CRANIOFACIAL AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER

Changing Faces
Changing Lives

CHRISTMAS 2025

Pictured: Cranio-Warrior Courtney

Craniofacial Australia
Changing faces | Changing lives

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Find us online:

- craniofacial.com.au
- facebook.com/craniofacialaustralia
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Finding Strength With Every Step

Courtney's Story

When Courtney was born in Hobart, her skull had fused too early and she was missing bone in parts of her head. Since then, she has faced countless surgeries, long recoveries, and the emotional and financial challenges of travelling from Tasmania to Adelaide for specialist care. Yet through every setback, Courtney's courage shines.

Now a young mum, Courtney shares through her eyes, what it means to grow up with a craniofacial condition.

My name is Courtney. I was born at the Royal Hobart Hospital. From the moment I arrived, my mum Michelle knew something wasn't right. There was a deep indentation in my skull near my eyebrow. Scans revealed I was missing bone, and my skull had fused too early. At two months old, I was diagnosed with a craniofacial condition.

At six months, Mum and I were flown from Tasmania to Melbourne for urgent surgery. Surgeons took bone from the back of my skull to rebuild my forehead and open my sealed plates. That operation saved my life but it was only the beginning.

As I grew, I struggled with hearing, eyesight, dental issues, and breathing problems. At age three, I had grommets inserted in my ears. At five, we started patching my good eye to help strengthen the weaker one. In my teenage years, I met Prof David David in South Australia, and now, as a young adult, I continue my treatment.

Over the years, I've had several operations. From fat grafting and septum repair to reconstructive surgeries using hydroset bone substitute. Some surgeries have helped, others were harder, but every one has brought me closer to feeling like myself.

As a child, I felt different and often alone. I was bullied because of how I looked, and I struggled with my mental health. As an adult, I still face the emotional and financial strain of ongoing surgeries and time away from my children.

I won't pretend it has been easy. The pain, swelling, and recovery can be brutal. Having my head shaved, stitches, staples, and bruising. It all takes a toll.

But through it all, I've had incredible support from my family. My mum has given everything. Her time, health and career — to help me heal. My brother Daniel made sacrifices too when Mum and I had to travel interstate. My children and friends are my biggest reasons to keep pushing forward.

We may look different, but we are no different on the inside. Today, I've learned to embrace my condition instead of hiding from it. I have an amazing medical team in Adelaide who feel like family, and a deep appreciation for how far I've come.

Craniofacial Australia has been a lifesaver. Living in Tasmania, I don't have local specialists, so every appointment and surgery means travelling to Adelaide. The costs of flights, accommodation, and food quickly add up. Without Craniofacial Australia's help, it simply wouldn't be possible.

They've supported me with travel, accommodation near the hospital, and even meals while I recover. They've lifted so much stress off my shoulders and made sure I can focus on healing.

The surgeries are hard, but the benefits outweigh the challenges. Trust the process, trust your team, and remember, where there is darkness, there is sunshine on the other side.

This Christmas, your support towards our Christmas Appeal will help families like Courtney's access the care, support, and hope they need to keep going.

Donate online: craniofacial.com.au

Our Education Program is Growing

Through your generous support, our Education Program continues to build the future of craniofacial care, by upskilling health professionals and strengthening treatment standards both here and abroad.

We are currently recruiting for a new Speech & Language Therapist (SALT) Placement in the UK. This is a fully-funded professional development opportunity that gives Australian Speech Therapists hands-on experience in world-class cleft care.

Based at University Hospital North Bristol and Weston General Hospital, the placement will:

- Shadow specialist cleft clinicians and speech pathologists
- Observe multidisciplinary surgical clinics and patient consultations
- Participate in community outreach sessions with families
- Collaborate with international researchers through the Cleft Collective

This unique 6- to 12-month placement blends clinical practice, research, and community engagement, equipping participants with advanced skills they bring back to Australia, ultimately improving outcomes for the craniofacial community.

Each placement represents a ripple effect of impact: the knowledge gained overseas strengthens Australia's clinical network, enhances treatment pathways, and fosters innovation across our hospitals and allied health settings.

Because of donors like you, Craniofacial Australia can continue to fund life-changing opportunities like this, empowering the next generation of specialists who will change lives for decades to come

To find out more or to apply, email Kerry:

E: k.southwell@acmff.org.au
T: 08 8267 4128

CMVGROUP FOUNDATION

Thank you!

Craniofacial Australia is deeply grateful to the **CMV Group Staff Foundation** for their generous grant, which will fund another 12 months of our Care Pack Program.

These comforting packs are given to children and families preparing for surgery: a small gesture that brings care, comfort and connection during a challenging time.

Thanks to the CMV Group Staff Foundation's continued support, families will receive a little extra kindness when they need it most.

From all of us at Craniofacial Australia, thank you for making a difference.

More Than a Diagnosis

For the first time in Australia, Craniofacial Australia is supporting a landmark research project led by Professor Rachel Roberts at the University of Adelaide. Titled “More Than A Diagnosis: Voices of Those Living with Craniofacial Conditions”, Prof Roberts’ research is giving people living with craniofacial conditions a chance to be heard.

While past studies have focused mainly on parents and caregivers, this longitudinal study is offering a different perspective, listening directly to children, teenagers, and adults with congenital craniofacial conditions.

Through in-depth interviews, the research team is exploring what life is really like beyond surgery, including challenges of school, friendships, self-image, employment, and mental health, as well as the supports that make a difference.

If you or someone you know has a craniofacial condition and would like to share your story and experiences, we invite you to take part in this valuable project.

Who can take part?

- Anyone 8 years + with a craniofacial condition
- For children under 16, parents must also provide consent but your child’s own voice and wishes will guide their participation

Learn more:

Email: amanda.osborn@adelaide.edu.au

Ph / Text: 0439 854 092

Direct Message: https://www.facebook.com/CranioResearchAU/

Or

https://www.instagram.com/cranioresearchau/

Behind the Scenes at Our Adelaide Lab Tours

Thank you to everyone who joined us for our Adelaide Lab Tours, whether in person, online via the live stream, or among those who travelled from interstate, it was wonderful to welcome so many supporters.

Special thanks to our researchers: Assoc Prof Quenten Schwarz, Assoc Prof Seb Dworkin, Dr Amanda Osborn and Prof Rachel Roberts for sharing their work and demonstrating how your support drives important discoveries in craniofacial research.

The feedback from guests was very positive and touching - thank you to everyone who took part and shared your thoughts.

Your donations fund vital grants to craniofacial researchers who are unlocking new insights into how craniofacial conditions begin, how they progress, and how they can be prevented and better managed.

Our researchers are paving the way toward breakthroughs that will change the face of the future.

You can now watch the Live feed and the Lab Tours on our YouTube Channel.

Community Fundraising Roundup

Turning Passion into Purpose

From the outback to the barbecue, our community has been extraordinary this year! Together, you've helped us raise vital funds that keep Craniofacial Australia's work going strong.

Harry's Outback Trek saw an incredible journey of courage and compassion, raising over $20,000 to support children living with craniofacial conditions

Our Bunnings Sausage Sizzle (Mile End, SA) fired up community spirit (and the grill!), bringing in $3,500 thanks to our wonderful volunteers and supporters

And our City-Bay Fun Run united dozens of runners and walkers in royal blue, raising awareness and much-needed funds for care, research, and family support.

Thank you for being part of our incredible community of care.

Australia, We Need You!

Join our Community of Fundraisers Today

Our fundraising events are making a real difference, but we can't do it alone. To keep supporting families nationwide, we need fundraisers from every corner of Australia.

Whether you're in Sydney, Perth, Melbourne, Hobart, Darwin, Adelaide or rural. Whether at school, in the workplace, at home or your community group. You can help. Host a morning tea, hold a raffle, start a fitness challenge, or create your own unique event. Every effort helps.

What's more, our Marketing & Fundraising Coordinator Kerri is here to help you all the way. Like a concierge, she can help you brainstorm ideas, set you up with a guest speaker, posters, marketing tools and more.

Scan the QR Code to download your free Fundraising Guide:

Starting your very own fundraiser will help bring care and hope to those who need it most.

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

Pictured: Ambassador Damien sharing his craniofacial journey at Probus Club of Yankalilla (SA)

Thank You To Our Community Partners

We are so grateful to the many community groups across Australia including Lions, Rotary, Probus, Apex and others, who continue to support Craniofacial Australia through donations, invitations, and local events.

Craniofacial Australia is always happy to visit your club, share updates, and speak about the impact your support makes. If your group would like a guest speaker or presentation at an upcoming meeting or event, please get in touch. We'd be delighted to join you.

Not in Adelaide? No problem. We'd be honoured to join you online!

Contact Kerri:

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