



ROTARY CLUB OF COROWA

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**President Bill Bott AM, District Governor Neta Kirby,
International President Gordon McNally**

Part 2 Karie Playford Royal Children's Hospital Appeal

In 2011, a new, 320 bed purpose-built hospital was opened on the Parkville site, adjacent to the building which had opened almost 50 years earlier. This is the incredible facility that we know today. In 2016-17 the hospital treated over 85,000 children in their emergency department, performed more than 17,000 surgeries and had close to 50,000 patients admitted to their wards. In addition, more than 322,000 children attended specialist clinic appointments as outpatients. While the Victorian Government funds the hospital's standard operating costs, money raised through the Good Friday Appeal supports clinical excellence. The programs and initiatives funded by donated money create outcomes that are above and beyond the hospital's normal day-to-day activities. They not only support [the Royal Children's Hospital](#), but also its campus partners, The [Murdoch Children's Research Institute](#) and [The University of Melbourne Department of Paediatrics](#), to push the boundaries of paediatric healthcare.

They take the Royal Children's Hospital from being a good hospital to being a great hospital.

This year the Good Friday Appeal raised over \$23 million dollars for the Royal Children's Hospital. Of this, our little community of Corowa Wahgunyah contributed over \$123,000, an amazing effort. For perspective, it was higher than the amounts raised by much bigger towns such as Albury, Wangaratta, Bendigo and Shepparton and it was on par with Geelong.

So just how did Corowa Wahgunyah raise this much?

The easy and very truthful answer to that is that we live in an extraordinarily generous community. We ask people to consider supporting the Appeal then it is entirely up to them to decide how to respond.

The second answer, we are lucky to have the support of many local businesses and community groups who sponsor our events or run their own fundraisers, doing a lot of the heavy lifting for us.

The third, and also very truthful, answer is that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes by local area managers, past and present, to build the profile of the Appeal locally and to create opportunities for people to support the Appeal in different ways and throughout the year, not just on Good Friday itself.

In some districts local area managers are made up of community groups or organisations, perhaps the local CFA, Lions, Rotary or Apex club. In other areas, such as ours, the local area managers are a group of individuals, often with a personal link to the hospital.

For us it is a family affair, inspired by our own experiences at the hospital. In 2015 one of my grandchildren was born with a complex congenital heart condition. He had his first of many open heart surgeries at the Royal Children's Hospital on his third day of life. For the following five months the Royal Children's Hospital was the only home he knew. Life for our family became a constant of trips up and down the freeway to Melbourne and we learnt to take everything one day at a time as my grandson was regularly moved between the intensive care and cardiac wards. Each step forward seemed to be followed by a step back. The hospital continues to play a part in his life, with a further surgery before his 4th birthday and regular visits to his multi-disciplinary care team.

I spent many days walking around the hospital, trying to keep my older grandchild amused or pushing him in a pram till he finally fell asleep. We explored every corner of the building and grounds, from the two storey high aquarium, and the Meerkat enclosures inside, to the duck pond and the adventure playground outside, from which you could watch helicopters land on the hospital's roof. Whilst this was exciting for the children watching, as a parent and grandparent I knew that this meant another family were having a particularly traumatic day. During my time at the hospital I saw happy times and sad times. Outside of our own journey there are two instances that have particularly stuck with me. In the first there was a little boy who was at one time in an adjoining room to my grandson in the cardiac ward. He and my grandson shared the same name. One evening I was at the hospital and this boy's family were preparing him for a trip downstairs to McDonalds for a special birthday dinner. He was turning four, and over his bed were strung up drawings and messages from his pre-school class mates. It took some effort for the nurses and parents to get him and all his tubes, wires and medical equipment sorted and ready to go. But for his family it was important, because the reality for this little boy was it may have been his last birthday. Without a heart transplant he would not be going home. I don't know what happened to this little boy, and whether he ever received the ultimate gift of life, but I think of him from time to time and hope that somewhere there is a 12 year old boy living his best life.

The other time was the afternoon of April 8th 2015. After several days in Melbourne I stopped by the hospital to see my grandson in the ICU ward before driving home. That same day women drove her car into a lake with 4 of her 7 children on board.

The children were airlifted from the scene to the Royal Children's Hospital. Usual protocol is when a trauma patient arrives at the hospital a nurse from ICU is dispatched to the emergency department to provide assistance. With 4 trauma patients arriving the ICU was left short of staff. One nurse asked if I was prepared to stay with my grandson so that he would still be monitored. I was to press the emergency call button if I was concerned at any time. I stayed many hours later than intended, till the emergency was over and staff returned to the ICU. Sadly, 3 of the 4 children did not survive. When I left the ward I decided to stop at the food court to grab some dinner. Seated at the table next to me were a group of paramedics who had obviously been involved in the day's events and were together debriefing and regrouping before getting back to their jobs and their own families. Seeing how visibly shattered they were will stick with me for life.

It is only once you have spent time at the hospital that you realize how lucky we are to have a world-class facility, with over 6000 dedicated staff members at our disposal. Many years ago, when my own children were young, I used to watch the Good Friday Appeal telethon each year and would get teary listening to the stories of the patients and their families. Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think that MY family would be an RCH family. But our community is full of RCH families – many of you will know, or know of, someone who has been a patient at the Royal Children's Hospital. The pediatric wards at our local hospitals in Wangaratta and Albury are fantastic, but they are still limited in the level of care and expertise they can provide to the sickest children in our communities. They cannot possibly have the same level of resources, both human and physical, that a major facility such as the Royal Children's Hospital can.

As a family we are incredibly grateful to the Royal Children's Hospital. Without them, my grandson, who won aged champion in his first athletics carnival when he started school, would not be alive. Not bad for a kid with half a heart! This is what drives our passion for the Good Friday Appeal. Seeing children being given the opportunity to grow and to live their best lives. This is why Easter now has an additional focus for my family.

This is what makes us thankful to each and every person who supports our local fundraising efforts by donating money, volunteering time, attending events, buying raffle tickets or running their own fundraisers. This is why we are so proud of our community in raising \$123,000.

In 1932, when the second annual sporting carnival was held, the Sporting Globe journalist and event organizer, W.S. Sharland noted in an article:

“An old footballer said the other day – Every kiddy is entitled to get a fair start in this world, and that is why I think thousands will patronise the carnival this year”

90 years later, the same rings true.

Over the coming 8 weeks there will be many activities taking place locally to raise funds for our 2024 campaign. As Good Friday approaches please consider how you, individually or collectively, can help support our fundraising efforts.

RVFR Dinner @ Chocolate Factory Thurs 14th Feb

Fantastic night had by all at the Corowa Distilling Co. The company was fabulous with a huge representation from travelling fellow Rotarians



El president Bill handing the President from RVFR a famous Corowa Rotary Muscat



Annic heading to Safari



Look at those legs! A much younger Neil Davis

February
celebrations



Birthdays

Ray Terrill 12th Feb 1951

Dave Millthorpe 22nd Feb 1956

Inducted

Barrie Hunter 3rd Feb 2021

Sandie Hunter 3rd Feb 2021

Bill Pentney 23rd Feb 2022

Roster of duties

Wed 31st Feb Royal Hotel

Program – Fellowship

Chairman – Alan Wilson

Treasurer – Ian Brooks

Grace – Graeme C

Loyal – Neil

International Toast – Rosie

Rotary Info- Dave M

Sergeant's help- Bill P

Supplied by Wally Cann

Kevin was starting to think
that maybe his mom wasn't
coming back.



Roster of duties

Wed 28th Feb Royal Hotel

Program – Fellowship

Chairman – Ray T

Treasurer – Alan Wilson

Grace – Ian B

Loyal – Graeme C

International Toast – Neil

Rotary Info- Rosie

Sergeant's help- Dave M



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Sat-Sun opening hours 9am to 1pm