



# A 30-YEAR ROTARY LOVE STORY

This year, Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC) is celebrating 30 remarkable years of transforming lives.

*By Ann Burleigh  
ROMAC communications advisor*



OPPOSITE: Elody attached to oxygen supply, carried by his mum and accompanied by his medical escort Dr Tara Douglas. ABOVE: Calnizio with his mum. ABOVE RIGHT: James 24 hours after his surgery. RIGHT: Justino in hospital.

**TAKE** one heartbroken family. Add a very remote location, with virtually no access to medical care. Situate this in a Pacific Rim country, with limited financial resources and infrastructure. A baby with a congenital birth defect is sure to die prematurely. A child with a grossly disfiguring condition, like harelip and cleft palate, encephalocele or teratoma, will potentially live a short life of misery, pain and social exclusion.

Add Rotary to the mix. Under this umbrella, create Rotary Oceania Medical Aid for Children (ROMAC), an organisation dedicated to bringing these children to Australia and New Zealand for the care and intervention they so urgently need.

This year, ROMAC celebrates an amazing 30 years of humanitarian aid. Newborns, toddlers and

adolescents have had their lives saved or transformed. "Hundreds of them," current chairman Rob Wilkinson says proudly.

"We have a great team of ROMAC volunteers in Australia and New Zealand, but also in countries like Vanuatu, Fiji, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste. It's really an international effort. We receive no government funding, so the financial support of Rotary clubs is crucial to our continuing success. We are enormously grateful to them and to our individual and corporate donors."

"Quite simply, though," Rob says, "it's about love. It's about caring enough to do something. The resources aren't available in the child's home country; we have leading teaching hospitals,

sophisticated technology, skilled and professional medical and nursing staff and rehabilitation specialists. We must share."

ROMAC is celebrating with a 30 Year Anniversary Dinner at NSW Parliament House on Friday, March 16, 2018. Rotary International president Ian Riseley will be the special guest speaker. All Rotarians and friends of ROMAC are warmly invited. Tickets (\$150 per person) are available from [www.humanitix.com/event/romac](http://www.humanitix.com/event/romac).

ROMAC is an exemplar of Rotary service. It's about being a good neighbour and a friend to those in need. It's about adversity, isolation, humanity, compassion, hope, trust and commitment – but, at its heart, ROMAC is indeed a marvellous love story. •