

ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23



Frequently Asked Questions about ROMAC

1 Q. Does ROMAC receive Government funding?

A. No. ROMAC relies entirely on the generosity of our individual and corporate donors, the support of Rotary Clubs and District Governors – and the very prudent management of our funds.

2 Q. Does ROMAC have any paid employees?

A. No. ROMAC is 'staffed' entirely by volunteers who use their own office facilities, drive their own cars and pay their own miscellaneous expenses eg. telephone accounts.

3 Q. Why does ROMAC bring children to Australia and New Zealand instead of operating on them in their own country?

A. Because the necessarily complex surgery, paediatric intensive care and rehabilitation required to remedy disfiguring birth defects or life threatening cardiac problems, is simply not available in small nations in the South West Pacific, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste.

4 Q. Once a child in need has been identified, how are they brought to Australia or New Zealand?

A. It is logistically complex to bring a baby or an adolescent, from a remote village to a leading teaching hospital for treatment. Visas and passports need to be obtained, international airfares booked and pre-paid, availability of hospital costs and surgeons ascertained, internal transport organised, home hosting arranged... it is incredibly time consuming... and all offered pro bono by volunteers.

5 Q. Does ROMAC need more volunteers?

A. Yes. There are many ways of supporting ROMAC. You might offer your vocational skills, home-host one of our patients and their carer or be a volunteer driver.

6 Q. How can I find out more about ROMAC?

A. Visit our website – www.romac.org.au or check out our Facebook page for regular updates at <https://www.facebook.com/ROMACFRIENDS>. Subscribe to our E-Newsletter for monthly updates www.romac.org.au/media.

7 Q. How can I donate?

A. That's easy. Thank you for asking. Donate securely on-line at www.romac.org.au OR mail a cheque to either our AU or NZ address. Give a little, care a lot.

Table of Contents

Report	Page
Chair	1
Medical Director	3
Treasurer	4
Operations Director	5
New Zealand Region	6
Northern Region	7
Southern Region	8
Western Region	8
Central Region	9
Australian Capital Territory Region	10
Eastern Region	11
Who's Who at ROMAC	13

Cover Photo

Photo of Senri, reproduced with the permission of David Pforr Photography & Printing Services.



Ian D'Arcy Walsh

Chair

Chair's Report

It has been an exciting but challenging year for ROMAC as we came out of the two-year COVID hiatus. While it has been wonderful to receive patients back into Australia and New Zealand again, it has also been quite demanding because of the changed environment in which we now have to operate. Hospitals are not as accessible as they used to be, our own systems and processes need updating and a number of our key volunteers, through health and the duration of time, have moved on and have to be replaced.

Our eagerness to welcome back the children from the Oceania region has been dampened by the limited access to hospital beds as our Hospitals recover from COVID. Consequently, we have only been able to treat 8 returning and new patients this year, compared with 30 or more per year in the past.

The Hospital bed situation has gradually improved and we have been able to sign two very supportive Memoranda of Understanding, with the Canberra Children's and the Adelaide Women's and Children's Hospitals, which augers well for the next five years. We acknowledge and thank Canberra and Adelaide their wonderful support. We hope to sign hospitals in other cities.

There has been a dramatic decrease in the level of Club donations over the last five years. In 2017, about 19% of Clubs donated \$633,740 to ROMAC compared to 13% donating only \$253,215 this year. This is the result of declining and aging Rotary membership across our Zone, with almost 10% fewer Rotary Clubs, and the pressures of the pandemic, bush fires, floods and inflation.

If we cannot turn around this decline in Club donations, as the Hospitals gradually open up again and are able to accept more of our patients, we will need to look to Government and Corporate sponsorship to maintain previous treatment numbers.

We thank the Clubs who have continued to donate to us over the years and ask the other Clubs to give some thought to supporting this extremely important life and/or dignity restoring Rotary initiative in the future.

Luckily, the level of our other (non-Club) donations and bequests, mainly from individual Rotarians or past Rotarians and their friends, has remained fairly constant at around \$200,000 per year over the last five years. We sincerely thank all those individuals who continue to support us.

We made presentations to over 60 Rotary and Rotaract Clubs across the Zone and made a presentation at the Rotary Zone 8 Conference in Canberra in October.

It was very heartening to have the current Rotary International President, Gordon McInally from Scotland, spend so much time looking over our ROMAC display in Canberra and to meet patients Melenaita and William.



Picture l to r: Ian D'Arcy Walsh, Sandra Goldstraw, William, Gordon McInally, Melenaita, Michelle, Mercy, Dr Larry Roddick

We also had a ROMAC display at the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne in May that attracted much interest from local and international Rotarians and Rotaractors.



Picture: Ian D'Arcy Walsh with international visitors

In November 2022, we conducted a large planning workshop in Brisbane for our key ROMAC office bearers and volunteers. The workshop also included a professional development session at the Queensland

Children's Hospital for our referring doctors from around the Pacific, together with a significant workshop for them and our local doctors who conduct the surgery here in Australia or New Zealand.



Picture r to l: Ian D'Arcy Walsh, Judy Holland and Dr Larry Roddick with overseas referring doctors

An important outcome of our meetings in Brisbane was that, with our new committee structures and all the tasks we are trying to undertake, we desperately needed more volunteers to join our ranks at the District, Regional and National levels. We have welcomed some new volunteers to our Committees but still need more Rotarians or Rotaractors with skills in areas like fundraising, marketing, communications, liaising with Government and Hospitals, paediatrics, finance, recruiting, hosting, producing newsletters and maintaining databases.

Having slightly less patients than we had hoped has allowed us to get our own house in order. We have completely revised and updated our By Laws, developed a new Strategic Plan, a new Child Protection Policy and Procedure and a new Code of Conduct.

We are in the process of updating our Constitution and our online systems for patient referral and management. We have also introduced new Committee structures to enhance the focus on operations (identifying and managing our patients) and engagement (communications, marketing and fundraising).

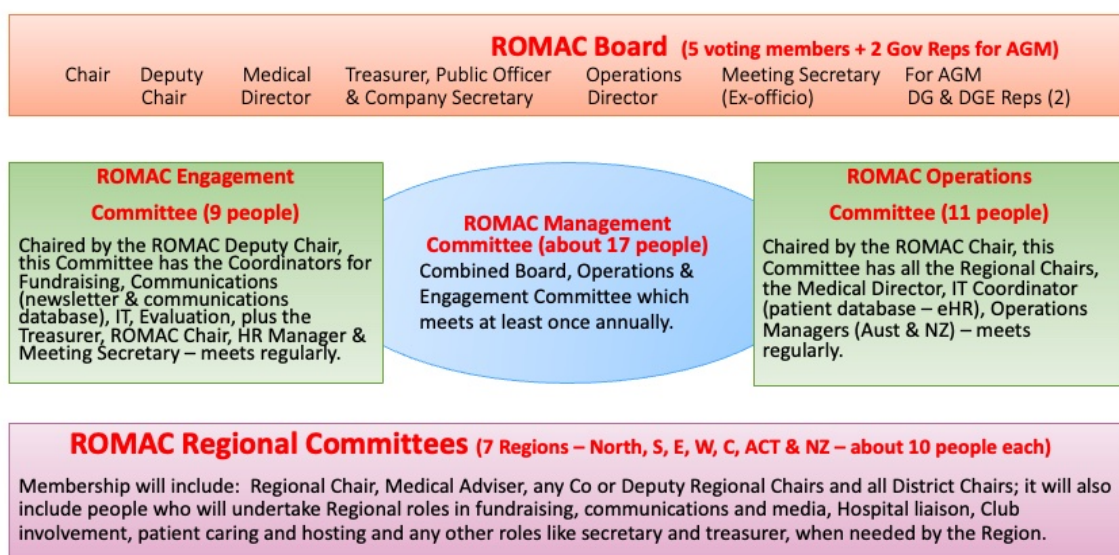
Like all Rotary entities, ROMAC officer bearers have a fixed term in any one position. As we started up again after COVID, we had to farewell some very hard working and long-serving officer bearers.

We acknowledge and thank Harold Sharp - Chair (2019-2022), Larry Roddick - Medical Director (2018-2022), Gina Growden - Communications Chair (2019-2022), Jim Prokhovnik - Secretary (2018-2022), Jill Oliver - Southern Regional Chair (2018-23), Wayne Litherland - Northern Regional Chair (2017-23), Helen Ryan - Eastern Regional Chair (2019-22), Gary Roberts - Fundraising Chair (2021-2023). Thank you very much Harold, Larry, Gina, Jim, Jill, Wayne, Helen and Gary and welcome to their replacements.

We are most fortunate to have come through the pandemic relatively unscathed, and with the resources and enthusiasm to again embark on providing life saving and/or dignity restoring treatment to children from our neighbouring countries.

I would specifically like to thank all our hard-working ROMAC volunteers for all their efforts and the Rotary Clubs, Rotarians and friends who have continued to support us.

The new ROMAC Committee Structure





Nigel Stewart

Medical Director

Medical Director's Report

I took over as Medical Director in late February 2022, following on from the good work of Dr Larry Roddick.

I would like to thank Larry for involving me in ROMAC. Rotary now has a new member as well as a new Medical Director. Larry did a great job in trying circumstances with COVID and its aftermath, which still affects us.

A very important and successful meeting took place with our South Pacific doctors and colleagues in late 2022 under his leadership, reconnecting all of us. Referral criteria were discussed and improved to give maximum benefit to children and their families.

A little about me. I am perfectly poised, mid-Tasman, being a citizen of both Aotearoa and Australia. I trained and practised in New Zealand mainly in South Auckland. I have spent 29 years in rural practice as a general paediatrician in Port Augusta, South Australia and now live, semi-retired in Adelaide.

My experience of children, who need transport and surgery long distances away from home, definitely helps. ROMAC is such a wonderful and effective provider to the South Pacific and Oceania. It has been great to reconnect with my colleagues from Oceania and humbling to see the good work they do.

In my part of this year, we have seen the fading of COVID but it still dominates. A number of children have been able to come to Australia and New Zealand, with Starship managing all through COVID to bring some in for surgery.

The hospitals have had a long break between patients and new relationships need to be built with governments, managers and clinicians. We are rolling out a series of Memoranda of Understanding with hospital managers to formalise and codify responsibilities.

I am in awe of the Regional Chairs and their teams. Also of Judy, Jill and Sue who do a fantastic job in Operations selecting the appropriate patients, organising visas, transport and providing pastoral care.

A number of key people in our region have retired or moved on. It is with sadness we note the passing of Dr Toa, an energetic and caring paediatrician from Tonga, who did so much good. Our condolences to her family and community.

We look forward to a busy and productive year.



Picture: Melenaita and mother Michelle



Stephen Noble

Treasurer

***Treasurer's
Report***

I am pleased to submit my report as Treasurer for ROMAC for the financial year ended **30 June 2023 (FY22/23)**.

This is the first year that we have operated using Xero accounting systems, having adopted Xero from 1 July 2022. This change has been beneficial for reporting and gives more options for system integration and improvements in future years.

The overall result for the current financial year was a surplus of **\$356,980** (\$403,268 FY21/22).

Donations from 148 Rotary Clubs within Australia totalled **\$259,451** (\$253,217 FY21/22), and 25 Clubs that had not donated in the prior year made donations. I note that several Clubs were late in making their donations prior to 30 June 2023.

In addition, ROMAC continued to benefit from other donations and bequests, receiving **\$216,034** (\$172,260 FY21/22). ROMAC continues to enjoy support from several charitable organisations and individuals who contribute year after year, plus a number of new donors.

Income from investments for the current year (dividends and interest) totalled **\$122,176** (\$53,729 FY21/22). The increase is mainly attributable to higher interest rates.

We changed financial advisers this year, moving to Morgan Stanley. This change has taken some time to effect and its impact will start to become evident during next financial year.

In relation to expenses I comment:
Medical expenses for the current year were **\$100,466** (\$4,400 FY21/22). These compare with the pre-COVID 2020 year medical expenses of \$419,215.

Indirect costs (Administrative, promotion and development costs and donations) for the current year are **\$126,463** (\$46,722 FY21/22). The increase in indirect costs was due to the first post-COVID face-to-face meeting for the Board, Regional Chairs and referring paediatric specialists, which was held in Brisbane in November 2022.

In addition, we have adopted the recommendation of our IT advisors to significantly upgrade our patient record system (referred to as "eHR"). This upgrade was needed to ensure that our information technology systems were fully compliant and up-to-date in a changing environment, and to meet more patient demand.

The ROMAC Board is continuing its focus on preparing for an increase in patient case load. This has involved ongoing review of our processes and procedures.

During this year we welcomed a new Medical Director, Dr Nigel Stewart. With Operations Director Judy Holland, he is involved with assessing individual cases, prior to acceptance. They are both focusing on maximising patient outcomes while minimising the risk of cost "blow outs", thus ensuring that ROMAC has a 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 all is critical to the 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**



Judy Holland

Operations
Director

Operations Director's Report

The Operations Team in Australia and New Zealand experienced a slow start to the year with a lack of available PICU and ward beds in our major Metropolitan Hospitals as they all played catch up with their endless elective theatre waiting lists.

Surgeries have again been dominated by cardiac referrals. However only one cardiac patient was treated during the past year followed by a teratoma, a urology, a burn, an eye condition and a respiratory case. Three children were accepted from Tonga, two from the Solomon Islands and one from Vanuatu. Auckland's Starship Children's Hospital is again accepting many of our patients with the majority coming from Vanuatu.

Our job of bringing children and the guardians into Australia has been made more difficult following COVID with long passport application times, even longer immigration waiting lists and stricter requirements to enter Australia.

Our greatest difficulty is locating the families post-referral on remote Islands. Our Rotary contacts in Vanuatu, PNG, Tonga and Solomon Islands have been instrumental in following up, finding and assisting patients with necessary paperwork. They need to be commended on their perseverance because, without them, our work would be impossible.

Bridging Health Vanuatu assisted us in locating 6 of these patients during their recent medical team visit to Tanna Island. We thank them for their time and dedication to ROMAC.

We are fortunate that many Surgeons and Private hospitals are willing to support ROMAC and our patients. Thank you to the Regional Chairs who have worked hard at communicating with hospitals and surgical teams to find the best possible care for our children. It is very exciting to be in talks with hospitals that are new to ROMAC and I hope

that these assist us in treating even more cases in the future.

With a view to expedite visa applications, we took on the task for PNG families despite it proving very frustrating and time consuming. Our web referrals have increased as more medical personnel travel abroad.

Thank you to Medical Director, Nigel Stewart, for your guidance and the ROMAC team for your support over the last year.

ROMAC Patients 2022-23

First Name	Country	Region
Melenaite	Tonga	ACT/ER
William	Solomon Islands	ACT
Vinna	Vanuatu	NZR
Taufa	Tonga	NZR
Isileli	Tonga	ER
Ephraim	Solomon Islands	ER
Senri	Solomon Islands	ER
Apakuki	Fiji	NZR



Picture l to r: Richard Woodburn, Melenaite, Michelle, Anita Robinson



Peter Garnett

New Zealand
Chair

New Zealand Region's Report

It is exciting to be part of an active ROMAC able to bring children into New Zealand once again, following the restrictions we have all faced as a result of COVID. I am proud that, during the COVID pandemic, the New Zealand ROMAC Committee remained well connected with each other, despite the borders being closed to any patients entering New Zealand. Hence, we were well prepared when the borders finally opened.

In this year, the NZ team has lost the services of a number of our long-standing committee members. Our photographer extraordinaire Bill Horne, who ably supported ROMAC with outstanding photographs of patients and supporters, and our skillful training facilitator Leigh Kelly, decided to stand down. Subsequently we were to remember and farewell Leigh following her death as a result of a tragic car accident.

Finally, during 2023 we have undertaken the process of succession planning with the retirement of our long-standing and wonderful Host Club Liaison member, Barbara Watt. We were fortunate to welcome Sarah Oommen who has stepped in to the Host Club Liaison role under the guidance of Barbara, making a very smooth transition. Barbara remains connected to ROMAC, providing support.



Picture l to r: Deputy Chair Glenys Parton, Vinna, Host Club Liaison Barbara Watt, Korina and NZ Chair Peter Garnett

Moving into the 2022-23 ROMAC year and following the opening of the borders, New Zealand welcomed back in November 2022 our first ROMAC Patient Vinna, an orthopedic patient. Vinna had the plate removed from her leg in a private hospital in Hamilton following a 2-year delay as a result of COVID.

Regrettably, during 2022 our NZ children's tertiary hospital, the Starship Hospital in Auckland, continued to have an embargo on accepting overseas patients due to the impact of COVID on staffing and theatre resources. Despite that, once Starship was able it began to take patients again. Baby Taufu and his mother Kalesita arrived from Tonga in March 2023. Apakuki and his mother Kuki arrived in April 2023 from Fiji.



Picture l to r: Sue Smith, Mother Kalesita, Taufu and Father Fainga'amuku



Picture l to r: Peter Garnett, Bruce Morrison, Mother Litea and Apakuki

Both were cardiac patients who were successfully treated and returned home to delighted families. Apakuki had been on the ROMAC list accepted for treatment since 2020 and was delayed due to COVID.

We continue to be grateful for the wonderful support and collegiality we receive from the dedicated medical teams at our supporting hospitals and for the warm and nurturing environment provided by the lovely staff at Ronald McDonald House. It is their support

which enables ROMAC to provide the life changing experience for each of our special ROMAC children.

A further highlight of the year was our support of Dr Walesi McGoan (Valerie) who attended sabbatical training in echocardiography. This training was supported by the sustainability component of a ROMAC Global Grant held by Rotary Takapuna for the treatment of ROMAC patients. Valerie, who was originally from Vanuatu, arrived from Fiji in early December 2022 and attended training through to February 2023 under the mentorship of our NZ ROMAC Medical Advisor Dr John Stirling.



Picture l to r: NZ Treasurer Geoff Pownall, Dr Valerie McGoon and Peter Garnett

Club presentations were held throughout the country but a significant effort to promote ROMAC was undertaken by the D9920 District Governor Partner and the NZ Operations Manager, Sue Smith. As well as speaking about ROMAC during her partner's Club visits, Sue promoted the sale of fundraising raffle tickets – the prize being a lovely Quilt made by immediate past NZ Regional Chair and current ROMAC Deputy Chair, Glenys Parton.



Picture l to r: Glenys Parton and winner David Cotter



Adele Hughes

Northern Chair

Northern Region's Report

Northern Region has been working towards re-establishing contacts enabling medical procedures to be carried out in Brisbane.

At this point in time, we are still on hand to provide support of transfer assistance through Brisbane Domestic and International airports. Both Senri and Ephraim were from the Solomon Islands and transferred to Sydney through Brisbane.

Senri spent most of his rehabilitation time in the care of his guardians in Brisbane, PDG Ros Kelly, and Operations Director Judy Holland. Senri also spent 2 weeks in Gladstone and presented along with me at 6 of the Gladstone Clubs.

I am trying to instigate visits for some of our patients to regional Rotary Clubs. Some of these Clubs have been donating to ROMAC for many years now, without any first-hand contact. To that end, Senri attended a fund-raising night in Toowoomba, which all the Toowoomba Rotary Clubs attended. He was able to meet up with his referring Doctor, Dr Nic Hamilton, who now resides in Toowoomba.

Hopefully, this will significantly increase the support from the Rotary Clubs in this District. The District Chairs will continue to present to clubs via video conferencing when face-to-face presentations are not feasible.

I held a ROMAC display booth at the D9560 District conference at Longreach, and further displays will be held at District Conferences in the future.

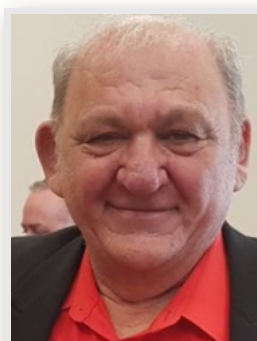
On to 2023/24 with more support and more patients returning.



Minh Nguyen

Southern Chair

Southern Region's Report



Phil Cordery

Western Chair

Western Region's Report

At the beginning of the year, Jill Oliver passed the Southern Region Chair role onto me. After the departure of District 9800 Chair Betty Kitchener, Cherrie Osborne accepted this role on the Southern Region team. We continue to look for a Tasmanian District Chair for 9830 and will be contacting all clubs to find a replacement for the past District Chair, Madeline Logan.

We also welcomed our new Medical Consultant, Dr Bernard Jenner, who is a Consultant Paediatrician, a Clinical Family Therapist and a Senior Lecturer at Deakin University with a vast network, not only within the medical field, but also in local, social and sporting organisations.

I would like to thank Jill Oliver for her support and her energy. Many thanks to all the District Chairs for their commitment and promoting ROMAC to their Clubs. Special thanks to Cherrie Osborne for becoming D9800 Chair and to SR Medical Consultant, Dr Bernie Jenner, for his time and contribution.

The Southern Region was very quiet during the 2022-23 year with no incoming patients to any Victorian hospitals. The major metropolitan hospitals were all busy with Victorian children and playing catch-up with elective surgeries.

However, with the persistent efforts and networks of the former Southern Region Chair, Jill Oliver, and the Regional Medical Consultant, Dr Jenner, a number of patients have been accepted by regional hospitals for 2023-24.

We continue to communicate with the two major metropolitan hospitals in the hope they will accept some of our patients when spaces open up.

I look forward to the year ahead with, hopefully, an influx of patients into the Southern Region.

There have been no ROMAC patients in Western Region since 2014. Despite this, a number of Rotary Clubs and Interact Clubs continue to support ROMAC with donations each year. In 2022-23, nearly \$25,000 was raised.

The Rotary Club of Southern Districts donated two paintings to ROMAC. One painting was raffled and the other was auctioned at District Changeover. The Rotary Club wished for the funds raised to be used towards costs for any future incoming patients into Western Australia.

A number of Rotary Clubs in the Metropolitan and Regional areas were visited. All visits resulted in the clubs donating to ROMAC.

With the assistance with MLA for Thornlie, Chris Tallentire, meetings were arranged with the Western Australia Health Department and the Perth Children's Hospital. Albeit slow progress, the Perth Children's Hospital has verbally indicated its willingness to take at least one ROMAC patient a year and maybe two. Meetings with both parties are on going and we are hopeful of agreement very soon. An Memorandum of Understanding will be signed at the request of the Children's Hospital.

I take this opportunity to thank PDG Brian Eddy for his advice and support.



Picture 1 to r: Members of the Rotary Club of Byford and Phil Cordery



Elizabeth Davis

Central Chair

***Central
Region's Report***

I would like to acknowledge the services of the former Central Region Chair, Ian D'Arcy Walsh. D'Arcy worked tirelessly through a period of change for the region, moving into and out of COVID, into a period of ROMAC renewal. He is now ROMAC Chair and the Central Region Committee is delighted to provide him with support in his new role.

This year the Committee has been firmly focused on the long-term goals of bringing children to Adelaide for their surgery, recognising the cultural and diverse nature of families living in the Oceania region and reviewing and renewing our policies and processes for the benefit of the organisation.

All Committee members have generously given of their time, developing strategies for fundraising, patients travelling to Adelaide for surgery and promoting the work of ROMAC to Rotary Clubs within the Region and beyond.

Over the past 18 months we have been developing strong relationships with some key partners including:

- The South Australian (SA) State Government Women's and Children's Hospital, working towards a Memorandum of Understanding annually capping the medical costs for 4 children
- Ronald McDonald House which provides accommodation while children are undergoing medical treatment by SA specialists and hospital staff
- The Pacific Island Council of SA providing children and their carers with cultural ties to their homelands while living with us.

We now await the arrive of patients and their carers into Adelaide. In the meantime, I would like to thank each member of the Central Region Committee and Rotarians and Rotary Clubs for their financial support for ROMAC.

Thanks to our Sponsors this year





Sandra Goldstraw

Australian Capital
Territory Chair

ACT Region's Report

Canberra had the first ROMAC child to be treated in Australia and New Zealand following the COVID pandemic border closures.



Melenaite and her mother Michelle arrived in Canberra from Tonga in July 2022, a 3-week-old baby girl with a large vascular sacro-coccygeal teratoma on her bottom that weighed 2.5kg.

The Canberra Centennial Women, Youth and Children's Hospital and the Paediatric surgeons accepted the care of Melenaite under the Memorandum of Understanding between ROMAC and Canberra Health Services.

Melenaite required two 7 to 8-hour surgeries as the teratoma had regrown. Unfortunately, the teratoma became malignant. Melenaite was then transferred to Sydney Randwick Children's Hospital to undergo a series of chemotherapy sessions. She returned home to Tonga in April 2023 and ROMAC will continue to follow-up Melenaite's care for a few years.



Fifteen-year-old William and his 23-year-old sister Mercy arrived in Canberra from Solomon Islands in October 2022. He had bilateral multiple kidney stones. His left kidney had 73% function and his right kidney 27%.

The Canberra Centennial Hospital accepted the care of William under the same MoU arrangement. He had 8 separate operations to remove the kidney stones, as working on a kidney has a time limit. In between surgery, William attended the local school where he was able to socialise with students as well as improve on his English skills.

William returned home to Solomon Islands in May 2023 with a fully-functioning left kidney and 60% function in his right kidney.

Where are some of our ACT ROMAC children now?



In 2010 Tava came to Canberra from Solomon Islands, as a baby, with Oesophageal Atresia. His oesophagus was not joined to his stomach. Pictured here with his father, he is now a healthy 13 year old.



In 2014 Honesio came to Canberra from Timor Leste with a complex fractured femur. Now 23 years old, he is on an Australian Awards Scholarship at Flinders University in Adelaide undertaking a Disability and Community Inclusive course for a Bachelor Degree.



In 2019 Vincent came to Canberra from the Solomon Islands with long gap Oesophageal Atresia. Now 4 years old, Vincent had a checkup scope by the visiting Canberra Paediatric team with a successful result.



Anita Robinson

Eastern
Chair

Eastern Region's Report

As a recent addition to the ROMAC team, I assumed the role of Eastern Region Chair in March 2023. I am thrilled to be part of this outstanding program. Following a period of relative quiet due to the challenges posed by COVID-19, I am excited to announce that the Eastern region is once again actively conducting patient reviews and accepting new patients to the Region.

Since the beginning of 2023, the Eastern Region has extended support to four remarkable patients.

Melenaite

Baby Melenaite is a resilient young girl from Tonga. Her journey began at the Canberra Centennial Women, Youth and Children's Hospital, where a skilled medical team successfully removed a 2.5kg vascular teratoma. However, despite the initial triumph, the teratoma regrew, necessitating her transfer to the Sydney Children's Hospital at Randwick.

At Randwick, Melenaite embarked on a courageous battle, undergoing chemotherapy to control the regrowth. The determination paid off, leading to another surgical procedure to remove the remainder of the persistent teratoma and addressed a newly-developed kidney and bladder issue – the success a testament to Melenaite's bravery and the exceptional care she received.



Throughout their stay in Sydney, baby Melenaite and her devoted mother, Michelle, found solace and unwavering support at Ronald McDonald House in Randwick. They formed the meaningful connections with the compassionate staff, fellow families, and members of D9675 and D9865 ROMAC Committees, making their challenging journey just a bit easier.

Senri

Senri is a 13-year-old boy from the Solomon Islands who embarked on a remarkable journey to Sydney in early April. Senri's mission was to receive life-changing reconstructive surgery for his hands, as they had been severely affected by a devastating burns accident in 2021.

At the Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick, Senri underwent not one but two major hand surgeries. In a ground-breaking procedure, metal rods were delicately inserted into each of his fingers, stretching them and creating the perfect canvas for a successful skin graft.

These surgeries have restored the functionality of Senri's hands, rekindling his dreams of playing soccer, particularly in his favourite position as a goalkeeper.



Senri's path to recovery includes rigorous daily physiotherapy exercises, along with his commitment to continuing his education at a local school. He eagerly anticipates the day when he can return home to reunite with his loving family and cherished friends.

The transformation in Senri's life has been made possible by the extraordinary dedication of medical professionals and caregivers who, working together, have given this young boy a chance at a brighter future.

Isileli

Isileli is a courageous 9-year-old boy who travelled from Tonga to Sydney in early April to seek medical treatment at Westmead Children's Hospital. Isileli had been battling illness since he was just 3 years old, enduring recurring chest infections and numerous bouts of pneumonia that challenged his young life.

Under the skilled hands of medical experts at Westmead Children's Hospital, Isileli underwent successful respiratory surgery that marked a turning point in his health journey. Following the surgery, Isileli remained under close medical supervision for a period of 10 days, during which his remarkable progress was closely monitored.



Throughout this challenging time, Isileli, and his devoted mother, Miliame, found solace and support at Ronald McDonald House Westmead, where they received not only shelter but also the comfort of knowing they were not alone in their journey.

The medical team at Westmead Children's Hospital was delighted with Isileli's remarkable recovery, and on May 27th, 2023, they gave their approval for his discharge, allowing him to return home to his beloved Tonga. Back home, Isileli will continue recuperation under the attentive care of doctors in Tonga, bringing hope for a brighter and healthier future for him.

Ephraim

At the tender age of 9 years old, Ephraim faced a challenging diagnosis: bilateral congenital cataracts. It was his observant schoolteachers who first noticed that he was struggling with his vision, which in turn, made it difficult for him to concentrate on his schoolwork.

Ephraim's journey led him to The Children's Hospital at Westmead, where he was accepted

for treatment. After careful evaluation during his initial consultation, it was determined that Ephraim would undergo right cataract eye surgery, a crucial step in restoring his sight.

Following the successful eye surgery, Ephraim's world began to brighten. His vision improved significantly, allowing him to see with greater clarity. To further enhance and optimise his newfound sight, prescription glasses were prescribed, ensuring that Ephraim could continue to explore the world with renewed wonder.



I extend my gratitude, on behalf of ROMAC, to the dedicated medical teams at Westmead Children's Hospital and the Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick for the unwavering care and support provided to Melenaita, Isileli, Senri, and Ephraim. Their expertise and compassion have made a world of difference in these young lives.

A profound thank you also goes out to Ronald McDonald House at Westmead and at Randwick for their exceptional hospitality. They have not only provided a roof over the families' heads but also a sense of normality during their challenging stays.

The ongoing financial support for ROMAC is nothing short of indispensable. It ensures that children from our neighbouring Oceanian countries receive the medical treatment they need, which is unavailable in their home countries.

I wish to express my deep appreciation for the support I have received from my fellow ROMAC District chairs thus far. We eagerly anticipate collaborating, sharing the inspiring ROMAC story, and working together to secure continued assistance for those children in need.

Who's Who in ROMAC 2022-23

Functional Role	Name	ROMAC Email	Club Affiliation
Chair	D'Arcy Walsh	chair@romac.org.au	Adelaide
Deputy Chair	Glenys Parton	deputychair@romac.org.au	Tauranga Sunrise
Treasurer	Stephen Noble	treasurer@romac.org.au	Adelaide
Medical Director	Nigel Stewart	medical@romac.org.au	Somerton Park
Operations Director	Judy Holland	operations@romac.org.	Redlands Bayside
Secretary	Brendan Kenny	secretary@romac.org.au	Unley
Operations Manager (AU)	Jill Oliver	opsmanager@romac.org.au	Alfredton
Operations Manager (NZ)	Sue Smith	opsnz@romac.org.au	St Johns
IT Support	Richard Woodburn	itsupport@romac.org.au	Randwick
HR Manager	Jim Prokhovnik	hr@romac.org.au	Albert Park
Marketing and Engagement Coordinator	David Mayne	marketing@romac.co.nz	Port Macquarie
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