



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
VIC & TAS

# Building blocks

Our Impact in 2023





*"I could breathe again.  
I could focus on my baby  
and getting him better."*

Isabel, Ernesto's Mum

Ronald McDonald House Charities would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, skies and waterways on which we work. We recognise the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples amongst the families we care for, our employees, volunteers and supporters, who form part of the oldest continuous living culture on Earth. We pay our respects to them and their Elders past and present.

Ronald McDonald House Charities values and promotes an inclusive workplace where everyone, from any background, can feel valued, be appreciated and do their best work. At our place, everyone regardless of gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, age, neurodiversity, disability status, citizenship or any other aspect that makes them unique, can contribute to improving the health and wellbeing of children and their families.

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# A message from Board Chair and CEO

Welcome to our 2023 Impact Report, a snapshot of our activities over the last year... and what a year we've had!

It was truly refreshing for a relative return to normal in 2023, enabling us to create and provide greater impact for families and sick children across the country.

At the beginning of 2023, we were cautiously optimistic for the year ahead following the insecurity of the previous couple of years, and thankfully, we were right to be.

All teams on the frontline at RMHC VIC & TAS began – and continued – the year with gusto, stepping up to meet the increasing needs of families across all Programs, supporting the healthcare and educational challenges of our community, alongside the ever-increasing need for funds.

Throughout the year we enjoyed great success with the continued operations of our House Programs and saw our enthusiastic volunteer networks increase in engagement and recruitment, while the team worked diligently in the background implementing updated processes and procedures. A triumph on all fronts!

Supported by over 90 of the most caring and professional educators you could meet, we continued our critical tutorials across the Learning Program and Bridge the Gap programs, helping over 408 students with their learning.

In House learning was extended beyond North Fitzroy House, ensuring educational equity for all school-aged children staying with us across our 4 Houses.

Our Youth Forum, in its 7th year, proved popular once again, providing over 126 families with key senior years information.

We granted three more Charlie Bell Scholarships to outstanding young people, providing small grants to support their further educational endeavours.



On the fundraising and events front we had some fantastic activities and experiences organised by dedicated teams – internally and externally by our wonderfully supportive community – from RMHC Annual Gala Balls, Golf Days, Ride for Sick Kids event to the CEO Walk in My Shoes, and every event in between.

The Tasmania Basketball Shootathon and the River's Round Golf Day annual events were hugely successful once again, and in November we celebrated twenty five years of the Hobart House, thirty years of the Monash House and five years of the Ronald McDonald North Fitzroy House at Casa Elda Vaccari being opened, with our generous supporters the Vaccari family in attendance.

In the Major Donor space, our facilities were enhanced through the generous support of Denise and Ellis Richardson. Essential work has also been undertaken in other areas including the introduction of a new finance system, plus much-needed improvements in operations of the People & Culture and IT departments.

During 2023 we also introduced the House App for families and the Sign In & Out App for our operational sites.

Throughout the year our Government engagement continued, with Government MPs visiting our VIC & TAS House sites. A key highlight was Hobart House being visited by the Tasmanian Premier, who is keen for further Government involvement, and various project details have since been provided to the Premier and the Health Minister's office. We also engaged with all Tasmanian MPs regarding our key issues, Accommodation Scheme funding, Learning Program funding and profile, capital works projects for the future, and car parking for the Hobart House.

Back in Victoria, James Newbury, Member for Brighton, enabled us to table a question on the VPTAS accommodation funding update in the Victoria Parliament.

All key stakeholders across the VIC & TAS Chapter have been assisting with RMHC Global Strategic Planning for the system through

engagement in surveys, workshops and face-to-face meetings. We are also engaged as the Victoria & Tasmania Chapter with the RMHC Australia Strategic Plan.

We acknowledge the great work and support of all our team members across the Houses, Family Rooms, Fundraising & Marketing, Learning Program, People & Culture, Business & Finance and IT.

You can read more in this report about the significant impact our programs and services made during 2023, and be sure to read the moving accounts from families who are the people who live the impact of the work we do.

RMHC VIC & TAS is powered by an energetic team, and we are proud of our collective impact and the incredible commitment of all staff, volunteers and Board Directors, and extend our deepest gratitude for their hard work and dedication.

The families, patients and students we work with, are all so very appreciative of the crucial support we provide in what many would say is their greatest time of need.

This impact is also made possible by the incredible work and support of our Mission Partner McDonald's, generous corporate, philanthropic and pro-bono partners, plus our community donors.

We look forward to making an even bigger impact in 2024, and hope you'll continue to stand with us on that journey.

With heartfelt thanks,



**GARRY THOMPSON**  
Chairman



**PETER BISHOP**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Our mission, vision and values

## Our Mission

To support the ever-changing needs of seriously ill children and their families.

## Our Vision

Ronald McDonald House Charities strives to achieve the best outcomes for families by reducing the impact of their child's serious illness.

## Our Values

Our values underpin all that we do.



**C**ollaboration



**H**igh Quality



**I**ntegrity



**L**oyalty



**D**iversity

# Precious moments amid trauma

Standing in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, Janelle watched as her tiny baby – not even a few days old – lay sedated on the bed. Connected to tubes, under a heat lamp and with a CPAP machine breathing for him, little Garcia needed around the clock care after emergency surgery to fix a bowel obstruction.

It was a traumatic time, made harder by the fact that Janelle, her husband Kane and their two other children, Rahli and Maverick, were forced to leave their home, work and community in Western Victoria to be close to the care Garcia needed.

"It was picked up at our 20 week scan that Garcia had some sort of blockage. Doctors wanted us to give birth in Melbourne so they could do tests after. It was daunting because we had no idea what was going to happen," said Janelle.

The family moved in to Ronald McDonald House when Janelle was 38 weeks pregnant. At 39 weeks she was induced and Garcia was born. Within days, Garcia was having tests, x-rays and scans.

"He hadn't used his bowels and he wasn't holding down any milk, so that was a big sign. During his first operation, they found two different things – colonic atresia and distal bowel obstruction."

Garcia was just three days old when surgeons removed 60 percent of his bowel. Still, it wasn't to be his last operation.

"After his first surgery, we couldn't hold him for three days because he was so sedated. They wanted to keep him as still as possible.



And he had to learn to breathe again, so he was hooked up to all the monitoring equipment. That's all you could hear. Just the beeping."

The Clark family's first stay at Ronald McDonald House lasted 63 days.

During that time, little Garcia had more surgery to take out an extra centimetre of his bowel, reverse his stoma and flush out obstructions.

**"Handing Garcia over to the surgeons each time, and not knowing the outcome... that was tough. He was in pain but we never knew whether that surgery was the one to fix it all, or if he'd need more. We soon fell into a routine. We'd wake up, spend all day at hospital, come back to the House, have some dinner, go to bed and repeat."**

*"We've all grown as a family but to see a five-year-old receive kindness and mirror that straight away – that's been really cool."*

Kane, Dad





The House very quickly became their sanctuary.

While at the House, Rahli and Maverick could play outside, do art and craft, watch movies and build friendships with staff, volunteers and other children staying at the House. When the family came back after a long day on the ward, they had a safe place to retreat to and home-cooked meals ready to eat.

"Not having to worry about accommodation and food expenses, kids' entertainment or putting them in kinder or childcare, took a load off mentally. It was completely mind-blowing because it felt like staying with family."

"It seems cliché to say, but we don't know what we would have done without that sort of help. Our house wouldn't exist, that's for sure. We would have struggled to keep up with repayments. We would have been split up as a family. Just helpless."

When the Clark family could finally go home, they briefly managed to settle Rahli and Maverick back into the swing of school and kindy before again making the 3.5 hour trip back to Melbourne for more hospital visits and surgery.

And while Garcia's care is ongoing, Janelle is grateful to have a home away from home where her family can be together when they need each other the most.

"Every hard situation we've been dealt, we've seemed to counter with some precious moments together as a family thanks to the Ronald McDonald House."

Sometimes guests at the House take you by surprise. Garcia's older sister Rahli is one of those very special people.

During their stay, Rahli decided there should be a cubby house for other kids staying at the House to play in, so she set about making it a reality. This five-year-old pocket rocket was willing to sell her own toys, hold a lemonade stand, have a bake sale... whatever it took to raise the money.

So determined she was, a fundraising page was set up and within 24 hours Rahli had enough funds to build, paint and decorate a cubby house. She was insistent that other children staying at the House have something extra to play with and enjoy – and she knew it would bring smiles and happiness to families staying at the House.



Rahli project managed the cubby house installation, and she and her brother Maverick 'supervised' the build, while also rallying staff and volunteers to a working bee... and voila! Casa del Rahli was complete.

# Our Family-Centred Framework

## Keeping Families Close is at the heart of all we do

When a child is diagnosed with a serious illness, it is an incredibly traumatic time, with the entire family embarking on an uncertain path.

Through our Houses and Programs, we enable families to stay together, helping facilitate much needed support throughout their heartbreaking journey.

The memories these families gather along the way and the milestones they achieve while they are supported by Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania are priceless.

Our 2023 Impact Report celebrates the everyday special moments, however large or small.





# Top 10 Diagnoses

Neonatal/premature birth	432
Cardiac	242
ENT	158
Neurological	157
Oncology	136
Gastrointestinal	127
Respiratory	115
Orthopaedic	117
Antenatal	102
Renal	54

# Welcoming families across Australia

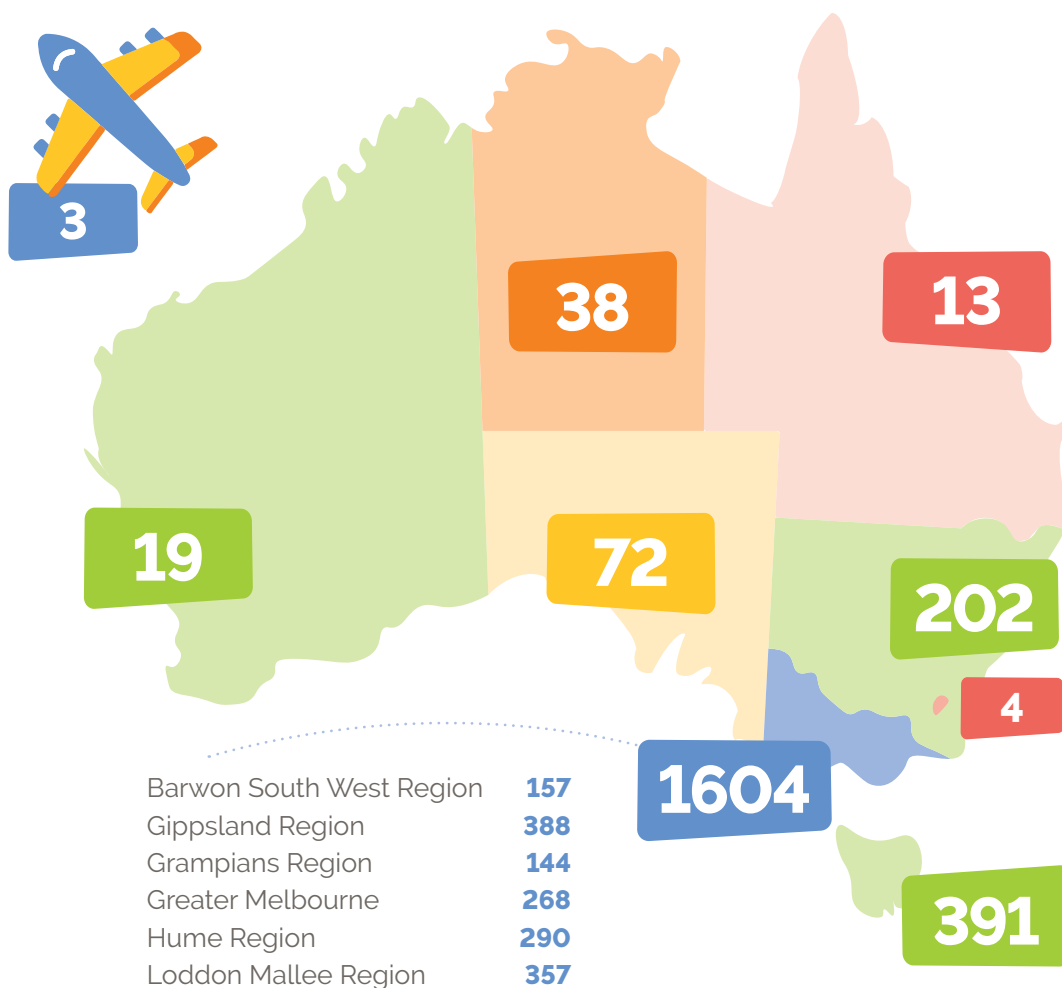
Our families come from all over Victoria and Tasmania and beyond.

Some will need to travel across the country to get to their child's hospital bed, whereas others may be an hour away.

No matter where they are across the country, staying at one of the Ronald McDonald Houses alleviates the need to travel to and from the

hospital each day and lessens financial and emotional burdens.

In our Houses we take care of the little things and big things, and often these are effects that families don't even know they may need yet. This means less things to worry about and more time spent together as a family, whether in hospital or the House, enabling a stronger focus on their child's recovery.



# Helping families in crisis

## York is a brave one-year-old who has faced many challenges since his birth just last year.

Arriving early at 35 weeks (and 2.2kg) at The Royal Women's Hospital, York was soon diagnosed with Severe Aortic Stenosis, a serious heart condition that affects blood flow and requires lengthy hospital stays.

With this diagnosis, York's parents Maddy and Josh from Ballarat found themselves facing an extremely difficult and complex situation to manage.

After discovering that York needed urgent surgery to save his life, the family was referred to Ronald McDonald House Parkville.

"York's original diagnosis was surgery with hopefully two to four weeks recovery, which was complicated by York being born prem. We ended up staying for eight months. So far York has had three heart surgeries since birth," Maddy explains.

"If the House didn't exist, we would have spent a lot of time travelling to and from Melbourne. We live about two hours away, depending on traffic. So, if we didn't have the opportunity to stay here, we wouldn't have been able to be in ICU with York when everything was going on. "

Maddy describes the critical role that Ronald McDonald House Parkville – and later North Fitzroy as well – played for her family during the 105 days York first spent in ICU.

The House gave us the opportunity to have family and friends visit and support us. It has also allowed us to meet families in similar situations, which have become our biggest support network.

"It allowed us to not have to try and find accommodation, which would have put a huge financial strain on our life.

"I would describe the Ronald McDonald House as a hidden gem. It's a home away from home that nobody knows about until you need it. Many just don't understand the impact that Ronald McDonald House has on so many families not doing too well.

When a family arrives at Ronald McDonald House, day or night, a friendly staff member is there to welcome them and show them around the facility, explaining everything they need to know about their stay. The family is provided with a comfortable, private room and access to common areas such as the living spaces, kitchens, laundry, dining room and play areas. The family can stay at Ronald McDonald House for as long as their child is receiving medical treatment at a nearby hospital.

"When we first arrived there were welcome packs with food and drinks. In the kitchen there are breakfast cereals, bread and much more.





"The fridge meals we used the whole time we were there. It's been awesome to be able to come back after spending 12 hours at a hospital and not have to think about a meal, to be able to just go to the fridge or the freezer and grab something and heat it up. It takes one little stress out of our lives.

"When you live in this environment for the first time, you realise the need for people to be able to work remotely from the House. So to be able to use the WiFi here, and the spaces available to work from, it really makes things that little bit easier.

**"All those little things that are pretty minor in the whole scheme of things make a massive difference when you're living through what we lived through – and you want to focus all your time on your baby in the hospital, child or whoever else you need to focus on." said Maddy.**

Families who stay at a Ronald McDonald House enjoy a comfortable and supportive environment, where they can meet other families facing similar challenges, access various resources, as well

as receive emotional and practical support from staff, volunteers and other families.

The Houses provide essential support throughout the year for thousands of families who face the challenges of having a child with complex medical needs.

"We've met loads of families who have given us a lot of support and who allowed us to be supportive towards them too. It becomes a real community environment and it allows you to get the support when you need it, and also give it when other people need it."

York will need more surgeries in the future, but Maddy and her family can rest assured they will always have a place to stay near the hospital while their baby receives the best care possible.

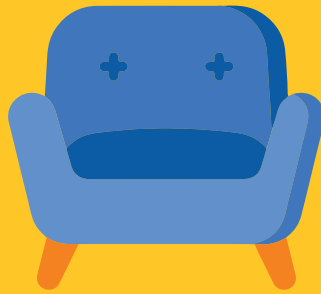
"You can't really do much when they're in intensive care, and for days like Christmas, the House puts on spreads and have gifts. They made days that you weren't looking forward to just that little bit special, with small gestures that meant massive amounts to us.

"When you are so far from home experiencing the worst situation you can imagine, a comfortable bed, welcoming people and a familiar environment truly can make the world of difference, and that is exactly the role of Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania," explained Maddy.



**2,537**

families stayed  
at our Houses



**4,807**

Family Room visits



**29,438**

total nights

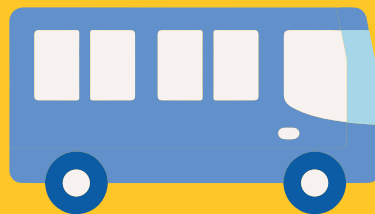
# The impact of your support

Unfortunately the need for our services and Programs never stops, but with the support of people like you, together we can alleviate some of the pressures and hardships for families, young people and children during times of heartache and trauma.



**8.5**

nights average  
length of stay



**2,496**

shuttle bus trips  
for families



**152**

hours of tutoring for 19  
students who medically  
cannot go to school



**389**

Learning Program students supported



**196**

volunteers dedicated to supporting our Programs



**126**

people tuned into the annual Youth Forum



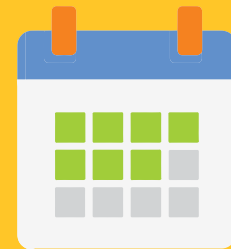
**50**

tutors engaged in two professional development opportunities



**14,993**

total volunteer hours



**348**

nights (and counting) is the longest stay



**1,797**

number of first time families

## Ratings from Family Experience/Exit survey

(completed by 27 people, scores out of 5)

Overall experience

4.56

Emotional support from staff

4.68

Wellbeing supported by House and staff

4.58

Stress level management

4.63

Actively participated in their child's care

4.88

# A day in the Life of... Volunteering with Sarah Walker

We spoke with one of our committed volunteers, Sarah Walker, about how she came to be a valued member of the RMHC VIC & TAS team.



Volunteering had been on my mind for a couple of years, as I wanted to do something constructive and good, particularly given the impact of the pandemic.

Riding my bike along the Fitzroy bike path, I saw a sign that the North Fitzroy House was looking for volunteers – and I took it literally as a sign!

The idea of offering a safe and supportive space for people who are in real stress and grief and confusion was a lovely way to offer a bit of ease and kindness to people who are having a really rough time, and something I wanted to be part of.

I volunteer at the North Fitzroy House and I am just so impressed by the staff. Their real genuine and generous care for people is inspiring. Everyone at the House is just so full of care and love and support for the people who come through and they're really determined to go out of their way to give people an experience that's meaningful and supports their needs – it's not only impressive, but really moving as well.

Volunteering feels really reassuring for me and is something I look forward to. Just being there and being useful is an amazing feeling. I'm a 'jack of all trades', performing quite discreet tasks for staff, like how much linen is needed, general support to House workers, whereas other days I'm fixing a toy or the printer, filing and helping people check in – for me it's about bringing and executing some practical skills to support people who are doing really great work... I feel buoyed by it.

We'll always pause during our shift, with staff and volunteers having a chat and cup of tea. There's such a sense of community – it's really active community building and it's lovely having the

opportunity to develop relationships with them. The shifts just fly by.

I find it really surprising and reassuring that in a place that's under so much pressure that there's such tenderness and care for everyone who's in that House.

There's no real typical day at the House, it depends on the energy of the House and day. Some days are relatively quiet, although there are always things to do, and others are manically busy. I go in being prepared to help whatever way I possibly can.

***“At the House there’s an offering of kindness and hope, and everyone understands that it is incredibly hard, but we’re going to make it a little less hard.”***

Sometimes there'll be a family who has just lost a child. One of the things I find most moving and powerful is how impacted everyone at the House is by that. There is so much care and support and whenever that happens, there's an email sent to staff and volunteers offering support, which is really beautiful. Then you'll find everyone takes time to just sit with their grief for that family.

At the House you're dealing with people at their most vulnerable, and it's always so touching to see families thank the staff so much for the time in the House, that it was such a solace while they were going through the worst time of their lives.

Those families have so much on their plate, and we take a few things off it wherever we can, to try to lessen the burden. Those things can make all the difference, and it really is a gift.

It's very beautiful in a complicated time of turmoil to be reminded that humans can offer a little bit of tenderness and delicacy to each other. It's really moving.

Families at the House have such grace. They still have space to be grateful and to have a laugh with staff and volunteers. I think I expected the energy in the House to be quite low and for people to be withdrawn, but it's far from it, and people are getting on with it the best they can.

One of the families had a child pass away and they also had their three year old staying with them. Her two grandmothers came to look after the little one, and everyone in the House wanted to do everything they could for this family, without being overbearing. There was a toy cash register that the three year old was fond of but it had broken. Everyone in the House had the mission of doing everything possible to fix that cash register, to give that little girl a little joy while everyone is surrounded by so much grief, loss and stress.

I think often people slip into a rote set of responses in these circumstances, but seeing the House staff, instead of going into a script, they stopped and listened and noticed what was actually needed at the time – and that was really beautiful to see.

***“We take a little bit off a family’s plate at such a traumatic time, in a way they didn’t know they needed. And that feels really great.”***

# Learning Program Impact

The Ronald McDonald Learning Program provides support for students who have been impacted educationally due to a serious mental health condition, or serious illness or injury. The support assists school-aged children to catch up on missed education following treatment and recovery.

## Tutoring Support once Returned to School

On returning to education, students receive up to 40 hours of one-one tuition on a weekly basis, either face to face or online with a qualified tutor, and is for students who are in a regular pattern of attendance at school.



**389 students**

*supported by*



**90**

dedicated Tutors

## Education at our North Fitzroy House

Qualified Learning Program teachers provide daily education for school aged children staying at North Fitzroy House. Sessions run for one hour in our dedicated Learning Centre. This is offered to patients and their siblings to reduce the negative impacts on families going through the hardship of illness.



**52 sessions**

supporting 92 students

## Bridge The Gap

The Bridge the Gap Education Program supports students who cannot go to school and cannot access the education support as an outpatient. These students may be staying with us at a Ronald McDonald House, or they may be recovering at home. Generously funded for 2023 by the Pierce Armstrong Foundation.



**152 hours**

of additional support

*for*



**19 students**

who cannot go to school for medical reasons

## Youth Forum



**126 people**

in attendance

In partnership with RCH Transition and CITY LLen, the 7th annual Youth Forum provided students from years 10-12 with important information around special provisions, applying for university and educational and career pathways. We thank previous Learning Program student Mary-Jo for generously sharing her experience.



## Early Year Pilot at Parkville House

After commencing a pilot of early years education at our Parkville House in term 4, 2022, the pilot was extended for 2023. One session per week was held by qualified teacher for children aged 3-5 years.



**24 sessions**  
servicing 43 students.

## Professional Development



**50 tutors**  
in attendance

Our tutoring programs are supported by dedicated tutors providing skilled tuition to our students. We recognise and value the importance of ongoing professional development and provide annual professional development.

In 2023 we provided an in person day of professional development, as well as several online presentations

In 2024 we will see:

- Expansion of Early Years Program across all three Victorian Houses
- Continuation of Bridge The Gap Program
- A pilot of our Learning Program for siblings, with 10 places on offer
- Introduction of Science, Technology, Engineering, Maths (STEM) Program at North Fitzroy House
- 14 places for continued study skills on mentoring pilot for students in year 10 and 11
- Expansion of Holiday Program activities.

# A legacy of learning

In year 10 Lewis suffered a traumatic acquired brain injury (ABI) and spent a harrowing 12 days in intensive care at the Alfred, and then a further couple of weeks on the neurology ward.

From there he was transferred to Monash Hospital where he was an inpatient for rehab for three months, and then an outpatient, where he continued rehab every day at the hospital.

Lewis now has continuing community rehab, which is done outside of the hospital. It's coming up to two years since the accident.

As a result of his time away from school, Lewis understandably began falling behind in school and needed tutoring to help get him back up to speed and on track again.

Lewis was referred to the Ronald McDonald Learning Program, where he was allocated a tutor, Jo, for his business management subject.

Lewis was tutored online weekly for the 12 months. It made such a huge difference, and we doubt he would have passed if it wasn't for Jo's tutorage.

The tutors in the Learning Program seem to understand their pupils on a deeper level, and Jo particularly understood the accident and the issues associated with such trauma.



Without that tutoring help, year 12 would have looked very different. Lewis may not have been able to maintain focus and do it by himself without that extra help to consolidate that year 12 learning. The school was really great and helpful as well – it really did take a village.

It was also Jo's persona that made a difference to learning. There was a happiness to her that I could hear in those online sessions, it just

## **Our Learning Program helps seriously ill children catch up on missed education following treatment and recovery.**

Our experienced teachers provide a suite of educational support services, including 1:1 tutorials and therapy sessions, all tailored to suit the need of individual students.

We aim to build each child's confidence and self-esteem in preparation for their return to the classroom. All services are free to families, thanks to mission grant funding.



shone through. She was very understanding of Lewis and the memory and cognitive challenges he faces as a result of his injury.

The tutors are so well briefed on the various impairments of the students they're working with.

Even just reading about Charlie Bell himself, we found him so inspirational and he taught us that you do have to give back to the community in some form or another in life. That's exactly what Charlie Bell did, in our case by helping Lewis with funds for uni. And it's what his family continues to do. His wonderful legacy still lives on.

Much to Lewis's surprise and shock, he was awarded the Scholarship – to say he was "pleased" is an understatement!

Lewis applied with the view of helping pay for various fees and books associated with the first semester of his Business degree at Monash University, which is exactly what he's done and it's been a huge help.

The Ronald McDonald House team is such an amazing, well-organised and compassionate team to work with – they provide so much relief in ways that they probably don't even realise when they're offering these opportunities to students who need them so much.

It really is an amazing charity and a lifeblood for those families in need and we're so thankful to all the team involved.

– Kim, Lewis's mum

# Learning with RMHC



## Learning through fun on holidays

During school holidays, our Learning Program team deliver a variety of fun, interactive and education activities across our Houses for families to immerse themselves in.

As always, in 2023 a mix of incursion and staff-facilitated activities were on offer, as well as excursions to local attractions. Families enjoyed Wildlife Exposure shows, science workshops, cooking, crafts, movies, zoo excursions and much more.

All activities are designed to provide much-needed distractions from the trauma these families constantly face.

Families are welcome to attend any sessions across the Houses, and our dedicated volunteers run shuttles to make sure nobody misses out.



**32**  
holiday program activities  
servicing 167 children

# Our Learning Program adds up

## My son Cody is a cancer survivor

Cody was born prematurely, with what they call premature rupture of the membrane, where you lose all your waters and the amniotic fluid. At birth we found that he couldn't breathe and had a diaphragmatic hernia requiring life saving surgery at just 24 hours old. We had no idea if he'd survive, which, miraculously, he did.

Then at two and a half we found the retinoblastoma, a rare type of eye cancer that typically develops before the age of five.

Cody had about 12 months in and out of hospital, with procedures, surgery, chemo and radiation therapies. Just before going to primary school in 2013, Cody had his eye removed and now has a prosthetic. He continued having treatment throughout school.

Over those years, we got to know many other families, one whose little girl was 18 months older than Cody. They had tapped into the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program, which had been successful in getting her grades up. Her mum noticed that Cody had been really struggling with his Maths – and was falling behind at school – and asked if I knew about the Program.

The Program had helped her daughter with tutoring as she'd had so much time off school as well... what did we have to lose?

The Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne referred us to the Ronald McDonald Learning Program, to which we were accepted. And we were incredibly grateful. That Learning Program did amazing things.

Around that time we also discovered that Cody had an acquired brain injury as a result of the treatment, and was getting further behind in Maths. He was great in lots of other ways – English, Music, yes, but Maths, no.

Cody worked with his tutor, the lovely Janine, who got Cody so far in advance with Maths that he did really well. He was set up for grade four and ready to succeed. And he did.

Then, fast forward to year 10... Cody had more surgery on his eye, and couldn't wear his prosthetic eye for almost three months due to complications and as a result, he missed all of term four.

Not knowing if Cody would qualify for more help, I reached out to the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program, even though we had used his initial 40 hours of tutoring in primary school.

We were in luck! We qualified for their Bridge The Gap Program, where tutoring is available for kids who need extra help with continuity of education after a hospital stay to prepare for getting back to school. It's short term, but it's incredibly helpful. So we gave it a shot.

We're in regional Victoria, so Cody worked with his new tutor, Alex, weekly online. He was fantastic and Cody is doing so well. Alex has a real passion for learning and exploring best outcomes – and just has a lovely way about him.

Cody is 14 years post treatment this year, which we've since found out for us it also means discovering problematic outcomes from his treatment. And there are many. We've had so many appointments that I don't think Cody has completed one full week of school.



It certainly isn't how I saw him doing VCE.

But, Cody is incredible. While his situation has held him back in some ways, he has thrived in many others. Out of school he's played ice hockey, tackled black runs and moguls skiing, is a keen tennis player and pretty dedicated guitar player, and is about to add singing to his repertoire.

He has a great, supportive group of friends and looks forward to getting back to life and school like a normal VCE student as best he can.

And as a result of being tutored in Maths, in Cody's last SACs (school-assessed coursework) he got 100%. ONE HUNDRED.

This is a kid who has had a hard slog his whole life, so that's pretty amazing. The tutoring has set him up and given him the grounding he needs.

That's our amazing story behind the Ronald McDonald Learning Program. Could you imagine where Cody would be, going into VCE after having a whole term off without tutoring? He just wouldn't be achieving.

Cody has huge aspirations.

He needs that Maths to be accepted into an accelerated learning program for high performing year 11 students at Deakin University so he can pick up two introductory uni course classes in year 12.

This kid has decided he wants to be a lawyer. A human rights lawyer. Or a criminal lawyer. And he's really passionate about that.

Without the support of the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program, there's no way Cody could have applied to Deakin, but now he's a real contender. Who knows what's going to happen over the rest of the year, but at least he's upped his average in Maths for other great opportunities, and sits in the 90s for English – he's a natural at that.

And now he's confident.

He has a chance now, whereas last year it wouldn't have been an option for us to even look at that opportunity.

– Ami, Cody's Mum





# If these walls could talk

North Fitzroy House Reading Corner, donated by The Grants Hub

The Reading Corner was created as a comfortable and inviting space for families to gather and immerse themselves in stories.

The books include many that promote diversity and inclusion, while others are tried and true, well-loved classics. This calming corner has been exceptionally popular with children when families are checking in to stay at the House.

The space was made possible by the Make it Happen small grant, awarded by The Grants Hub and founded by Jessie Ballantyne.

Story time sessions are also held in the Reading Corner, facilitated by the Ronald McDonald Learning Program Education Coordinator.

Thank you to Jessie and The Grants Hub for helping create this tranquil space of learning for the families of RMH North Fitzroy at Casa Elda Vaccari.

## Hobart House turning 25

On Wednesday 4 October we held an event for the 25th Anniversary of the Hobart House.

It was great to share this day with staff, volunteers and some corporate and community representatives who continue to support RMHC VIC & TAS and the families who stay with us.



Three of our wonderful long-term families made heart-felt speeches and there was not a dry eye in the House.

The past 25 years has seen many families come through our front door. Thank you to the dedicated team and volunteers who continue to make a difference to the families.

## Family Fun Day at Parkville

On Sunday 29 October, Kingpin Kuztums joined the RMHC VIC & TAS families for Family Day at Parkville House. The weather was perfect for marvelling at stunning vintage cars, grabbing a cloud of fairy floss or a tub of popcorn and enjoying various games and activities for all ages.

It was a memorable day filled with laughter, delicious food, and incredible cars, creating cherished memories for all who joined at Parkville House.

Thank you to Kingpin Kuztums for bringing your beautiful cars, and thank you to the staff and volunteers at Parkville House for all the work put in to make this a memorable day.



## Monash turned 30 last year

Opening our doors in April 1993, Ronald McDonald House Monash celebrated our 30th Birthday on Monday 24th April.

For 30 years this House has supported thousands of families, helping to alleviate some of the practical pressures while they focus on what matters most, their seriously ill child.



**4,165**  
Monash day visits

# Helping Children Thrive with Charlie Bell Scholarships

The late Charlie Bell was the first Australian Global CEO of McDonald's. After passing away following a courageous battle with cancer, Charlie left a wonderful legacy that allows young people who have experienced serious illness or injury to get their life back on track and follow their dreams.

RMHC is privileged to offer Scholarships in honour of Charlie Bell. The RMHC Charlie Bell Scholarship, awarded annually, is an exciting initiative that provides seriously ill young people the opportunity to flourish in their future endeavours. Congratulations to our winners for 2023!



## Jamila Cheung

An exceptional young person, Jamila undertook a hybrid delivery of education and completed her VCE over three years. Due to a serious health condition impacting her ability to attend full-time school, she graduated without her original peers.

Jamila has been profoundly impacted by the quality of care she has received over the past few years and now dreams of becoming a Doctor. She also dreams of being able to enter medical research later in her career to support the lesser diseases that don't currently have treatments or cures.

The Scholarship will assist with transport, school fees and required course resources. It will also allow Jamila to work less and focus more on her study and self-care.

## Bella

Bella is another exceptional young person who was diagnosed with a serious health condition in 2021. Despite her VCE years being significantly impacted due to medical treatment, Bella dreams of one day supporting a professional soccer team on an international stage.

In 2024 Bella will begin a double degree at ACU, combining Exercise & Sport Science and Nutrition, and hopes to assist athletes in reaching their peak performance.

The Charlie Bell Scholarship will support Bella's university fees and the purchase of a new laptop.

## Lewis Pepi

Lewis's life, as he knew it, changed significantly when he sustained a fractured skull and traumatic brain injury in early 2022. The impacts of the accident affected all aspects of his life: function, cognitive abilities, academic engagement, and even social connection. Through support, determination and

perseverance, Lewis continues his rehabilitation and has now successfully completed his VCE.

He has always been interested in Business and Commerce and plans to undertake an undergraduate course in the field in 2024.

The Scholarship will assist with textbooks, travel and equipment expenses. Due to Lewis's ongoing cognitive deficits, he acknowledges that continuing 1:1 tutoring (as he was receiving through the Ronald McDonald Learning Program) would be beneficial for his ongoing tertiary learning.

## Humble Resilience

The young people who come through the Charlie Bell Scholarship are simply extraordinary, with many exhibiting levels of resilience and humility well beyond their years.

Bella is one such person.

Diagnosed with a form of cancer a few years ago, Bella was being tutored to help her progress through VCE, with the aim of still being able to graduate with her peers.

Incredibly, only a few of Bella's tight-knit group of friends knew that she had an illness – and had chemotherapy weekly. Chemo would be at the end of the week so she could recover over the weekend and front up for school the following week. If she looked tired, she could pretend it was just from her weekend. Her parents were incredulous as to how she went about handling it.

All Bella wanted was to be treated as an equal and fit in at school.

During a tutoring session for biology, her tutor mentioned the RMHC Charlie Bell Scholarship, and suggested she apply for it. Bella's immediate reaction was a flat "no" – in her eyes she's no more special than anyone else, so why should she be a contender to receive it?

Time went by and the tutor reminded Bella of the Scholarship, so she did apply – submitting her application just a few minutes before deadline, and really didn't think too much more about it.

To Bella's great surprise, she was successful, and was granted a Charlie Bell Scholarship.

Bella was grateful to receive the Scholarship, but also confused due to her conflicting emotions of feeling no more special than anyone else, so why should she get it? Other people have it worse than her and she didn't think herself worthy of it.

This selflessness continued in her schoolwork and activities. Bella was a year 12 House Captain and somehow managed to run functions from her hospital bed while having chemo.

At that time, Bella was also working to achieve the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and even during treatment, she persevered. Her determination to live like a 'normal' teenager seemingly knew no boundaries.

Missing one camp that was mandatory to achieve the Award, Bella was granted special dispensation to finish the component at a later date. So Bella – along with her family – went to Point Nepean, where she took them on hikes, documenting their expedition.

This incredible act of resilience and willpower resulted in Bella proudly receiving her Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Bella has taken her positivity and is now settled into uni – and appears to be trailblazing her way through so far. She's taken care of coordinating her classes and is involved with the community however she can.

With the funds received from her Scholarship, Bella has purchased a laptop, general admin necessities and still has some left in the kitty for upcoming expenses related to her course.

It's humbling for RMHC VIC & TAS to be able to award Scholarships to young people like Bella – and our other recipients and applicants, who continue to stare down the face of adversity and inspire us all.

# Growing room for families

## Trish McGuire gladly made use of the RMHC Family Room in Wodonga six years ago when her daughter Ellie was born.

Ten years earlier – and two years before the Wodonga Family Room opened – Trish had a very different experience when she spent several weeks on the ward when her first daughter Chelsea was born. Through no fault of the hospital, 10 years ago there was little additional support.

Trish has gone from a RMHC Family Room user, to a parent group participant, to now, a dedicated volunteer. We spoke with Trish about her experience with RMHC...

"I became involved with RMHC when my second born was prem and stayed in the Wodonga Special Care Nursery for a few weeks. The RMHC Family Room was close by, which meant I could be near Ellie during the day.

When I got to the Family Room I met the lovely staff who were there to support me and showed me somewhere to have a rest. With what I was going through, it was great.

Through the Family Room and the other parents there, in essence we formed a mothers' group. The connections we all made, the resources, education, and even the craft we tapped into in the Family Room – all of it was an outlet for us. It was a relief knowing there are other people in situations like yours so we can really relate to each other.

Our mothers' group made you feel like you were meant to be there – and if you weren't there they'd miss you. And new mums were always welcome.

Looking back, I was one of the lucky ones. Even though Ellie was premature and wasn't well, she wasn't as ill as other children.

Ellie wasn't delayed in any milestones, but it was still traumatic and I was so lucky to have such a great group of mothers around me who could just connect and support each other. Apart from the care Ellie got, I think that was the most vital part of my experience.

Our mothers' group was not about comparing yourself to everyone else, it was about the new connections that you make and to build confidence.

We all still connect and talk six years later, and Ellie loves going to the Family Room – she's just sad that she has to go to school instead!

While there are some in the group we don't actually see anymore, we are still connected, whether that be by phone, email or social media.

I'm also still connected with the wonderful volunteers, although we don't catch up as much as we'd like. Time is not the best thing these days, but we know we're there for each other regardless.

I decided to become a regular volunteer so I could give back what I had been given, to support my community and to help other mums. I suppose we were all 'volunteering' our knowledge and support to each other even before we knew it ourselves.





There was one mum in particular who made me realise that I could actually give back.

I had been really affected by the trauma of both of my births, but I learnt this could be used in a positive way.

Sharing my experience with other mums, you can see the relief on their faces that they know they're speaking to someone who's been through something similar and had their own trauma. It makes them realise that they're not alone, and a lot of the time, that they're not over-analysing the situation.

For some mums, it's actually been a mental health and wellbeing thing and a reassurance that they're being a good parent. I think the bottom line is that it might be all of us in a way.

Any contact for these mums is a bit of relief, and it shows people that they're just human, that it's OK to feel how they're feeling, that we're doing OK. In a way I suppose it's mentoring, and that's not something I ever thought I would do. But it's really nice that you can give back.

I've also got the support from House staff, which makes a massive difference and boosts your confidence and that in itself is gold. Because then you know you're doing the right thing."



**63%**

Wodonga Family Room 2023 average occupancy



# A day in the Life of... a Family Support Coordinator, with Sandy Reay

I feel very passionate about the work that RMHC does. As a mum with a daughter who's spent a lot of time in hospital, I feel a real connection to my role.

My job is so rewarding and gives me purpose, and it's great to work with others who are focused on helping families too. Every day is different, but it generally starts with a handover from the overnight person, checking if there's anything I need to know, finding out if there are new families, and then there's some operational work. Each morning, I walk through the House, checking in with families and speaking with new families I haven't met before. There's a daily meeting with the other support coordinator onsite, and regular contact with Learning Program staff, social workers, and hospitals. Then there's project work, social media and input to marketing. No two days are ever the same! We also have a large cohort of wonderful volunteers and it's always lovely to stop and have a cuppa with them. It really feels like a family here.

I'm impacted personally by my role as I understand the importance of what we're providing for our families. Having experienced my child being in and out of hospital, I can appreciate what it would mean to have one less thing to worry about and I'm grateful I can play a part in supporting our families.

We provide a place to stay, meals to eat, a shuttle service, someone to talk to and learning support if they need it. With some families unable to work while they're staying with us, helping relieve some of that financial burden is especially vital.

It's lovely to hear that families feel supported whilst staying at the House. I have a colourful wall of thank you cards and drawings that the children have made for me and it's a constant reminder of the important work we do.

I also find it lovely to see how the families connect here and bond and support each other while they're staying with us. It's extra support from people in similar situations that they didn't even know they needed, but find they really appreciate.

In amongst the hardship, there are the beautiful moments.

A recent example that comes to mind is when we had the Clark family staying at the House for more than three months. While her baby brother was in hospital, five-year-old Rahli asked if she could buy a cubby house for the House. She had it all planned out: she was going to sell lemonade, as well as some of her belongings to raise the money needed to purchase the cubby.

With the help of our social media, Rahli raised an amazing total of \$3,500 in under 24 hours!

It's lovely to see other children playing in the cubby and parents sitting in the fresh air watching their kids just be kids.



It's such a beautiful legacy that Rahli has left behind and her thoughtfulness, kindness and generosity will always stay with me. Every time I see that cubby I have the biggest smile on my face, it's just so beautiful. For a five year old to be thinking about the other children staying in the House is just incredible.

The Clarks will be back when Rahli's brother needs more treatment, and we're excited for Rahli to see the cubby house again, complete with a new sign we made in her handwriting – 'Casa del Rahli' – that's what she wanted to call it. It's wonderful to see families giving back and how that in turn can have such a positive impact on families to come.



# Year in pictures





# Many hands make light work

We love seeing how our compassionate community give their time and energy to raise vital funds. Some decide to help because they have been either directly or indirectly impacted through one of our Houses, others just want to help families in times of need.

## Trekking Through Tassie

The second Tassie Trek for Sick Kids set off from Launceston in February, with eight participants walking in the spectacular Cradle Mountain National Park. The group included some McDonald's Licensees, and also the mother of the Tasmanian Charlie Bell scholarship recipient, who wanted to do something significant for all the help her family had received from RMHC.



Trekking the spectacular surrounds of Cradle Mountain on sections of the iconic Overland Track, our crew travelled with purpose and created change in the lives of seriously ill children and their families – and themselves.

Every step they took helped support the ever-changing needs of seriously ill children and their families, from diagnosis to recovery. It was a phenomenal effort and raised just shy of \$50,000.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone involved, both on the trek and behind the scenes.

## Shootathon

For the third consecutive year, Shootathon was held on 20 May 2023, this year raising \$39,089.



The junior basketball community in Southern Tasmania has now raised a total of more than \$140,000 from this event over the three years, making it the largest community event held for RMHC in Tasmania.

Shootathon began as a result of Belinda and Timothy's son, Bodhi, who had been experiencing a range of symptoms that nobody could explain. He had severe intellectual disability, hearing loss, bone and joint issues, as well as behavioural and autistic/ADHD traits.

After 18 long months, it was discovered that Bodhi had inherited a rare recessive disease called Alpha Mannosidosis which affects less than 200 people worldwide.

Bodhi had to undergo a bone marrow transplant and receive ongoing medical treatment at the hospital, which was far from their home.

During this incredibly traumatic time, the family was able to call Ronald McDonald House home for 132 nights and stay together as a family during the toughest time of their lives.

**“Having our own space that allowed the family to visit significantly helped Bodhi and my wellbeing. Being so close to the hospital was also extremely appreciated as Bodhi had almost daily oncology appointments.”**

Belinda, Bodhi's mum

## Z Fest Musical Festival

The Chugg family's Z Fest fundraising event is a tribute to the life of Zander Chugg, who sadly passed away on 13 July 2020 at the age of 17.

So appreciative of the services the Chugg family (and friends) benefitted from during Zander's illness, his father Nick designed and organised Z Fest, a Launceston music festival in his son's memory to help other families who discover their child needs urgent hospital treatment.

The family-friendly music festival was held in October at Apricus in Launceston and saw over 150 people join in the melodic fun in Zander's memory and raise much-needed funds for RMHC.

Eight popular local bands gave their time to support the event that raised more than \$16,000.

Throughout the first five years of Zander's life, Ronald McDonald House provided essential accommodation and emotional support to his family.

**“We know programs delivered by RMHC VIC & TAS work, we know it is important, and we hope to spread the word across Tasmanian communities. This is the motivation behind Z Fest.”**

Nick Chugg, Z Fest organiser

## CEO Walk in My Shoes

In May 2023, eight business leaders visited our Parkville House to immerse themselves in an experience like no other.



They were given a first-hand understanding of what parents and carers go through on a daily basis, as well as getting an opportunity to see what it takes to create the best possible experience for a family and come to know the families staying at Ronald McDonald House in Parkville.

During the 24-hour immersion experience, the senior leaders cooked and served dinner and breakfast to the families. They were also guided through real life scenarios, gaining a better understanding of what families are confronted with and go through when staying.

They also gained a rare insight as to what it takes to run the House and foster a true sense of empathy and compassion for the families who stay at RMHC VIC & TAS.

The CEOs were asked to reach out to their communities to generate funds to support families with children in hospital – and they raised just over \$20,000.

# It takes a village

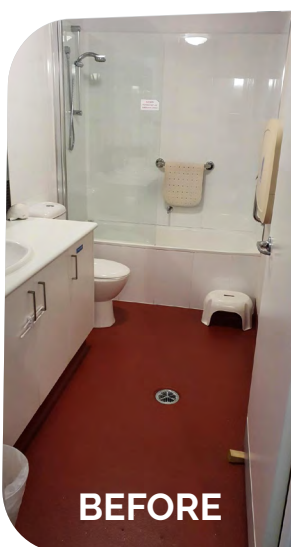
RMHC VIC & TAS's valued partners play an essential role in helping to provide a 'home away from home' for the families who stay with us.

Our partners work tirelessly to support the needs of our Houses and support our mission of keeping families close.

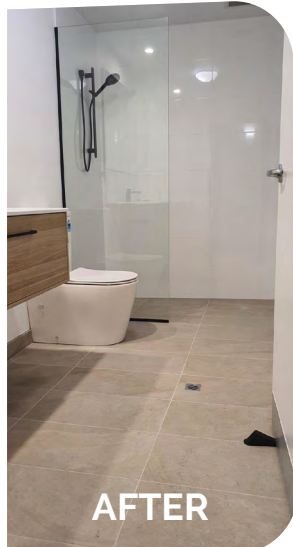
From organising events, to volunteering for Meals from the Heart, to supporting our Learning Program or keeping the pantries stocked, we cannot thank our corporate partners enough for their continued support in 2023.

## Trusts and Foundations

In June 2023, Hobart House had two freshly renovated bathrooms for families with sick and injured children, thanks to TG & JM Matthews Foundation.



**BEFORE**



**AFTER**

## Major Donors: June Bramich

An 80-something dynamo, June has supported Hobart House for the past 10 years.

On retirement from full time work, June decided to start donating to several charities – and gives generously to us each year.

A proud Tasmanian, June likes to support charities that operate in Tasmania. While she understands that gifts to RMHC VIC & TAS are pooled across the two states, she does like knowing that Tasmanian families are benefitting from her donation. June's donation can also be funnelled into Tasmania-specific initiatives whenever they arise.

After researching a number of charities operating in Tasmania, fortunately she chose us as one of her beneficiaries. Part of her reasoning for this was an appreciation for us not being 'top heavy' with administration costs, and that we enlist the help of many local volunteers.

June – on behalf of the hundreds of families you have helped over the years – thank you.

## Special thanks

Thank you to all our partners, donors, supporters and volunteers for helping us support more than 2,500 families in 2023.

You've helped families to feel safe, supported, loved and taken care of, giving them the strength to support their children when they need it most.

## Reid Foundation

Precious little River was just six months old when she was diagnosed with Stage 4 Lymphoma and HLH.

Motivated by River's recovery, her father Simon established the Reid Foundation Limited. With the family by River's side during her positive response to a hefty 60 rounds of chemotherapy over five months, Simon was inspired to help other families facing traumatic and challenging times, particularly those staying at Ronald McDonald House.



RMHC played a pivotal role in the Reid family's experience, providing practical solutions to coordinate visits with River and her mum while they were at The Royal Children's Hospital.

Grateful for the comfort, care and compassion they received, the Reid family recognises the lasting effect the Ronald McDonald House Charities has had on their lives, as well as the significant impact of its community and donors.



In establishing the Reid Foundation, Simon's aim is to extend that support to others facing similar situations, fostering hope and community for families dealing with serious illnesses.

Kicking off the Reid Family Foundation's fundraising was the inaugural Rivers Round event: a golf day at the prestigious Peninsula Kingswood Golf Club, which was followed by dinner, a silent auction and some emotionally moving speeches. Then in contrast, everyone was up on their feet dancing the night away.

A huge thanks go to all sponsors, businesses and individuals who generously donated auction items, funds, time and who attended the first Rivers Round event.

Throughout the day the event raised a whopping \$36,897!

Thank you Simon and the wonderful Reid family for supporting other families going through similar circumstances, you are an inspiration.

## McDonald's mission partners

Special thanks to the efforts by our Vic & Tas McDonald's team for their contribution to the national McHappy Day campaign. We're so grateful to our local restaurants who put in so much effort to support it.

McDonald's is RMHC's founding and Mission Partner. We are more than thankful for their generosity and ongoing support over the past 43 years. Together with our broader family of corporate partners and donors, McDonald's Corporate, Licensees and their customers continue to support the charity and help even more families of seriously ill children in Australia.



# Twice as much risk

During my second pregnancy, Shane and I found out at 12 weeks that we were expecting twins. At that stage we didn't have any idea what was in store for us, and wasn't until our follow up appointment where we were told that we had MCMA (Monochorionic Monoamniotic) Twins – a high-risk pregnancy.

The condition is rare. Identical twins share everything including growing in the same sac and share the placenta, causing higher risks of complications such as miscarriage, still birth of one or both of our babies, foetal anomalies and cord entanglement.

There were so many emotions the day we learnt what MCMA Twins were and the risks we were facing with the pregnancy.

Given the higher risk of complications, at 25 weeks gestation I moved to the RMHC Hobart House, 3.5 hours from home, my family and friends. I went from having a great support network to knowing no one.

I required daily monitoring at the Royal Hobart Hospital as I needed three CTGs a day and a weekly ultrasound. Staying at home just wasn't an option.

We made a plan to deliver the girls early as that was safest for them and lowered the chances of us losing them as they got bigger. We welcomed both girls at 32.5 weeks on 20th April 2023, a day after their father's birthday and only a couple of days before their big brother Eli's.

As the girls grew stronger we were then transferred to a hospital closer to home, and after a 33 day stay at the Launceston General, the girls were finally discharged and brought home to meet the rest of our family.



**"The House and staff really became our lifeline through this journey, it became our second home and the staff became our family. On the weeks where Shane and Eli couldn't make the 3.5 hour travel down due to work or other commitments, the staff were all I had and they have become lifelong friends. We just love them so much, they made life a lot easier with a two year old and made us all feel so welcome. We really could not have done this without them."**

Nadia, parents of twins  
Amarli and Remi

Both are doing really well now and are absolutely adored by their big brother.

All up we had 117 days in hospital (with 85 nights at RMH Hobart and a further 32 nights at the Launceston General Hospital), 126 CTGs and 57 ultrasounds – and it was worth every single one of them.

# Building memories

Our heartfelt thanks go to our wonderful supporters at every level of giving. Thank you to everyone who contributed to these events, from our corporate partners, to sponsors, donors, guests and the incredible event team of staff and volunteers. We are humbled and so incredibly grateful for your support. Thank you.

## Ride for Sick Kids

Our annual Ride for Sick Kids was held across 15-18 March 2023. The 2023 event saw the road ride reduced to one day this year, with a fun, new 10-hour Spin Challenge introduced on the rooftop at St Kilda Baths. With the introduction of the Spin Challenge being on the one day in Melbourne, more cyclists than ever joined in the fundraising fun. Our riding week kicked off on the Wednesday, road ride on Friday from North Fitzroy House to Frankston and back, and Spin on the Saturday. It was a huge week of fun, funds and wobbly legs Thanks to our Gold Sponsors Aryzta Australia and McDonald's Australia for making the event possible. Overall the event raised an incredible \$260,716.



## Golf Day

This year's sell-out event was held on 10 October, with 240 golfers and 276 dinner guests attending the National Golf Club to help raise money.

The weather was superb and we had some activations out on course and a 'pink ball', nearest the pin competition, where players donated additional funds for the chance to win, before everyone hit off.

From all activities across the day, we raised an impressive \$149,821, and we thank everyone involved.

Particular thanks must go to our generous Founding and Principal Sponsor, Stillwell Motor Group, who have made our Golf Day so successful through the years.

## A Night of Fun and Fundraising

### Tasmania

The RMHC Tasmanian Gala Ball is always a terrific night, and 2023's on 8 July was no exception! Thanks to the tireless efforts of a dedicated committee and team of volunteers, sponsors and supporters: together we raised a record \$270,000 to help support families in need.

Gala host, the engaging Darren Sangwell, a parent who knows first-hand the work of Ronald McDonald House having stayed there himself, did a fabulous job of keeping the night on track.

With the help of returning Auctioneer Hank Petrusma, we introduced a Pledge Moment seeking \$160 donations from guests to cover the cost of a night's accommodation for a family at the Hobart House. Guests eagerly raised their hands, resulting in a record-breaking tally of 1,096 nights sponsored for the House!



This year's surprise act was none other than – Human Nature! With the band performing everyone's favourite hits, the crowd were on their feet, singing and dancing the night away.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to major sponsors listed below, our corporate sponsors, major and generous contributors 7 Tasmania, Hit 100.9, Hotel Grand Chancellor, The Nicholas Group, Bega Group, The JBM Group, C&C Mingari, Simplot Australia, Tasmanian Eye Institute, TCM and William Adams CAT.

### Victoria

In 2023 we celebrated our 31st Victorian Gala Ball on 2 June, and we did it in style at Melbourne's Crown Palladium.



Hosted by Rebecca Maddern, the night included a stellar line-up of entertainment and the dance floor was full the moment Ricki-Lee took to the stage. Anthony Callea and Tim Campbell then treated guests to a performance and the singing and dancing continued long into the night.

The highlight of the night was a speech from Trudy and Andy Marr. They delivered a deeply personal and emotional account of their first-hand experience of Ronald McDonald House, where their family stayed for 64 nights whilst son Bobby was receiving blood cancer treatment at Melbourne's The Royal Children's Hospital.

The success of the event was only possible with the incredibly hard work and dedication of our community – the organisers, volunteers and sponsors. Their commitment to the cause and tireless efforts ensured the event was a huge success and will make a significant difference in the lives of families with seriously ill children. Thank you to everyone involved including our Platinum Sponsor, Zagame Automotive and our Double Gold Sponsors, Crown, Barry & Helen Fitzgerald, Encore, Essential Caravans, JCDcaux, Nine and QMS.

The Ball, along with the Helping Hearts sold in McDonald's Restaurants (RMHC Helping Hearts available for \$2, \$5 and \$10), we raised a total of \$612,664.

# Building partnerships

## Community Partners

### Tasmania

The Lions Club in Tasmania helps once a month to cook delicious meals for our families.

All chapters in Southern Tasmania have a roster that sees individual clubs coming in 2-3 times throughout the year.



### Victoria

We are fortunate to have dedicated community groups come in to our Houses, not just once, but multiple times each year.

For example, Melbourne Grammar comes in approximately 32 times over the year to cook for the families.

Melbourne business It's the Little Things donates meals every week to both North Fitzroy and Monash Houses, with North Fitzroy receiving 50 meals each week, and Monash 30 (excluding school holidays).

They also come in each quarter to make meals for the families on site (about 100 meals), and work with school groups to make snack packs for

the families to take to the hospital, which is 70-100 packs 10 times per year.

McDonalds licensees and staff also come in regularly to cook both breakfasts and dinners.

Not only is it much-needed practical help for the families staying at the Houses, it is also a rewarding experience for those who roll up their sleeves and show off their culinary skills to make the meals.

### Special thank you to our Major Community supporters:

- Orbest Poker Run
- Reid Foundation
- Team Jack
- East Gippsland Convoy for kids

## Hospital Partnerships

Collaborating and building our hospital relationships has become a vital part of supporting family-centred care whilst in the Ronald McDonald House Program.

Our hospital network includes, but is not limited to, The Royal Children's, Monash Children's, Albury Wodonga Health, Royal Hobart, Mercy and the Royal Women's.

It is critical that we keep extending our outreach, to help ensure families have access to our Programs when they need it.

Working in collaboration with our hospital partners to assist in the lifecycle of each family's journey in the House, including before admission and post discharge, demonstrates RMHC's commitment to the continual support of family-

centred care, as well as building longstanding and respectful relationships.

Ensuring clear and open communication channels with Nurse Unit Managers and Social Work team members enables the team to deliver the highest standard of quality care to the families – and hospitals.

## Corporate Partners

### Sports Entertainment Network (SEN)

In 2019, SEN built a McCafé on their premises to help raise funds for RMHC VIC & TAS.

Since then, through proceeds from the purchase of a toastie or coffee, SEN has topped \$100,000 for RMHC, a significant achievement particularly in light of COVID challenges across 2020-2021.

Further to this, 2023 saw SEN joining forces with their partners to raise another \$25,000 for us outside of the McCafe funds. Before Christmas they also visited the house to cook a hearty breakfast for the families.

### Aurora Energy

Aurora Energy ramped up their ongoing support to become a Platinum Partner for the 2023 Matched Giving Day Campaign, committing \$50,000. The partnership also includes six group-volunteering sessions by their senior management team.

#### Acknowledgments to our Major Corporate partners:

- Canaccord Genuity Foundation
- Pace Development Group
- Aurora Energy
- Sports Entertainment Network
- Stillwell Group
- McCormick Foods
- Turosi

#### With Special mentions to:

- Don Smallgoods
- Nicepak Products
- Bega Dairy and Drinks
- Tip Top Australia

“We’re thrilled to be the 2023 Ronald McDonald House Match Day Platinum Sponsor.”

“We are a Tasmanian business who supports Tasmanians and we greatly value the practical and compassionate care that families receive at the Ronald McDonald House.”

“No family deserves to have a sick child, but through our support we hope we can help to lighten the load, and we encourage everyone to get behind this worthy cause.”

Nigel Clark, CEO, Aurora Energy



# Group volunteering

## Victoria



Meals from the heart: 50 groups



Freezer food: 29 groups



Baking with love: 13 groups



Working bee: 21 groups



12 Days of Xmas: 13 groups

## Tasmania

We had 42 Group Volunteering sessions in Hobart in 2023, with the majority being the preparation and cooking of dinners in the House.

Our local corporate stars, Tassal, took the opportunity to participate in 15 events, while the Tassal Community Foundation also took the opportunity to Adopt a Kitchen in the House.

At the end of the year, Tassal gave gifts for all in the House, with all activities providing a rewarding experience for both volunteers and the recipients.

Tassal goes over and above their agreed volunteering session of one day per month given its popularity amongst staff, with various divisions and teams booking extra sessions during the year.

One division, the Russell Falls Hatchery, also independently fundraises throughout the year for us.

We also enjoyed a fun, immersive session with Francesca Jewellery called Bake and Bead, where their team members held a beading session for families to make their own bracelets as a memento of their stay, while also baking delicious treats for morning tea for all to share.

Our volunteers are the lifeblood of Ronald McDonald House Charities Victoria & Tasmania, embodying our core values and principles. We wholeheartedly acknowledge, appreciate, and celebrate the profound impact they have on the families we serve. Hailing from diverse backgrounds, ages, and cultures, each volunteer bringing a wealth of unique skills and experiences that enrich our community. Their commitment is truly commendable, and we are deeply grateful for their invaluable contributions.

Whether they're driving our shuttle bus or ensuring our donation resources are well-stocked, our team of caring, diligent, and dedicated volunteers play an indispensable role in our mission.

Each member of our volunteer family has gone above and beyond to support our families, demonstrating unwavering dedication and compassion. Without their tireless efforts, we simply couldn't keep our doors open to those in need.



"Tassal proudly sponsors the Ronald McDonald House Charity Kitchen through the Tassal Community Foundation, providing our employees with a truly enriching experience and an invaluable opportunity to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those facing challenges in our communities. Our dedicated team members who participated in the Make a Meal Program have consistently shared positive feedback, expressing their appreciation for the great facilities, engaging experiences, and an overall uplifting atmosphere created by the RMHC's staff, volunteers, and families. The overwhelmingly positive response has reinforced our commitment to continuing our support for RHMC."

Gemma Gwilliams, Tassal

# Financial foundations

Thanks to the unwavering support from all our donors, including individuals, communities, organisations and corporate partners, we have been able to sustain and expand our critical services. This year, our financials reflect not only the generosity of our donors but also the efficient allocation of resources towards providing care and comfort to families.

A significant portion of our expenses is dedicated to ensuring that accommodations are not just facilities, but warm, welcoming homes where families can find peace during turbulent times.

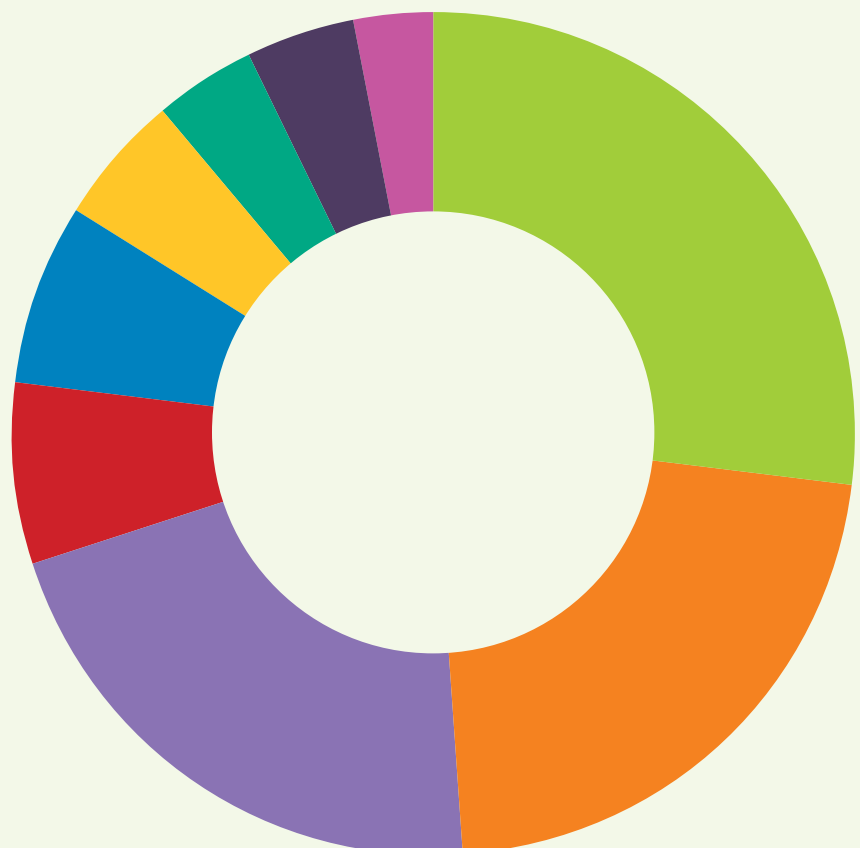
Accommodation subsidies are provided by the Government on application by families to help fund their stay with us. Special thanks to our Mission Partners, McDonald's, who have been instrumental at every level—from event sponsorships and direct mission funding to individual contributions that make a real difference in the lives of those we serve.

## Income VS Expenditure

Ronald McDonald House Charities VIC & TAS is audited annually by DFK BKM. Our revenue comes from various sources: Bequests, Business and Community, Corporate, Donors, Events and Government.

### Income

- Accommodation Subsidies 27%
- Events 22%
- RMHC Mission Grants - Program Funding 21%
- Corporate Contributions 7%
- Major Donors and Individual Giving 7%
- Trusts, Foundations and Bequests 5%
- Community Activities 4%
- Investment income 4%
- McDonald's activations 3%



**81%**  
Annual average  
occupancy for all 4 Houses



**78%**  
Hobart



**84%**  
Monash



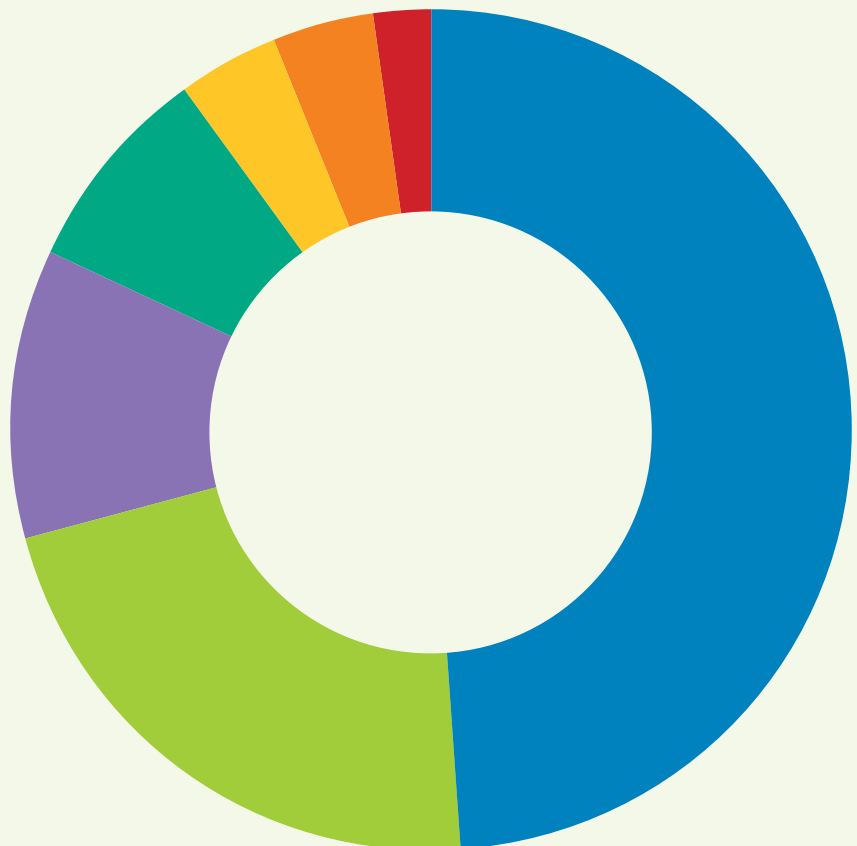
**82%**  
North Fitzroy



**79%**  
Parkville

## Expenses

- People 49%
- Facility costs 22%
- Events 11%
- Deprecation Expense 8%
- Fundraising investment 4%
- Learning Program 4%
- Administrative expenses 2%



# Experience builds success

Thank you to everyone who works behind the scenes to make RMHC VIC & TAS such a success – from the Board Directors, to volunteers and staff who work tirelessly for the cause – we really are so fortunate to have you all on our team – and your help is simply invaluable.

On behalf of the families we support, your time and dedication is so incredibly appreciated and is often a lifeline for those going through the most devastating and emotional time of their lives.

## Chief Executive Officer

Peter Bishop

## Our Board Directors

Jason Wall – Board Chair (until April 2023)

Garry Thompson – Board Chair  
(appointed April 2023)

Ben Westover – Deputy Board Chair  
(retired December 2023)

Sarah Connolly

Alice Gilbertson (appointed October 2023)

Dr Ben Jones

Adele McIntosh (appointed October 2023)

Corey Mingari

Patrick Moloughney - Deputy Board Chair  
(December 2023)

Kelly Nardella (appointed October 2023)

Julia Reid

Claire Richards

Danielle Smith (appointed October 2023)

## Staff

The devoted team at RMHC VIC & TAS is integral to achieving our mission. They bring compassion and extensive expertise to their work in supporting seriously ill children and their families.

RMHC VIC & TAS employs 78 staff across four Ronald McDonald Houses, four Ronald McDonald Family Rooms, the Ronald McDonald Learning Program, as well as our Fundraising, Marketing and Corporate teams.



## People

**20**

Permanent full time

**29**

Casual

**29**

Permanent part time

## Volunteers

Volunteers really are the unsung heroes at RMHC VIC & TAS. Those who give up their own time are truly inspirational, and are often so selfless that they are embarrassed to even receive a simple 'thank you' from staff.

No matter how many hours are donated by our treasured volunteers, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.



**196**

Volunteers



**14,993**

Total volunteer hours



**3,658**

Volunteer shifts





# Building impact

Our success is only realised with the incredibly generous support of our RMHC VIC & TAS community. You can help too. There are so many ways you can get involved, from supporting our appeals during the year, to organising a fundraising event, whether that be sporting, a challenge amongst colleagues and friends, or a lemonade stand, to sponsoring a room in a House, meal, or donating time and products in-kind. No matter what you choose, every little bit helps to deliver support and Programs to seriously ill children and their families.

## How can you help?



### One-off or regular donations

Supporter donations really add up to significant impacts for families staying at our Houses and participating in our programs. It's easy – jump on to our website and in just a few clicks, your financial support can help keep families together in times of need.



### Adopt a Room

More significant donations can cover costs associated with the upkeep of a room in one of the Houses: linen, electricity, maintenance, etc. As a program member, you get priority access to events and other benefits too!



### Gift in Will

Leave a legacy for future generations. Even a small percentage of your estate can make a huge difference to families doing it tough. You can even if you'd like to write your Will online and make a difference tomorrow without impacting your finances today.



### Group Volunteering

Bring your work team to one of the Houses to cook for families or participate in a working bee. Experience first-hand the positive impact that volunteering can have on both your team and families.



### Host or participate in a fundraising event

Fundraising can be fun, because you can make it whatever you want: tea party, fun run, head shave! Or perhaps you'd rather ask guests at your celebration to donate to our page. Find everything you need on our website.



### Workplace Giving

Giving directly from your pre-tax salary is one of the best ways to give. And it's easy to set up through your payroll. Find out more on our website.

Families need your support  
now more than ever  
[rmhcvictas.org.au](http://rmhcvictas.org.au)



# Thanks to the builders

The families we support would not be able to enjoy the comfort and support of our Houses and Programs without the generous and substantial funding from a special group of people and organisations. We are forever grateful.

## Bequestors

Aimee Grace Phegan  
Alisha Rachel Friend  
Belinda Moss  
Ben Westover  
Denis Shaw  
Donna Portway  
Elaine Fuller  
Geoff & Katina Sanger  
Jason Henry Wall  
Joan Heard & Muriel Morrish

## Estates

Estate of Reg Webb  
Estate of Valma Mary Cox

## Major Donors

Ellis & Denise Richardson  
Hislop Family Foundation  
June Bramich  
Robert Nicolaidis

## Trusts & Foundations

Collier Charitable Fund  
Community Bank Pinewood  
Godolphin Australia  
Grifols Australia  
Gringlas Charitable Fund  
Gualtiero Vaccari Foundation  
Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation  
Nelson Alexander Charitable Foundation  
O'Brien Foundation  
Pierce Armstrong Foundation  
RMHC Australia  
Suburban Rail Loop Authority  
TG & JM Matthews Foundation  
The Grants Hub Make it Happen Small Grant  
The Honda Foundation





# Keeping families close™

**Ronald McDonald House Hobart**  
62 Collins Street, Hobart  
(03) 9966 8480

**Ronald McDonald House Monash**  
33 Kanooka Grove, Clayton  
(03) 9966 8460

**Ronald McDonald House North Fitzroy**  
863 Brunswick Street North, North Fitzroy  
(03) 9966 8440

**Ronald McDonald House Parkville**  
22 Gatehouse Street, Parkville  
(03) 9966 8400

**Ronald McDonald Family Room Monash**  
Monash Children's Hospital  
(03) 8572 3726

**Ronald McDonald Family Room Sunshine**  
Sunshine Hospital  
(03) 8345 0888

**Ronald McDonald Family Room Wodonga**  
Wodonga Hospital  
(03) 6024 5206

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**Ronald McDonald Learning Program**  
863 Brunswick Street North, North Fitzroy  
(03) 9966 8440

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**RMHC VIC & TAS**  
victas@rmhc.org.au  
Level 1, 250 Canterbury Road  
Surrey Hills Victoria 3127  
(03) 9966 8420



**Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®**  
VIC & TAS

#KeepingFamiliesClose  
rmhcvictas.org.au

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