

## DECEMBER 2025

Monthly Newsletter

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

VOL.12

DECEMBER 2025



Our impact

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Refer a child

Donate

Our impact

### Transforming children's lives through life saving surgery

We bring hope to children across Oceania by connecting them with world-class medical care when treatment isn't available in their home countries.

Donate today

How we help

### NEW ROMAC WEBSITE LAUNCHED

ROMAC is proud to announce that its new website [www.romac.life](http://www.romac.life) is live and ready to use. Take a moment to have a look.

This December issue of our E-Newsletter is the last for 2025. In February 2026, we will be back with a new look and feel for our news too.

Enjoy the festive season. This year, please give a gift to help a child live a healthy, happy life at <https://romac.life/donate>.

[Follow Us On Facebook](#)



### MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

As we approach the Christmas season and, here in the southern hemisphere, prepare for our summer break, I would like to take a moment to reflect with gratitude on the extraordinary support that enables ROMAC to make a difference in the lives of children and their families across Oceania.

ROMAC is sustained by generosity in many forms; the commitment of our volunteers, the kindness of host families, the dedication of medical professionals, and the ongoing support of donors, Rotary clubs, corporate partners and friends beyond the Rotary network. Each contribution, whether large or small, plays a vital role in helping children access life-changing medical care.

We are also pleased to share that this month **Solomon Airlines** reaffirmed its long-standing support for ROMAC by renewing its memorandum of understanding, ensuring continued assistance with the safe transfer of children for treatment.

As the year draws to a close, treatment activity naturally slows to allow our volunteers time to rest and enjoy the festive season with their families. At the same time, we are pleased to share that a number of children have already been approved and scheduled for treatment in the New Year, and planning is well underway to ensure they receive the care and support they need.



To everyone who has given their time, skills, resources or encouragement this year, thank you for being part of Team ROMAC.

We also encourage you to consider volunteering with ROMAC in 2026. We currently have several vacant roles, including Operations Director and e-Newsletter Editor. Both roles are vital - facilitating the treatment of children and keeping our community connected by sharing the impact of our work. If you, or someone you know, may be interested, please email [hr@romac.org.au](mailto:hr@romac.org.au).

On behalf of the Board and the entire ROMAC team, I wish you and your loved ones a safe, restful and joyful Christmas, and good wishes for the year ahead as we continue our shared mission.

Glenys Parton  
ROMAC Chair

## ROMAC'S NEW WEBSITE & IT SYSTEMS

ROMAC is pleased to announce its new website [www.romac.life](http://www.romac.life), replacing [www.romac.org.au](http://www.romac.org.au). The URL [www.romac.life](http://www.romac.life) reflects what we do - we provide the hope of a better life for children in Oceania who need surgery they can't get in their home countries.

The new website is rich with features and its look is soft, warm and modern but based on the familiar colours ROMAC uses to identify itself. We have updated our logo to reflect these changes too.

We wanted our website to reflect what we feel we are:

- **Compassionate:** We approach every child's story with empathy and understanding
- **Transparent:** Every dollar donated goes directly to patient care - no hidden costs
- **Collaborative:** We unite volunteers, medical professionals, and communities across Oceania
- **Dedicated:** Our 200+ volunteers give their time freely because we believe every child deserves a chance
- **Impactful:** We don't just facilitate medical care - we transform families and communities

There are new website pages to provide up-to-date news, events and donations. Patient stories are featured prominently. Our team is there as well.

You will find our forms for referrals and donations are updated as well. They are simpler and more user friendly, making them easier to complete.

Behind the scenes, we have implemented a new IT environment to simplify the work our volunteers do and to improve workflow. New systems integrate our data and we can now provide a much better service to our families, Rotary Club members and Districts, medical professionals, hospitals and donors through accurate, speedier information.

● Patient stories

## Real children, real hope, real change

Meet the children and families whose lives have been transformed through ROMAC. These are real stories of courage, community support, and life changing care across the Oceania region.

All regions

Cook Islands

Fiji

Kiribati

Nauru

Niue

Papua New Guinea

Samoa


Solomon Islands

Timor-Leste

Tonga


Tuvalu

Vanuatu




Tonga ● November 21, 2025

Melenaite update



Vanuatu ● November 1, 2025

Baby Ken lives



Solomon Islands ● July 25, 2025

Peter plays



## NORTHERN REGION UPDATE

The Northern Region is pleased to continue its association with the cardiology unit at the Queensland Children's Hospital in Brisbane, under the passionate and caring stewardship of Dr Nelson Alphonso.

The unit recently treated Makin from Vanuatu, who returned home in late August full of smiles and in good health.



Photo: Makin (right) at the airport with Jerry and supporting Rotarians.

Preparations are now well advanced for the arrival of Maximus, an 18-month-old boy from Timor-Leste who requires surgery to correct a hole in his heart. Flights have been booked, pre-operative appointments arranged, and surgery scheduled.

Maximus and his mother, Lilina, will stay overnight in Darwin while transiting to Brisbane, where they hope to briefly renew acquaintances made during a previous visit for pre-assessment.

During their stay in Brisbane of approximately one month, accommodation is likely to be at the nearby Ronald McDonald House (RMH). We reach out to Rotarians and the wider community to assist with support during this time.

At a joint meeting of the combined Rockhampton Rotary clubs, a certificate of appreciation was presented to Rockhampton South Rotary in recognition of their support. Representatives from Ronald McDonald House also presented at the meeting, highlighting the strong cooperation



Photo: Maximus and Lilina with their previous host Ray Fauntleroy in Darwin.

between ROMAC and RMH across a number of locations.

ROMAC relies on the dedication of many volunteers, together with the ongoing support of Rotary clubs. If you are ready to help, please contact [northern@romac.org.au](mailto:northern@romac.org.au).

Wayne Litherland  
Northern Region Chair

## ACT REGION UPDATE

### ACT welcomes two patients in the New Year

Canberra Health Services, Women, Youth and Children's Hospital has recently established a paediatric orthopaedic service in Canberra. It is under the specialised expertise of Dr Blaise Wardle, the newly appointed paediatric orthopaedic surgeon.

In February 2026, we will be welcoming two children from the same family for treatment. Anis aged 12, and his 3-year-old sister Melanie, are from Tanna Island, Vanuatu. Both children have bilateral club feet (talipes) and come from a small village in the north of Tanna Island.

ROMAC extends its sincere appreciation to Canberra Hospital for accepting two children at the same time from the same family. This illustrates the beneficial collaboration between ACT Health and ROMAC. We will share this family's journey to recovery with you in the new year.

Sandra Goldstraw  
ACT Region Chair

## CENTRAL REGION UPDATE

Ivana is a four-year-old girl from Timor-Leste who was diagnosed with congenital heart disease in 2023 following an echocardiogram in Timor. The echocardiogram revealed a small to moderate patent ductus arteriosus (PDA).

In November, Ivana travelled to Australia with her mother Silvia, transiting through Darwin before arriving in Adelaide on 17 November. She was reviewed by her surgeon on arrival and was initially scheduled for PDA surgery on Wednesday 19 November.

However, on the morning of admission for surgery at the Women's and Children's Hospital (WCH), Ivana was found to have a respiratory virus infection. As a result, her surgery was postponed. The revised plan was for a surgical review on 24 November, with possible surgery two days later but this was delayed too.

Finally, Ivana was admitted to the WCH on 3 December and underwent successful PDA surgery under the care of cardiac surgeon Dr Andrew Kelly. She recovered well and was transferred to the Medical Day Unit for observation later that afternoon, before moving to a bed in the adjoining unit overnight. Following a further ultrasound the next morning, Ivana was discharged to stay at Ronald McDonald House with her mother Silvia during her recovery.

Ivana attended her final consultation with Dr Kelly on 8 December at the WCH. A follow-up ultrasound confirmed a clean bill of health, and she was discharged on no medications.

She returned home on Wednesday 10 December, once again transiting through Darwin and supported by Judith and the Darwin team during their transit journey.



Photo: Four-year-old Ivana

The dedicated Adelaide ROMAC Regional Committee and I provided support to mother and child throughout.

Our sincere thanks to the WCH, which enabled Ivana's treatment under a Memorandum of Understanding with ROMAC for a fixed price.

This was a wonderful and successful way for me to begin my journey as the new ROMAC Central Region Chair.

Judi Brown  
Central Region Chair



## EASTERN REGION UPDATE

Six-month-old Baby Hilario from Timor-Leste was born prematurely. He was later diagnosed with bilateral retinopathy of prematurity, a serious condition affecting both eyes. He required vitreo-retinal surgery to save his sight.

Hilario and his mum, Ninevia, arrived in Sydney on 7 December to undergo pre-surgery testing and receive specialist medical care. Surgery was successfully performed on 12 December at The Children's Hospital at Westmead under the care of ophthalmologic surgeon Dr Amanda Ie and her dedicated medical team.

Hilario and Ninevia were initially hosted by ROMAC Eastern Chair Anita Robinson, and then supported by the wider Eastern Region Committee. After several days in hospital, they stayed at Ronald McDonald House Westmead while Hilario continued his recovery and awaited medical clearance.

Eastern Region Committee member Maggie Thorn played an instrumental role in supporting Hilario and Ninevia throughout the post-surgery period. Her dedication and compassion are greatly appreciated.

During their stay, Ninevia also received heartfelt support from Sister Eufemia and Marzieh Brentall, both originally from Timor-Leste and now living in Sydney. Their kindness, cultural connection, and home-cooked food provided comfort and encouragement. They were a great source of strength to both Ninevia and the Eastern Region team.

Following a successful post-surgery review, Hilario and Ninevia were cleared to return home and departed Sydney on 20 December, just in time to celebrate Christmas with family and friends in Timor-Leste.

This beautiful outcome was made possible through teamwork, generosity, and care. Sincere thanks to everyone who played a part in Hilario's journey.



Photo: Baby Hilario with his mother Ninevia

Fifteen-year-old Antonio from Timor-Leste is scheduled to arrive in Sydney in early January to receive specialist treatment and surgery for his right eye.

Antonio sustained a traumatic eye injury after being struck by a ball while playing football with friends. Although he received immediate treatment in Timor-Leste, the intervention was unfortunately unsuccessful. Doctors in Dili contacted ROMAC to seek help to access further specialist care.

Antonio will travel to Australia with his mother, Ana, and will be under the care of ophthalmic surgeon Dr Gaurav Bhardwaj from the Retina and Eye Clinic NSW. Antonio will need to remain in Australia for about two weeks after surgery.

Antonio and Ana will be kindly hosted by several Rotary families. Eastern Region Chair Anita Robinson will initially support Antonio through his surgery, after which they will enjoy the hospitality of other generous Rotary families.

I am sincerely grateful for the wonderful support extended to Antonio and his family, which will make his life changing treatment possible.

Anita Robinson  
ROMAC Eastern Region Chair



[AUSTRALIA - DONATE NOW](#)

[NEW ZEALAND - DONATE NOW](#)

## How Can You Help ROMAC?

## Give a little, care a lot.

Refer a patient. It's easy. Just follow the [Refer a Patient Link](#) on our website and make a difference to a child and their family.

Every day Rotarians and Friends are providing funds to cover travel, accommodation and treatment for children and their parent or guardian. But we could help more children if we had more donations. Donations all go directly to children and their care. ROMAC funds its administration costs through investment and other income.

Volunteers run our organisation. Please volunteer yourself to help.

**Rotary clubs:** If every Rotarian in Australia and New Zealand donated \$20 and every club matched the donation of each member, we could cover the costs of all the children referred to us annually.

**Friends of Rotary:** If every Friend donated \$20, we could help even more children.

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