

## Expert medical team restores a teen's hopes and

# SAVING VICTOR

## 'WORDS CAN'T EXPRESS HOW MUCH I LONG TO BE WELL'

**Robyn Riley  
Brad Crouch**

**S**hy, softly spoken Victor Ramei has a simple wish for 2024. The teenager from a small village in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, wants to just get on with life.

Only a few months ago Victor, 14, did not think a "normal life" would ever be possible but a dedicated group from Victoria and South Australia had other ideas.

Victor was born with an orbital tumour, a wicked web of abnormal tissue invading his left eye that was threatening his sight, possibly even his life.

Once he started school it also stopped the passionate athlete joining in with his friends, particularly in the sports he loved to play: basketball and football.

"I always wish that I could do all things that my peers can do ... but can't because of this swelling covering my eyesight," Victor said through his cousin Isaac Oliver before the surgery.

"Words cannot express how desperately I long to be well and get on with my life."

Enter team Victor: medical experts and volunteers in

Melbourne and Adelaide led by the renowned Children First Foundation, a Melbourne-based not-for-profit that helped give Victor hope for his future.

Always in Victor's corner are his close family of four brothers and a sister and his loving parents Rhonda and Robert, along with his cousin Isaac Oliver, who put his own studies on hold to come to Australia last month to be with him as Victor underwent surgery.

Victor does not speak English. Yet.

He says learning the language is on his ever-growing list of things to do when he returns home next week, tumour-free and ready for life.

Victor lives in a village of fewer than 500 people so remote there is no internet or telephone, no means of external communication and certainly no access to the video games that have become Victor's new passion while recovering from surgery in Adelaide over Christmas.

What will he do without them?

"He might get a little bored," says Isaac with a chuckle.



In a country where there is no financial support for people living with disability, blindness would have been life-changing.

This was one of the reasons the Children First Foundation agreed to bring Victor and Isaac to Australia for the critical surgery.

Victor Ramei, 14, of Bougainville, after craniofacial surgery to remove a tumour over his eye (insets left and above right), with his guardian Isaac Oliver. Picture: Dean Martin

Its chief executive Jessica Redwood says if Victor had gone blind, or worse if it had spread to his brain, it would have grave consequences as there is no social security support in PNG.

"If left untreated, Victor's future would be very different and he would have been reliant on his family for all his most basic needs, for the rest of his life," she said.

"Thanks to our donors, the Women's and Children's

Hospital Adelaide and Ronald McDonald House Adelaide, we are thrilled to be able to support Victor to access the critical life-changing surgery he needed."

The charity, established in 1999, helps to bring children to hospitals across the world including Australia. Each year it supports lifesaving and life-changing surgery for about 33 children with operable conditions who cannot be treated in their home countries.

Victor was brought to its attention by Damien Hasola, a dedicated doctor in Port Moresby, who first operated on him as a five-year-old.

Dr Hasola was concerned that if left untreated Victor's tumour would continue to grow and affect his other eye and possibly even invade his brain. He was also painfully aware that the complex surgery Victor needed could not be done in PNG.

He explained that he had tried to surgically remove the

## Kissing, groping doc banned

**Gianni Francis**

A Victorian GP who denied groping and kissing the mother of his young patient has been disqualified from practising as a doctor, after a tribunal of his peers found he had committed the grubby act.

Shyamal Kanti Datta, aged in his 60s, was found to have sexually assaulted the mother of his 11-year-old patient during a medical appointment

while he was a practising GP in October, 2013.

At the end of the consultation, Dr Datta shook the woman's hand while she was sitting and did not let go.

He pulled her towards him, leaned forward, kissed her cheek and touched her breast, leaving her "in shock".

She phoned her husband, and told him what happened.

"She was really upset and was crying," a Victorian Civil

and Administrative Tribunal heard in December.

The tribunal heard the victim was left traumatised fearing being left along with male doctors.

Datta had previously been reprimanded in a February 2022 VCAT decision after the tribunal found two of four women's allegations against him true. He was disqualified from holding a medical licence until July 28, 2027.



Elton John

## Elton auction 'personal'

Elton John has put a variety of personal items up for auction at Christie's in New York, including monogrammed silver leather platform boots, a grand piano and a triptych by street artist Banksy.

Most of the items come from John's former home in Atlanta, a condo on Peachtree Road that was recently sold, the auction house said on Thursday.

Beginning on February 21,

Christie's is organising a series of eight sales, both in person and online, for the collection of the 76-year-old's belongings. They include a vast array of Versace shirts and home decor to a Julian Schnabel portrait of John.

John is also offering an ivory and gold jumpsuit from the early 1970s designed by Annie Reavey, and photographs from the likes of Richard Avedon and Helmut Newton.