

Herald Sun

Scarlett McGowan, we all give a damn

- **Elissa Doherty**
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Scarlett McGowan is poised to become the face of the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal. Picture: Alex Coppel

Source: Herald Sun

LITTLE Scarlett McGowan's beautiful smile is enough to melt your heart.

Victorians are about to become intimately acquainted with her excruciating battle, with the blue-eyed tot poised to become the face of the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal.

She underwent a life-saving heart transplant at the RCH last year after being diagnosed with a crippling heart condition.

Doctors discovered at five months old, she had dilated cardiomyopathy, where the heart becomes weakened and enlarged, and can't pump properly.

With her heart failing and her life in the balance, she was placed on the transplant list and hooked up to drugs. But, despite the ordeal, she displayed courage and tenacity throughout.

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Today the adorable toddler celebrates her second birthday - a day the family feared may never have come.

"We've since been told that before her transplant she only had about two weeks to live," said mum Sam, 35, of Torquay.

"Scarlett was really in a bad way. She is incredibly lucky.

"And she was amazing. She was stronger than us, and she was still playful despite being so ill."

But the harrowing time will be a distant memory when she opens the special doll's house crafted by her dad, Jon, and a huge party is thrown in her honour.

RCH heart transplant co-ordinator Anne Shipp said Scarlett was doing extremely well.

"She's a very cheeky toddler who's interested in the world around her. We adore catching up when she visits us."

Good Friday Appeal executive director Christine Unsworth said the appeal, to raise money for Victoria's sickest children, would mark its 80th year in 2011. It is looking for 80 past RCH patients to be faces of the appeal.

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