

CRANIOFACIAL AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER

Changing Faces Changing Lives

AUTUMN 2025



PICTURED: RESEARCHER ASSOC PROF SEB DWORKIN, LA TROBE UNIVERSITY, VIC

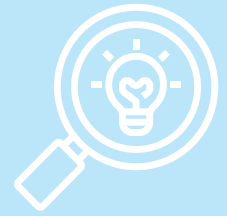


E: info@acmff.org.au | T: (08) 8267 4128

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-  craniofacial.com.au
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Exploring Frontiers: Insights from the Research World



Did you know that one of the main goals of Craniofacial Australia is to drive discoveries for the craniofacial community? We've been at the forefront of craniofacial research for more than 40 years.

In 2025, we continue to shape the future by funding the brightest minds dedicated to craniofacial research in Australia and abroad.

We present to you our game-changing researchers.



Genetic Causes of Craniofacial Defects

Title: "Understanding genetic pathways that regulate palate closure"

**Assoc Prof Sebastian Dworkin,
La Trobe University**

Summary

Craniofacial defects are among the most common birth defects, yet the causes of nearly 50% remain unknown.

Researchers have found that GRHL genes play a crucial role in craniofacial development by regulating other genes.

This project aims to identify key genes involved in facial and head development.

Impact on the future

Findings could lead to better maternal health strategies during pregnancy and improved treatments.



Understanding Mental Health in Craniofacial Patients

Title: Mental health disorders among individuals with craniofacial anomalies

**Dr Mohammed Junaid
University of Western Australia**

Summary

People with craniofacial conditions often face social stigma, bullying, and mental health challenges. Dr Junaid's study analyzes data from seven Western Australian databases to assess the prevalence of mental health conditions in craniofacial patients and explore links to intellectual disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Impact on the future

Findings could improve treatment protocols and ensure better psychological support for patients, helping healthcare teams provide more effective care.



Clinical applications of new discoveries in hope of improving patient care

Title: "Exploring aberrant chondrocyte death as a new origin of craniofacial defects"

**Assoc Prof Quenten Schwarz,
University of South Australia**

Summary

Mandibular hypoplasia is a common congenital condition with limited treatment options, often requiring major reconstructive surgery.

Assoc Prof Schwarz's previous research found that dietary supplements given during pregnancy can influence cranial skeleton growth and may even reduce the effects of genetic defects leading to smaller jaws.

Impact on the future

This research will provide insights into why jaw defects occur, new diagnostic tools, predictive testing, and potential treatments. These findings could complement surgical interventions and improve postnatal jaw growth for affected patients.



Drug-Based Therapy for Craniomaxillofacial Bone Repair

Title: "Epigenetic regulation of craniofacial bone regeneration"

**Prof Stan Gronthos,
University of Adelaide**

[Summary](#)

Craniomaxillofacial defects caused by congenital conditions, trauma, or disease are difficult to treat. Current treatments rely on bone grafts, which can cause complications and vary in effectiveness. This research explores drug-based therapies to stimulate bone regeneration using skeletal stem cells.

Researchers identified two DNA-modifying enzymes that suppress bone formation in skeletal stem cells. By using chemical inhibitors, they successfully stimulated bone repair in large cranial defects in small models.

[Impact on the future](#)

This breakthrough could lead to non-surgical treatments for bone defects. The next phase involves testing in larger models, with the goal of advancing to human clinical trials.



Bridging the Support Gap for Craniofacial Families

Title: "Psychosocial support needs for families living with craniofacial conditions"

**Prof Rachel Roberts, Dr Amanda Osborn, Assoc Prof Diana Dorstyn,
University of Adelaide**

[Summary](#)

Parents of children with craniofacial conditions face anxiety and uncertainty, often struggling to find reliable information, emotional support and access to credible, tailored resources.

Research has uncovered a strong need for a central online hub with evidence-based information and digital psychosocial support, especially important for rural families.

[Impact on the future](#)

Thanks to research previously funded by Craniofacial Australia, the next step is developing a library of accessible online resources to ensure all families receive the guidance and support they need.

[Did you know?](#)

Findings are available for public viewing on The Cleft-Palate Craniofacial Journal. Scan the QR code to view the full report:



Cleft Lip repair in older children

Title: "Is Cleft Lip repair in older children associated with higher complication rates?"

**Dr Nitisha Narayan
Bristol Cleft Fellowship, UK**

[Summary](#)

Comparing children undergoing Cleft Lip repair before and during the Covid-19 pandemic. Healthcare restrictions during the pandemic delayed the surgical repair of Cleft Lip, meaning that as children were more mobile, over 20% injured the repaired lip. Currently under peer review in JPRAS.

[Impact on the future](#)

Dr Narayan's work is shaping future cleft care protocols, ensuring safer, more effective treatments for children worldwide.

[Did you know?](#)

Dr Narayan's previous paper, "Antibiotic Prophylaxis for the Prevention of Fistulae in Cleft Palate Repair: A Quality Improvement Study" has been published in Vol 43 of JPRAS and is available for public viewing. Scan the QR code to read online:





Patient Support Spotlight: **From Pakistan to Australia**

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One of the most important things we do at Craniofacial Australia is support people from overseas with craniofacial conditions. Zuhair, a dedicated father of three, searched tirelessly to find the best support and treatment for his first-born daughter Zuhrah.

Cranio-Warrior Zuhrah was born in Pakistan in 2021, a day that should have been filled with pure joy. Instead, it quickly turned into a whirlwind of anxiety as she struggled to breathe. Her doctors were baffled, faced with a condition they had never encountered before.

Hospitals and medical teams in developing countries like Pakistan are not funded, trained and equipped to adequately provide for craniofacial patients. A series of traumatic events saw Zuhair searching far and wide for better options for his precious daughter.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Craniofacial Australia funded return flights from Pakistan to Australia, transport and meals during their stay to receive treatment in Adelaide.

We spoke to Zuhair about how our Patient Support program played a part in their journey.

“Our prayers were answered. We made our way to South Australia for treatment. Our visit to Adelaide was a revelation. The care and compassion that we received gave us something that we hadn’t felt in a long time: hope.”

“Our hearts are filled with gratitude for everyone who has supported us on this journey—from the dedicated medical team to the compassionate souls at Craniofacial Australia. They have given our daughter a fighting chance and, with it, the promise of a brighter future. As parents, we wish for nothing more.”

“Our beautiful Zuhrah, continues to shine brightly. A beacon of hope and resilience.”



Thank you Zuhair for generously sharing your family's story.

Scan here or use the link below to watch the family's video:



craniofacial.com.au/zuhrah-s-journey



Support Craniofacial Australia with a Donation Box!

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Calling all Aussie businesses, workplaces, sporting clubs, and community groups!

Looking for an easy way to give back? Host a Craniofacial Australia donation box at your location and help raise funds for life-changing treatment and research.

A huge thank you to Flava Lunch Bar in Marlestone, SA, whose donation box raised an amazing \$175 in coins!

How it Works:

- Customers can drop in coins or notes
- Or scan the QR code for an easy online donation

**Want to get involved?
Contact our Fundraising Team and join us in making a difference!**

Email:
fundraising@acmff.org.au

New Partnership

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KAISERCRAFT

We are incredibly grateful to Kaisercraft for teaming up with us in a wholesale partnership, allowing us to purchase Care Pack toys at a discount rate and also generously donating birthday cards for our Cranio-Warriors.

Support Those Who Support Us! Visit your nearest Kaisercraft store or shop online at kaisercraft.com.au



A Celebration to Remember

20th October 2024

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Wow—what a spectacular day celebrating at our 40th Anniversary Gala Lunch! Guests arrived in style and enjoyed a beautiful spring afternoon filled with delicious food and drinks, live entertainment, and wonderful company.

We are incredibly grateful to the local businesses whose generous donations made our silent and live auctions a success, as well as to our Cranio-Warrior families, long-time supporters, and new friends who joined us for this milestone event.

Visit craniofacial.com.au/gala-lunch-2024 to view photos, a highlights video, and a list of our amazing partners.



Children's Christmas Party

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In November 2024, we gathered for our annual Cranio-Warriors Christmas Party at AFL Max, Adelaide — and what a celebration it was!

Our incredible families, both young and young-at-heart, spent the afternoon playing, kicking, climbing, and laughing together. A huge shoutout to **Variety the Children's Charity** of South Australia for sponsoring this event and for their continued generosity over the years.

We also sent gift cards to our interstate Cranio-Warriors, ensuring they felt included in the holiday magic.

▶ View the full photo gallery here:
craniofacial.com.au/christmas-party



☆ A Christmas Wish Come True ☆

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to the Craniofacial Australia Christmas Wish Appeal, from long-time supporters to new donors alike.

Coming to a Town Near You!



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Imagine a place where Craniofacial Warriors and their families can come together, connect, share stories, and enjoy some well-deserved time out—that's exactly what our Coffee & Cranio Meetups are all about!

Whether you're just beginning your craniofacial journey or have years of experience to share, these meetups create a supportive and uplifting space where families can chat, laugh, and let the kids play in a relaxed environment.

These gatherings are held Australia-wide, and we'd love to work alongside you to bring one to your community! If you'd like to volunteer to host a Coffee & Cranio Meetup in your town, reach out to us.

Email:
familysupport@acmff.org.au



How it works:

- Hosts volunteer their time to coordinate, by sourcing a location, time and date
- We spread the word and invite families in your area
- Craniofacial Australia covers the cost of refreshments
- Families mingle & connect at their local Coffee & Cranio Meetup

Community & Workplace Fundraising



Community fundraising is more than just raising money—it helps us build awareness, engagement, and lasting support. Our supporters are invaluable in amplifying the impact we make. Every contribution, big or small, brings us closer to changing lives.

Meet Our Inspiring Fundraisers

Cranio-Warrior Mum Rikki – A Fundraising Superstar

We were thrilled to be chosen as Charity of the Month (September 2024) by the Westpac Group Mortgage Operations Community Committee in Lockleys, SA!

This opportunity came thanks to super-mum and Westpac employee Rikki—proud mum of Cranio-Warrior Zayne—who nominated Craniofacial Australia and took the lead in organising raffles, a staff baby photo contest, a hot lunch, and more. Westpac generously matched a portion of the funds raised, bringing the total to an extraordinary \$6,134.

We attended a cheque presentation with Westpac Senior Manager James Wigzell, Project Manager Melissa Mudge, Rikki, Zayne, the fundraising committee and staff.

A heartfelt thank you to Rikki and everyone who organised and participated in this fundraiser — your hard work and kindness shine brightly!



Cranio-Warrior Mum Nina – A Heart of Gold

Meet Cranio-Mum Nina (pictured with Craniofacial Australia staff Matthew) who embodies compassion. Following son Loui's Craniosynostosis diagnosis, Nina reached out to us last year with a desire to help other cranio-families. She donated to our Tax Appeal in lieu of Loui's baptism favors, and then went on to organise a Toy Drive over Christmas at her family business "Style Philosophy Hair Studio" in Fulham Gardens, SA.

Nina delivered her Toy Drive box, which was overflowing with toys, toiletries, books and more. It's incredible knowing that this gesture of compassion impacts so many families in a similar situation.

Thank you Nina, Vinnie, Loui and everyone who donated to her Christmas Toy Drive. If you live in Adelaide and would like to support the incredible family behind it, please follow and visit "Style Philosophy Hair Studio" — a local business with a big heart.

“Calories for Cranio” Success

A huge thank you to Fitstop in Wynnum, Queensland for hosting their annual “Calories for Cranio” workout day, raising an incredible \$990. To mark the occasion, the gym was decorated with purple balloons and cupcakes. Gym members brought their energy, and support to help raise awareness and funds for the Ollett family’s mission, inspired by their son Artemis’ Craniosynostosis journey.

We are grateful to the Olletts and their Gym Family. Through their dedication and the support of their amazing community, they have raised thousands of dollars over the years to support Craniofacial Australia. Thank you!



Join us as a Community Fundrasier!

Want to make a real impact? We’re looking for passionate community fundraisers all around Australia, to help support our mission. Whether you host an event, run a fundraiser, or rally your network, every effort brings life-changing care to those in need.

Join us today and be a part of something bigger! Get involved now.

Email: fundraising@acmff.org.au | Phone: (08) 8267 4128

Introducing Craniofacial Australia’s New Board Member

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We are thrilled to welcome Associate Professor Neil R McLean MD FRCS to the Craniofacial Australia Board!

Currently working as a Consultant Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon in the North-East of England, Prof McLean and his Australian wife plan to retire to Adelaide in the next 12-18 months, allowing him to dedicate even more time to supporting our mission.

Contributions Over the Years:

- ▶ Worked alongside Professor David David at the Australian Craniofacial Unit
- ▶ Supervised in-house research projects supported by Craniofacial Australia
- ▶ Represented CA at University Science Malaysia for over 10 years
- ▶ Sits on the editorial board of the University’s Archives of Orofacial Science
- ▶ Presented original research at international and Royal Australian College of Surgeons meetings
- ▶ Collaborated with Professor David David on multiple peer-reviewed publications

Current & Future Involvement

- ▶ Assists the Craniofacial Australia Board in research supervision, peer review, and funding evaluations
- ▶ Supports the Bristol Cleft Fellowship program
- ▶ Reviews and advises on key research projects from top institutions, including:
 - University of Adelaide
 - Uni SA
 - La Trobe University Melbourne
 - University of Western Australia

We are honoured to have him on board and look forward to his continued impact!

Platinum Supporter: Refined Real Estate



A heartfelt thank you to the incredible team at Refined Real Estate for their support of Craniofacial Australia over the past 10 years!

We are deeply grateful to the Refined Real Estate team for presenting us with a generous \$15,000 cheque at our Gala in October 2024. This donation, made through a portion of their commission sales, is invaluable to our cause.

In recognition of their dedication, we proudly presented Refined Real Estate with a plaque at our AGM in November 2024.

We encourage the community to support the team that so passionately supports us. When you choose Refined Real Estate for your property sales or rental needs, you're not just securing

expert real estate services – you're also helping us continue our vital mission. Every transaction contributes to our cause, allowing us to make a real difference in the lives of those in need.

Special Offer!

Sell your home with Refined Real Estate and get a **\$500 marketing discount**, plus a **\$500 donation** to Craniofacial Australia.*

Leasing an investment property? **Enjoy 6 months free management!***

To find out more, please contact Victor Velgush or Cheryl Misso at Refined Real Estate.

*Offer valid for new listings. \$500 discount applies to marketing expenses only and is not redeemable for cash. 6 months free management valid on a 24-month lease. Please mention offer at time of signup.

Pictured: Alexi Broikos, Sam Shoaeeeyan, Cheryl Misso, Principal Victor Velgush and Prof David David AC.



Phone: (08) 8357 9001

Head Office: 278 Anzac Hwy, Plympton SA

Eastern Office: 262 Magill Rd, Beulah Park SA

Grants Update

Grants are a valuable source of stable funding, helping us sustain operations, expand impact, and drive innovation. We are pleased to report that Craniofacial Australia has received two grants:

PKF Adelaide Foundation

We thank and gratefully acknowledge the PKF Adelaide Foundation for their generous grant, which has helped fund the development

and delivery of "Cleft Aware".

This initiative is part of our Patient Support program, providing vital resources and guidance for speech therapy requirements the Cleft Lip and Palate community.

Four "Cleft Aware" Zoom calls were held from 5th February – 19th March 2025 and recordings were made available on our website. A series of related brochures are also in development.

CMV Group Staff Foundation

We extend our deepest gratitude to Cranio-Warrior Mum Bev and her friend Bianca for connecting us to the incredible team at the CMV Group Staff Foundation.

Thanks to their generosity, we received an amazing \$7,800 grant, which will go directly towards our Care Packs — special gifts for our Cranio-Warriors before their surgery to bring them comfort and support.

Education Update



Board Member and Adelaide Craniofacial Surgeon Dr Benjamin Grave visits the United Kingdom

In November 2024, Dr Ben Grave visited Mr Shaheel Chummun, a Consultant Plastic, Reconstructive, Cleft and Aesthetic Surgeon in Bristol, UK.

Together they completed two complex cleft septorhinoplasties requiring rib grafts.

Advancing Cleft & Craniofacial Care in Indonesia

Every week, Craniofacial Australia proudly delivers the Advanced Cleft and Craniofacial Management Education Program, an innovative online lecture series training Indonesia's next generation of specialists.

Through weekly online sessions led by Dr Ben Grave with guest presentations by leading surgeons and medical team members, we provide advanced training in craniosynostosis, cleft surgery, craniofacial trauma, and more—empowering Indonesian medical teams to deliver world-class care in their communities.

“We are truly grateful for the opportunity to participate in the craniofacial lecture from Australia. The sessions were both interesting and impactful for us. The discussion on challenging cases we face with our patients is incredibly helpful.”

- Fiera



“Covering a broad range of topics, from congenital anomalies to trauma with aesthetic considerations, the series provides comprehensive insights into the complexities of craniofacial surgery. This lecture series will be a benefit for my career as I continue to explore advancements in craniomaxillofacial surgery. Thank you for your kindness to share your knowledge and experience for us.”

- Jilvien

“One of the most valuable aspects of the series was the opportunity to connect with fellow attendees and speakers. The lectures provided not only theoretical knowledge but also practical insights that I could apply in my practice. The emphasis on real-world applications helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, making the learning experience both relevant and actionable.”

- Fajar

Our Education program is funded by the generosity of our donors and supporters. Thank you for making an impact both here and abroad.

WIN in the Play 4 Purpose Raffle!

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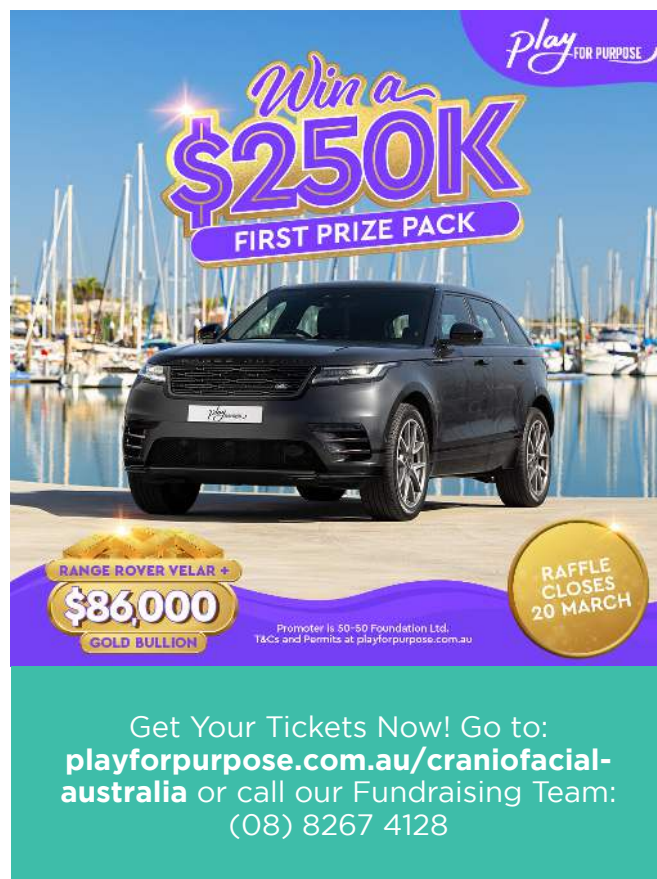
The Play for Purpose raffle isn't just about profit—it's about making a difference! 50% of every ticket directly supports Craniofacial Australia. With four online raffles every year, this is your chance to win big!

MAJOR PRIZE – A \$250K First Prize Pack!

- Range Rover Velar valued at \$163,908
- PLUS \$86,092 in cashable gold bullion!

Ticket Details:

- \$10 per ticket
- 1 in 380 chance of winning a prize
- 395 prizes to be won!
- Tickets close: 8 PM (AEST) Thu 20 Mar 2025
- Draw date: 9 AM (AEST) Fri 21 Mar 2025



play FOR PURPOSE

Win a **\$250K** FIRST PRIZE PACK

RANGE ROVER VELAR + **\$86,000** GOLD BULLION

RAFFLE CLOSES 20 MARCH

Get Your Tickets Now! Go to: playforpurpose.com.au/craniofacial-australia or call our Fundraising Team: (08) 8267 4128

Promoter is 50-50 Foundation Ltd. T&Cs and Permits at playforpurpose.com.au



Paces for Faces!

City-Bay Fun Run/Walk - Adelaide

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Join us for the City to Bay Fun Run in Adelaide on Sunday 21st September 2025! After an amazing time last year, we're excited to do it again—so lace up your running shoes and be part of a fun-filled day of fitness and fundraising for Craniofacial Australia.

Register your interest by emailing: fundraising@acmff.org.au.

Not in Adelaide but still want to take part? You can join a fun run or walk in your own town! Visit grassrootz.com/events to find an event near you and fundraise for Craniofacial Australia. Let our Fundraising Team know, and we'll help spread the word and support you in forming a "Team Cranio" in your community.

Join us and make a difference — one step at a time!

City Bay



2025 REGISTRATIONS ARE OPEN!

Secure your spot
NOW and SAVE with
earlybird pricing!

21 SEPTEMBER 2025

