

## Rogers Family Support

Bridget and Peter Rogers have two sons, Chase and Reeve.



Chase was born in 2011 with complications. He was diagnosed with hypothyroidism, dysphagia and low muscle tone. He has since been diagnosed with a speech and language impairment. He underwent weekly therapies, was NG tube fed, attended interstate specialists' appointments, had six surgeries and a range of different genetic tests all funded solely by Peter and Bridget.

In June 2017 when Bridget found out she was pregnant, it was a pleasant surprise but also one that concerned her deeply given Chase's background. Peter and Bridget underwent every test possible to understand if their baby had any anticipated medical complications. During utero they did find out that Reeve had a VSD ventricular septal defect of the heart, it was monitored closely but they were assured it was nothing to worry about and at worst case scenario Reeve may need surgery to correct this. There were celebrations and the excitement began.

Reeve was born a healthy 4.03 kilos, and everything appeared perfect.

Fast forward a couple of months and Bridget presented to Reeve's paediatrician with concerns that Reeve wasn't meeting milestones. The family sought additional occupational therapy advice and the OT immediately shared Bridget's concerns, so suggested she take Reeve to hospital and demand further testing.

Reeve was admitted to hospital where a trans-cranial brain probe was performed which showed a large mass on the left-hand side of Reeves brain. He was then rushed into a brain MRI which sadly confirmed the diagnosis of **Right Hemiplegia Cerebral Palsy**.

The cause is likely to be an ischemic stroke while in utero. The damage to his brain is severe and confronting to look at but important to see just how much of his brain has been damaged from the stroke. Only time would tell how much or little this little boy will ever be able to do, meaning will he or won't he be able to move, talk or walk.



Reeve's future at six months old was looking challenging. He was unable to roll, hold his head up, unable to sit and had lost the use of his right arm and hand. He was unable to swallow correctly and was not meeting any of his gross and fine motor milestones.

With help from friends, a GoFundMe funding effort and Rotary, the family have received funds to assist with therapy for both Reeve and Chase and the results have been quite significant. This much needed early therapy provided Reeve with the best chance of maximising the early window available to train Reeves brain taking advantage of brain Neuroplasticity. The results have been significant. Reeve can now sit up of his own accord, roll and even pull himself

up to a standing position. Reeve is about to enter another round of intensive therapy and we hope to see more improvements. There is a Facebook page entitled "Reeve's battle with Cerebral Palsy" which provides additional information on Reeve's progress.

**In May this year we were informed that Bridget was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.** MS is severely impacted by stress to which this family has an abundance of. Bridget has started monthly infusions to help minimise the progression of the disease however this is all new and difficult to comprehend so the situation is evolving. The MS has been impacting Bridget's general physical strength and during flare ups has impacted her mobility.

The Rogers family need help and we intend to do our best to support them.

After the 12 month NDIS application process Reeve has secured some NDIS funding, however it does fall short. It is not going to come close to covering the long term intensive early intervention therapy that will benefit Reeve **now** to provide the best possible outcomes for his future. It also does not fully cover the therapy and support equipment recommended.

The NDIS, although a good help does not look at the family's challenges holistically. The family is getting by with Pete working hard to continue to provide financially. Bridget is unable to return to work as they would have anticipated due to Reeves special needs. There is no room in the budget for Pete to take leave from work to assist Bridget during treatments and flare ups of her MS.

The NDIS is new, helpful, yet limited in many ways. The complexity of the Rogers family case will take some time to be understood and, in the meantime, much is required to maintain the momentum already developed. The family has been in a stressful emotional and financial position for some time. This has meant mounting worry and stress as their aim to provide the best care and support for their children's needs have taken precedence over things like repairs to family vehicles etc. These decisions are now proving to provide additional stress as functional vehicles are paramount to allow Pete to continue to work and Bridget to attend medical appointments, etc., for the children and herself. The weight of this stress impacts on Bridget's MS and the overall family wellbeing. Bridget and Peter have been doing a wonderful job with their boys, but they need a helping hand to offer some relief from the stresses imposed upon them. The ability to have some options about transport that is appropriate to Reeve and Bridget's conditions, having the means for Pete to take some Saturdays off work to spend time with his family or support his wife through treatment would provide great joy to a family that has been digging deep and fighting hard for their special needs kids and who still have a long fight ahead of them .

Rotary funds have been set aside specifically to support Reeve's therapy and well-being. These funds have a limited life and scope. We seek to raise \$30,000 to give this family support for their journey.

**Rotary Club of Coomera Valley**

Rick McElhinney, President 2015, 2018 & 2019

Rotary District 9640

Mobile: +61403216664

[www.coomeravalleyrotary.org](http://www.coomeravalleyrotary.org)