. They will generally go home with you, but occasionally may go straight to hospital. It is likely that the patient and guardian will stay with the Carer family for a short period prior to being admitted for their procedure. During this period, they will normally require a number of medical appointments for tests, etc.

Many of the patients arriving have very little by way of English skills. From past experience once they get a little established, their English improves and they can communicate reasonably well. Phrase books may be available if required. Whenever possible we will arrange for an interpreter to be on call.



## 2. Carer Allowance

A weekly remuneration to support the child and guardian may be paid by ROMAC if required. This covers accommodation, food and minor personal expenses.

The family usually arrives with no money and may have to be given a small allowance, but bear in mind that they may be unfamiliar with our currency and prices and so should be accompanied when making any purchases to assist with suitable product choice and cost. (Often the sponsoring Rotary Club will provide some “pocket money”).

Parent/guardian will often volunteer for chores around the house and if they do so doing simple chores should be encouraged, so they can feel as having contributed to your generosity.

Cash expenses incurred for hospital parking, pharmaceuticals, x-ray, pathology tests, etc can be claimed from ROMAC on presentation of receipts. Any accounts for hospitalisation, pathology, etc should be referred to the ROMAC Committee for payment.

Requests for clothing, shoes etc. should also be directed to the ROMAC Committee, but are frequently offered by local religious organisations, charity groups or the sponsoring Rotary Club.

ROMAC children and their families are usually poor and have never had much money or material things and must return to those conditions. A good thing to remember for all our patients is “Keep it simple” and appreciate that overly spoiling them may not be in their long term interest or could create an adverse cultural problem when they return home.

ROMAC will not be responsible for excess baggage, so please make sure they do not accumulate gifts causing baggage to be over 20kg in total. Please bare in mind that electronic equipment is often not suitable and/or affordable to operate in remote island locations. They are often not a good choice of present and something able to be shared by many children more pleasurable and suitable (football or colouring pencils etc).



### 3. Medical Appointments

You will receive advice of medical appointments from a member of the ROMAC Committee.

Assistance is to be arranged through Rotary Clubs to take the patient to appointments, should the Carer family not be able to do this.

If they are from the same culture, carer families sometimes can act as interpreters during medical appointments. In some instances, accredited interpreters are required by the medical institutions.

### 4. Hospitalisation

When checking the child into the Hospital the address to be given is that of the ROMAC Regional Chair and the hospital is to be requested to send all accounts to that address.

When the child is in hospital their parent/guardian may also stay in hospital.

Visiting them as regularly as possible will be greatly appreciated, as would be taking them food which they are used to eating (e.g. rice etc). Mothers/fathers should be encouraged and shown how to prepare food for their child in the carer home.

### 5. General

Patients and parent/guardian should be introduced to some of our modern dangers and domestic facilities. Dangers such as those that exist on our roads and highways, our hot water taps, playing with domestic pets and our domestic chemicals need to be explained. Facilities such as taps, toilets, showers, televisions and laundry arrangements sometimes need to be demonstrated. Some island people need to be shown how to sleep in a bed under a blanket. In some cases these are things they do not have or need at home.



Do not expose a child who has come from a small remote village to large numbers of people. This is sometimes daunting, as are lifts and escalators, and need careful introduction. Introduce new faces slowly so confidence grows.

Be very careful with the use of telephones by the patient and/or guardian. Unfettered access to the telephone can end up with large telephone expenses. It is often important that a parent has access to provide an update back home, but not every day (mostly only when there are medical interventions). The Carer is responsible for unsolicited use. If being used, impose strict time limits to ensure minimal call costs.

The Carer Family is responsible for the child and parent/guardian and must report any issues that they are not happy with, so that we can deal with them before they become problems.

Depending on the age of the child, it may be necessary to provide suitable child/infant car seating to ensure compliance with legal requirements for transport of children in cars. If you do not have a suitable child car seat, please discuss this with the ROMAC Committee.

Any change of Carer Family cannot occur without the approval of the ROMAC Committee. ROMAC must be able to contact a ROMAC Child at all times. Approval from the ROMAC Regional or District Chair must be granted if the child and guardian are to be taken away from the metropolitan area that they are staying in.

The ROMAC child must be accompanied by an adult (with the appropriate State Child Protection Check unless a parent/guardian) at all times and not allowed to be alone in shopping centres and public places (e.g. playgrounds or parks).

ROMAC pays for their airfares, passport and visas and if you are told contrary to this, it is not true. They are often very street wise and soon realise the generosity of what they perceive as wealthy Aussies and Kiwis – don't underestimate them. It is best practice not to allow any gifts of money to them but if offered, suggest the donation be made direct to ROMAC.