



MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 17 September 2025

\$1M Dick and Pip Smith donation doubled to \$2M for Australians in need

Australians experiencing extreme hardship such as rare illness, trauma, or unexpected life events, will benefit from up to \$2 million in new support, following a \$1 million commitment from Dick and Pip Smith to Rotary Australia's Compassionate Grants program, matched by Rotary Clubs across the country.

Since 2017, the Compassionate Grants program has delivered more than \$6 million in direct aid to Australians and Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) CEO Mahir Momand, said the new pledge would extend the program's reach even further.

"The Smiths' generosity, combined with the matching support of Rotary Clubs, will transform lives across Australia," Mr Mahir said.

"The Compassionate Grants program has already supported hundreds of Australians in crisis, and this new commitment ensures we can continue to provide immediate, practical help where it is needed most."

The Smiths have supported Rotary's Compassionate Grants program since its inception in 2017 and have seen the significant impact it has had on people including 13-year-old Isabella Lombardo who suffers from spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy.

"Rotary is a trusted organisation with an excellent track record of supporting people facing extreme hardship and I call on Australians to help support this fantastic cause and make a material difference to the lives of people like Isabella," Mr Smith said.

Isabella's mother, Libby Lombardo, said that Rotary and RAWCS gave their family a way forward when there was no clear path.

At just four years old, Isabella Lombardo lived with constant pain caused by spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy.

Doctors in Australia said little could be done beyond ongoing pain management injections, and her family, already stretched with a newborn and a mortgage, felt they had no options.

With the support of RAWCS, the *Isabella's Journey to Walk* project was established, enabling tax-deductible donations and fundraising to cover the cost of life-changing surgery in the United States.

In 2016, Isabella underwent the operation and began intensive rehabilitation and today, she can stand independently, walk with a frame, and continues to build her mobility.

"Rotary and RAWCS gave us a way forward when we had no clear path, kept our family together, and ultimately gave Isabella the chance for surgery," said Ms Lombardo.

"This is an organisation that directly helps families and delivers life-changing results you can see. For us, this support didn't just change Isabella's life – it changed our whole family's future."



Australians wishing to support the Compassionate Grants program can learn more or contribute at: donations.rawcs.com.au/65-2023-24.

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About RAWCS

The Compassionate Grants program is enabled by RAWCS and administered through the Rotary Australia Benevolent Society (RABS), with Rotary Clubs nationwide identifying and supporting individuals and families in need. Every dollar donated is matched, ensuring contributions go further and reach people at their most vulnerable.