



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
Northern NSW



# Keeping families close™

**Impact Report 2019**





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**“If the House  
wasn't here we don't  
know what we would  
have done”**

*- James, Olive's Dad*

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**Note:** Patricia 'Margaret' McNaughton retired from the board in early 2019 after 27 years of service



## Board Chair and CEO Message

The families that arrive at our front door are facing some of the toughest challenges they will ever endure. They open their hearts to other families and to our volunteers and staff, inviting us all to become part of their journey.

Our community of supporters – our volunteers, donors, and our founding mission partner, McDonald's – is critical to our success in helping these families.

Volunteers are an integral part of what we do. Whether it's reading a book or playing a game with a child, a quiet conversation with a parent, or preparing one of our rooms, volunteers provide comfort for our visiting families.

Sincere thanks, as well, to the 2,308 donors who supported us in 2019. Your contributions and your belief in our mission helped keep over 6,000 families together during times of need.

You have also helped us continue to be able to improve the way we support families across the region. In 2019, as part of our Learning Program, a new Learning Space was created at Newcastle House to help students who have missed out on their education due to illness reach their full potential. Our Family Rooms at John Hunter Children's Hospital and Gosford Hospital had a full make-over improving the facilities for our families. We also broke ground for the new Volunteer and Administration building at our Family Retreat in Forster which is due for completion in 2020.

At the time of writing, we are facing new

and unprecedented challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the safety and well-being of our families, volunteers, staff and broader community remain our utmost priority we've had to make important and necessary changes to how we serve our families.

Whilst we are still supporting families at our Houses, the communal areas have been closed and only essential service staff are permitted access. We've had to temporarily close our three Family Rooms and the Family Retreat. And our Learning Program has transitioned to online learning.

Many of our major events have been cancelled or postponed which has impacted the vital funding we need to continue to deliver our services. While COVID-19 has changed the world, the need to support families with a seriously ill or injured child remains.

Thank you for standing beside us and helping to keep families close who need it now more than ever.

Judith Woloschyn  
RMHC Northern NSW  
Board Chair

Ross Bingham  
RMHC Northern NSW  
CEO

# About Us

When a child is seriously ill, it can disrupt every aspect of family life – from school and work, to everyday moments like meal times, bath times, play times and quality time. This can have a devastating effect on the whole family. Ronald McDonald House Charities helps family life carry on while a child is undergoing treatment. Since 1981, we've helped thousands of Australian families through their most difficult times.

# Our Mission

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

# Our Vision

To achieve the best outcome for families by reducing the impact of their child's serious illness.



## How We Help

We've developed a range of Programs to help families enjoy more everyday moments when they need it most.



### 2 Houses

Our Houses offer families a place to stay close to the hospital. They are especially helpful for families who have to travel far to receive treatment for their child. Each House's accommodation is equipped with everything families need to feel supported during their stay.



### 3 Family Rooms

Our Family Rooms are located inside the hospital and close to the children's wards. They give families a chance to recharge after many stressful hours at their child's side. Each Family Room is equipped with areas to rest, eat, freshen up, play and relax.



### 1 Family Retreat

Our Family Retreat gives families a chance to forget the stresses of hospital life. They're open to families with a seriously ill child, or those grieving the loss of a child.



### Learning Program

Extended stays in hospital or receiving medical treatment means kids miss school. Our tailored one-to-one tuition helps kids catch up on school work so that they feel confident as they transition back to school.

Our Learning Program also offers professional development for educators. EDMed™ provides teachers with information about the potential impacts of a serious or chronic illness, as well as educational strategies to support the needs of these students impacted by a serious or chronic illness.







## Stronger Together

"The meals cooked each week for the families won't be forgotten. Cafeteria and hospital food gets old fast, and a home cooked meal was just what we needed some nights." Amanda Unger – Mardi, NSW

Newlyweds Amanda and Ben had been married only a couple of months when their 3 year old son Frankie received his cancer diagnosis. On the cusp of purchasing their first home and beginning preschool for Frankie, 2019 was not the year they were expecting.

During the first week of Frankie's treatment, Ben drove back and forth to the Central Coast each day. "Initially we thought we could do the trip each day, I don't think we realised how intense Frankie's treatment was going to be. We gratefully moved in to Ronnie Mac's soon after," said Amanda.

Ben's mother Julie was able to stay to assist with their younger child Leo, and they had all the comforts of home in the unit, even bringing their toys and pillows. "We couldn't have the whole family at the hospital, so it was great to have the unit where we could all be together. It was our own quiet place in all of the chaos."

The support from staff and volunteers at the House made each day that bit easier, from having a home cooked meal provided through Meals From the Heart, to having the Easter Bunny come to the House so the kids didn't miss out on anything.

"We have so many happy memories from that tumultuous time, thanks to Ronnie Mac's. It's not until you are in this that you realise how important the charity is for so many families just like ours," said Amanda.

After 260 nights calling Ronald McDonald House 'home', the family are now back on the Coast. Frankie is thriving and Amanda and Ben recently welcomed their 3rd son Mars to the family.

# The impact we made in 2019

## Unique Families Supported

**6,120 +**



**Ronald McDonald Houses**  
**681** different families given  
a home away from home in our  
**23** rooms across our  
**2** Houses.



**6,558** Meals from the  
Heart experiences, where  
families have been provided  
with a home cooked meal,  
baked goods or big brekkie.  
**361** days was the longest  
continuous family stay of 2019.

## Our Volunteers

**320** volunteers donated  
over **30,000** hours to help  
provide families with the  
comforts of home at any one  
of our programs.





### Ronald McDonald Family Rooms

**5,140** families took a much needed break in one of our **3** Family Rooms, walking through the doors over **22,277** times.



### Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

**142** holidays provided for families at our Forster Retreat.



### Ronald McDonald Learning Program

**123** students received tutoring through the Learning Program by one of our **46** tutors. Our Education Liaison Officer worked closely with the Paediatric Oncology team to support **40** students and their families on their journey to recovery from serious illness.

# Financials



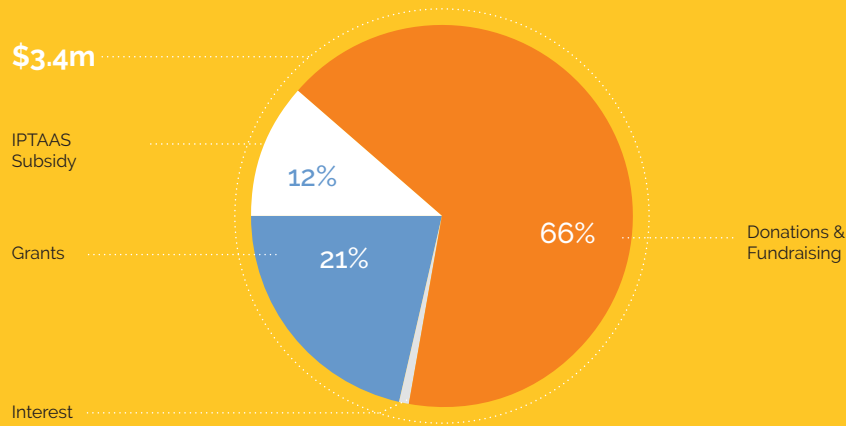
In 2019, RMHC Northern NSW generated over \$3 million to support the ever-changing needs of seriously ill children and their families. These vital funds have helped over 6,000 families from our region when they need it most.

Our fundraising income equalled the 2018 record year, with \$2.3million raised, even with a third year of drought in the New England North West and the devastating fires experienced across the country in the latter part of the year.

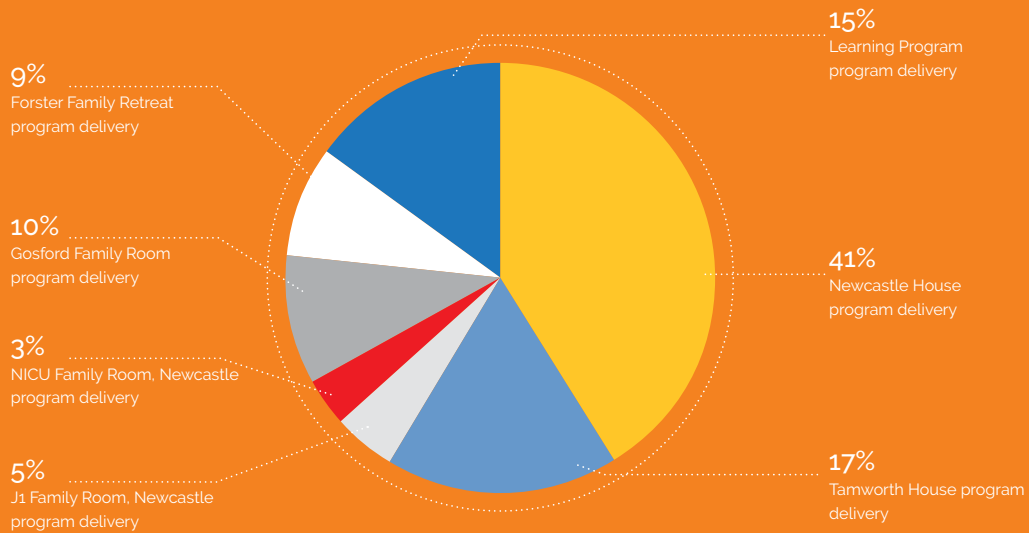
As RMHC NNSW is 100% community owned and operated, we rely on the generosity of the community to provide much needed support for sick children and their families. So it was positive to see support from the community and local businesses increase by 25%.

We are grateful to our generous supporters for enabling us to continue helping families of seriously ill children in 2019.

# Where the money came from

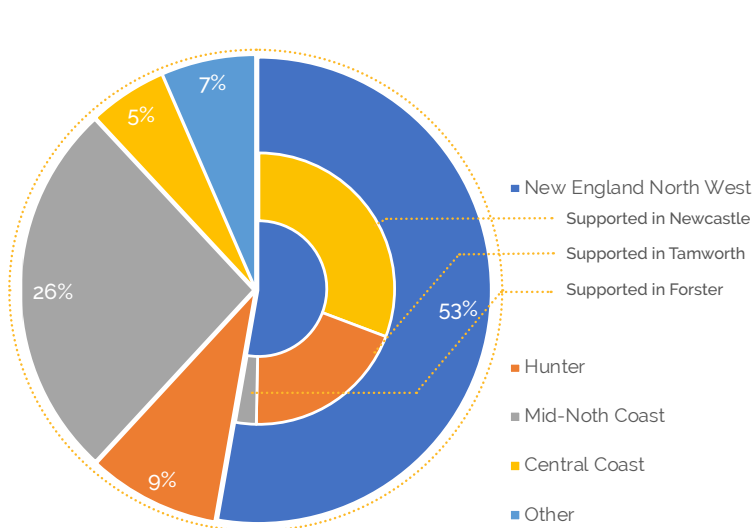


# Where the money helped\*



\*How operational costs were distributed

# Where our families came from





## Keeping Families Close

*“The Family Room was a place where we could catch our breath. It felt like home amongst all of the chaos.” Kate Sinclair, Newcastle NSW*

Already proud parents of 3 rambunctious boys, Kate and John were excited for the arrival of their baby girl, Hannah. When Kate's waters broke at 22 weeks gestation, and nine weeks of hospital bed rest followed, they knew the pregnancy would not be smooth sailing. Hannah was born prematurely via emergency caesarean and needed vital medical care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

Such a difficult and stressful time was made a little easier by having the support of the Family Room within the hospital. The whole family could be together and share some special moments, while staying close to Hannah. Simply being able to have a chat or watch some TV with her boys could brighten Kate's day. Family Room volunteers were also

there to lend a hand. “The volunteers were so thoughtful and caring, and they would often listen to our story or ask us how our baby was going,” says Kate.

Kate and John value the friendships they formed with other parents who also had sick babies in hospital. “We were all riding a similar rollercoaster, and it was a journey a lot of people wouldn't understand,” says Kate. “We have built lifelong friendships with families we met in the Family Room.”





## Our locations

Region	Location	Programs	Contact
New England North West	Tamworth Hospital	House	31 Dean St Tamworth NSW 2340 Locked Bag 9701 Tamworth NEMSC NSW 2348
Hunter	John Hunter Children's Hospital	House Family Room - J1 Family Room - NICU	Off Lookout Rd New Lambton Heights NSW 2305 PO Box 268 New Lambton NSW 2305
Central Coast	Gosford Hospital	Family Room	Holden St Gosford NSW 2250 PO Box 9530 Wyoming NSW 2250
Mid-North Coast	Forster	Family Retreat	Cnr Oyster and Dolphin Dve Forster NSW 2428 PO Box 9 Forster NSW 2428





# Our Community

Ronald McDonald House Northern NSW is 100% community owned and operated. Because of our community, we were able to look after over 6000 families in 2019. Families who felt safe, supported, loved and taken care of. Parents and carers who had the strength to support their children when they needed it most, because of you.

## Meals from the Heart

Our Meals From the Heart volunteering program keeps going from strength to strength as community and corporate groups get involved with the charity.

In 2019, a whopping 183 groups visited Newcastle House to take part in Meals From the Heart, Lovin' From the Oven and Big Brekkie. That's a lot of delicious home cooked meals for families with sick kids!

## Renee Schofield Personal Training

Getting fit has never felt so good! The Lake Macquarie community really got behind Renee's Christmas festive shirts fundraiser, raising over \$11,000!! Renee's tireless efforts to support families doing it tough at Christmas was fantastic, and she was a deserving finalist for the Newcastle Herald Hunter Hero Award in 2019.

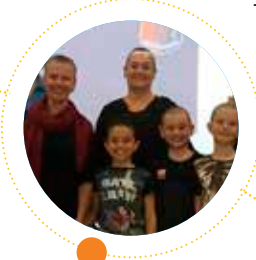
## Merewether Public School Head Shave

The generous and community-minded teachers and students of Merewether Public School raised \$13,000 through their head shave event in 2019! What an incredible effort and contribution to our charity.

The school is now the proud sponsor of our Learning Room at Newcastle House.

## le Tour de Taree - Club Taree

In 2019, Club Taree's 'le Tour de Taree' annual fundraiser soared to new heights, raising over \$40,000! Understanding the support Ronald McDonald House Charities offers families right across the Manning/Great Lakes, Club Taree and their members are wonderful supporters and advocates for our charity.





Barb Lewis - Volunteer

# Volunteers

## The heart of RMHC Northern NSW

Volunteers are at the core of our Charity. In 2019, over 320 volunteers across Northern NSW worked regularly to help with the everyday operations of our programs, and many more assisted through corporate and events volunteering. We know the job could not be done without them. From cleaning and maintenance, to making cups of tea for parents and assisting with their laundry – our volunteers are priceless.

### Barb Lewis - Volunteering since 1991

For 28 years, Barb has been giving back to her community by volunteering at Ronald McDonald House. She hasn't looked back after seeing an advertisement in the local paper asking for volunteers who were willing to assist parents staying at the House. "It asked for people who could make a cup of tea for parents, and I thought, well I could do that!" said Barb.

For Barb, volunteering has been an enriching life experience that has provided life long friendships and a palpable sense of the importance of family. "When you go home you know how lucky you are that your kids are healthy," says Barb.



Margaret  
Newcastle Volunteer



Steve  
Forster Volunteer



Sue  
Gosford Volunteer



Sue  
Tamworth Volunteer



## McDonald's Our Founding Mission Partner

## McHappy Day

Ronald McDonald House Charities is a global charity founded in 1974 in the USA as a result of the foresight of an oncologist at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia.

Dr Audrey Evans envisioned a place where families could live and get proper rest away from the ward while their children were undergoing treatment.

Funds to build the first House were raised by the local McDonald's restaurant's and in exchange for their support it was named "Ronald McDonald House".

The first Ronald McDonald House in Australia was opened in Camperdown, NSW in 1981 and was also made possible through the generous support of McDonald's Restaurant Licensees in Australia.

McDonald's Corporate, Licensees and their customers continue to support the charity today, alongside RMHC's family of corporate partners and donors. Thanks to their backing we are able to help even more families of seriously ill children across Australia.

McHappy Day is the biggest fundraiser of the year for RMHC. Every year, McDonald's restaurants around Australia raise vital funds for our families and children. And every year, we are blown away by the incredible support of every restaurant, individual and business who donates to our cause.

In 2019, a record-breaking \$5.5m was raised across Australia through McHappy Day. McHappy Day is always a truly collaborative event. It brings the community together, to raise the bar and ensure we can continue to support thousands of families with seriously ill or injured children.

Locally we continue to enjoy an amazing relationship with McDonald's restaurants and Licensees across Northern NSW through event support, corporate volunteering, donations and workplace giving.



## Supporting RMHC

Our local McDonald's, Licensees and their crew are always willing to lend a hand to help families with a sick or injured child.

### Getting Involved

When an extra pair of hands are needed, the McDonald's crew are there to help. Whether it's volunteering on the golf green or in a ballroom - their support helps ensure our fundraising events are a success.

### Meals from the Heart

McDonald's and their crew have been involved in our Meals Program since the beginning, coming into Ronald McDonald House to cook a tasty meal for families after a long day at the hospital and often go that extra mile with children's activities and games.

### Connected to Cause

Across Northern NSW, our McDonald's Licensees get involved and support RMHC. Whether its taking on physical challenges, like participating in the Ride for Sick Kids, personally sponsoring events or activities like the Central Coast Charity Ball, or educating their crew about RMHC and encouraging them to be involved - they are connected to RMHC's mission.

### Raw Challenge

More than just a team building event, the McDonald's Raw Challenge at Doyalson brings together crew from across the Hunter Region for some fun and fundraising.





## Relax, Refresh, Recharge

"We've seen whales, dolphins, caught fish, chased each other around at laser tag, chilled out, and enjoyed every bit of it together." Trudie Arnold, Werris Creek NSW

Sometimes being able to enjoy those everyday moments makes all the difference for a family. When Trudie's 6 year old daughter Jorja was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes in February 2018, family life for the Arnold's changed dramatically.

Dealing daily with the highs and lows, injections, site changes and strict dietary requirements has been a source of anxiety for the whole family, as they all adjusted to a new lifestyle.

"We are 18 months into our journey with diabetes, and it hasn't gotten easier but we manage a lot better. We are lucky Jorja is a brave, happy and resilient child," says Trudie.

After experiencing years of drought in North West NSW, the Arnold Family were excited

when they were given the opportunity to head to the beach and enjoy a holiday at our Family Retreat in Forster. Located on the beautiful banks of Coolongolook River, and a stone's throw to Main Beach, shops and restaurants, the Family Retreat provided the Arnold's with the space and opportunity to relax, recharge and enjoy the everyday moments of being a family.

"To be able to come to the coast where the grass is green has been wonderful. Thank you so much for this opportunity to enjoy great family time together and make memories to treasure. It was just what the doctor ordered!" says Trudie.

## Forster Family Retreat

When a family is assisted by Ronald McDonald House Charities, they get so much more than a roof over their heads. The extra support and care we provide is essential for families to cope with the trauma and stress of having a very sick child. We offer social and emotional connection at a time when many families feel isolated. In 2019, we have taken our mission even further at the picturesque Forster Family Retreat, by starting the build of a new onsite office and storage rooms, that have been future proofed to also have the capacity to convert to a 5th holiday cabin.

This wonderful addition to our Family Retreat offering means staff and volunteers will be onsite to meet and greet families, and deal with any enquiries throughout their holiday. The new space will be a communal hub that provides an area for corporate and community volunteers to participate in Meals From the Heart, as well as offering onsite gardening workshops, craft workshops, story time and a weekly breakfast. We appreciate the extensive support of the previous Forster Beach House Board, Mid-Coast Council, SavCorp Builders, EJE Architecture and Northrop Consulting Engineers, who have all helped bring our vision to life.



## Newcastle House Units

In 1997 the Newcastle community raised \$3 million for a dedicated children's cancer service here in Newcastle. This meant Northern NSW families would no longer have to travel to Sydney for their child to receive treatment.

Ronald McDonald House Newcastle responded to the increased demand for long term accommodation close to the hospital, by building 6 self-contained units adjacent to our existing facilities. Our beautiful oncology families call these units home through the toughest of times.

In December 2019 we received a significant grant from the Newcastle Permanent Charitable Foundation, that will allow for the upgrade and renovation of 3 of those units. We have planned to complete the works with minimal disruption to families - only closing one unit at a time and waiting until a family returns home before starting work.

At the end of a long day at hospital, the upgraded units will provide a safe and comfortable home where families can be together, support each other, and hopefully make some special memories.





## Learning Program

As pioneers of the Learning Program across Australia and globally, our chapter understands the importance of education and schooling in the life of a family with a sick child. Keeping a child connected to school both socially and academically is vital for the well-being and recovery of the child. In 2019, the Learning Program in Northern NSW received a major boost in funding through the Greater Charitable Foundation, ensuring even more families have access to this important program.

Since August 2019, the number of students supported through the Ronald McDonald Learning program has grown by 18%. Over the same period, the number of families with seriously ill children that have been supported through Educational Liaison has increased by 17%. With continued community support, we look forward to seeing even more resilient students reach their fullest potential with the assistance of the Learning Program.



## Gosford Family Room

When a family is spending long stressful days by their child's side in hospital, our Family Rooms provide a place to relax and recharge. Having first opened in 2013, the Gosford Family Room has had many people step through the doors, enjoy a cuppa, relax on the lounge and enjoy time together with their whole family away from the ward. Over a frantic couple of days in May, and with the assistance of the local community, the Gosford Family Room was decked out with new furniture, a fresh lick of paint and even new toys and play equipment for the kids!





## Keep learning, keep growing

"It makes such a difference to know you have people in your corner,"  
Steph Cassar, Forster NSW

Eight year old Solomon is a healthy, energetic kid who loves sport and school. "Most people would be totally shocked to know what he has been through," says Solomon's mother, Steph.

Diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia at 5 years of age, Solomon and his family spent many months travelling back and forth to Newcastle for his treatment.

"We had both short and long stays at Ronald McDonald House, and that was a fantastic support for us at the time," said Steph.

Having missed most of Kindergarten, and enduring two and a half years of chemotherapy and steroid treatment, Solomon was feeling anxious and unsure about going to school. "The Learning Program gave us all peace of mind that Solomon was

progressing and where he needed to be academically," said Steph.

The private tutoring with a fully qualified teacher meant a program could be designed specifically for Solomon's needs. "His tutor Bron, was familiar with the school and across all of the milestones Solomon needed to be achieving. She was great,"

Ronald McDonald House Charities has played an important role in the care and recovery of Solomon and his family since his diagnosis in 2017. "No one gets how important it is until you have to use it," said Steph.



# Raise Love Charity Ball

In 2019, guests from across our region came together and experienced a spectacular night out to 'Raise Love' and the much-needed funds to help seriously ill or injured children and their families during their time of need. The Raise Love Charity Ball featured spectacular performances, aerial artistry, glam bars, local celebrity hosts and guest speakers.

Alliance Labour Solutions came on board as our Event Partner and along with other sponsors, live and silent auctions, and other fundraising activities, contributed to more than 1,520 nights of accommodation raised.



# Central Coast Golf Day

The Gosford Family Room's Annual Charity Golf Day was another successful day on the green. Proudly supported by Event Partners Servers Australia and local McDonald's Licensee group Family Chips, the event raised vital funds to ensure families have access to the programs that RMHC offer while their child is sick or injured in hospital.



# Country Under the Vines

In 2019 Country Under the Vines featured 10 amazing country artists and with the support of Singles Builders, the major event sponsor, music festival goes dug deep to help keep families together when their child is sick or injured and needing RMHC.



Raising 173 nights to help keep families together, Country Under The Vines has been driven by Tamworth Local and Ronald McDonald House supporter, Chris Watson.

While Chris is stepping back to focus on his family and business, the support of the Country Music community and Tamworth region is strong and we can't thank them enough for being a part of Country Under the Vines.



## Ride for Sick Kids

## China Challenge

"The bike is just the apparatus for us to raise vital funds for the charity to ensure they can help sick kids."

"The challenge was hard - physically, emotionally and mentally but worth it knowing we are helping families."

In 2019, Ride for Sick Kids continued to evolve. From starting out as a Road Ride back in 2005, involving the broader community by doing their own Ride for Sick Kids in their local community in 2017 to this year bringing together local business leaders for the inaugural CEO Ride-Off. The Ride for Sick Kids continues to be one of our marquee events with September now earmarked as Ride For Sick Kids month.

On the road a team of 18 cyclists took up the challenge, cycling from Inverell to Newcastle - more than 500km in 5 days.

The support of each person who jumps on a bike and every business that gets involved makes a huge difference for families when they need RMHC.

In May 2019, 6 heroes took on the challenge to step out of their comfort zone, walk the Great Wall and fundraise for seriously ill children and their families who need the support of Ronald McDonald House Charities.

"We had an unbelievable team. Every single person has been kind, supportive and generous with everyone. We were each other's cheerleaders & advocates & made sure the whole team made it & enjoyed their success.

Walking 1000's of steps across often steep and varied terrain, they completed their journey and thanks to our trekkers and their supporters, the funds they raised means families can have access to the support they need when their child is sick or injured.

# Our Supporters

RMHC Mission Partner



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## Thanks to our major donors

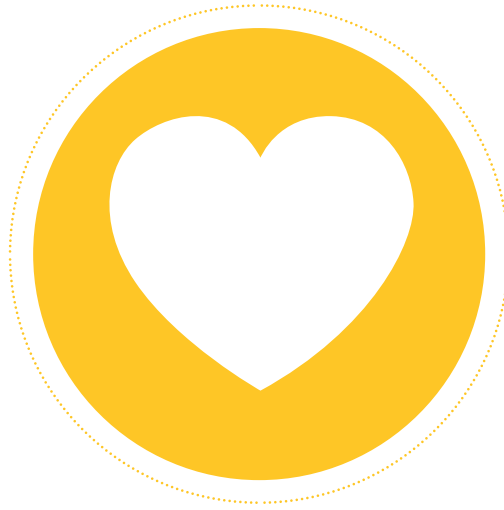
Abermain Bowling & Recreation Club	Friends of Ronald McDonald House	Orica
Adflow	Fujitsu Australia Limited	Pacific Magazines
AI Insurance & Soft Landings Foundation	Greater Charitable Foundation	Pacific National
Alan Gilmore	Halekulani Bowling Club	Peter Doyle
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Foxtel Media	Novatones	Young Aggies
	oOh! Media	

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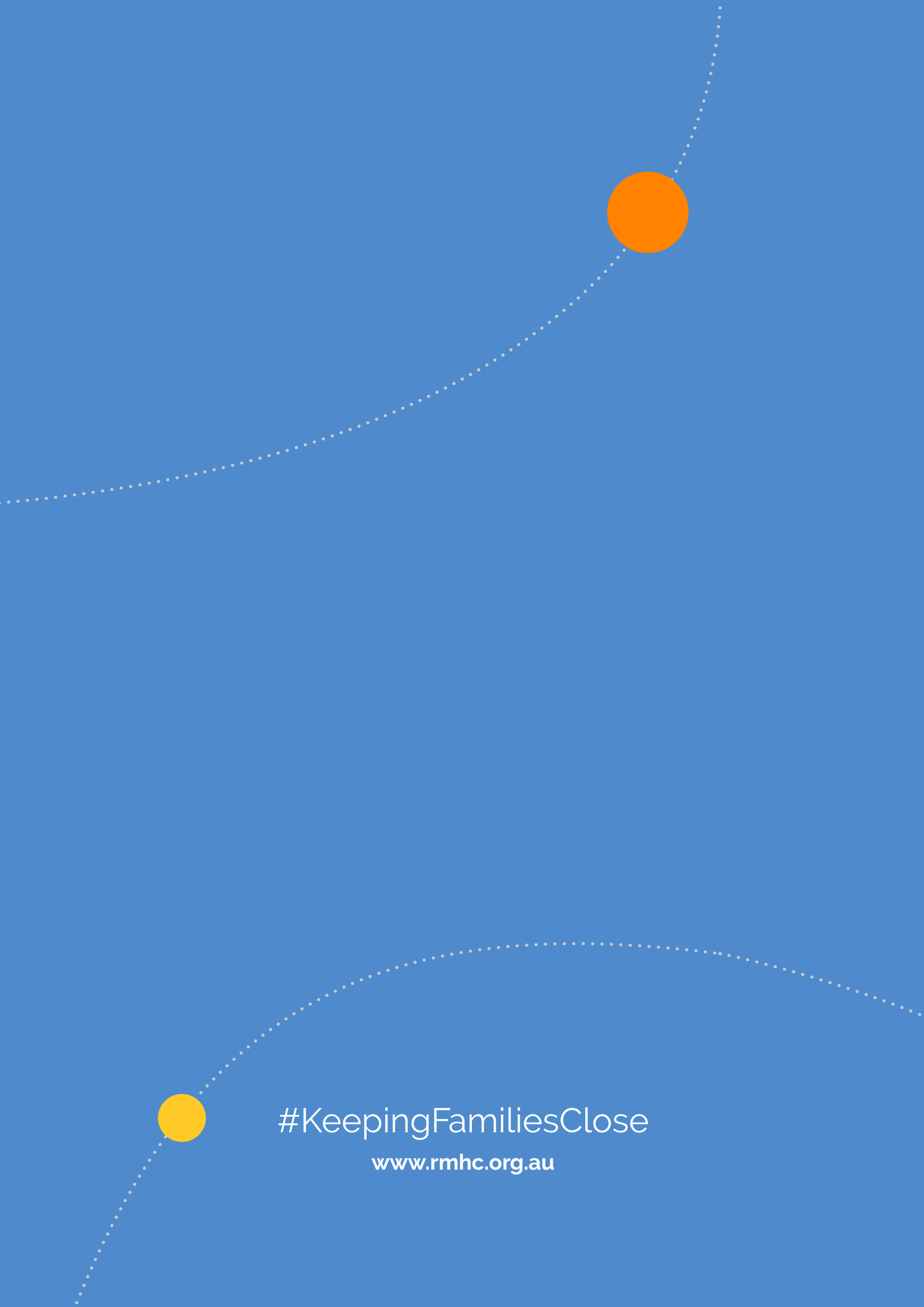
## Thanks to our major in-kind supporters

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Asaleo Care	Helping Hand Group	Scenic Tours
Bosch	Hyundai Help for Kids	SCIS Property Group
Central Coast Leagues Club	Ingenia Communities	Sealy of Australia
Clorox Australia Pty Ltd	JR Richards	Shaun Maybury Plumbing
Coca Cola Amatil	Kobie Smit	Southern Cross Austereo
Dean Maybury Electrical	La Z Boy	Strategic Information Technologies
Domayne Furniture	Newcastle Weekly	The Newcastle Herald
Ecolab	Northrop Consulting Engineers	Tip Top
EJE Architecture	Pact Group	Toybox Films
Erina Fair	Parmalat	Tuggerah Lakes Target Action Group
Foxtel	Popcake	

Thank You



This is the house  
where families meet  
to continue their lives,  
to eat and sleep,  
to find their strength,  
and dry their tears,  
to look forward with hope  
to better years.  
This is the house  
that becomes their home.  
This is the house  
that love built.



#KeepingFamiliesClose

[www.rmhc.org.au](http://www.rmhc.org.au)