



Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®  
North Australia

# OUR IMPACT | 2020





## Acknowledgment of Country

Ronald McDonald House Charities North Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we work, live and play.

Ronald McDonald House Charities North Australia further acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our practical care programs operate, including the Bindal (Birri Gubba people) and the neighbouring Gurumbilbara Wulgurukaba people, the Yirrganydji people, the Kalkadoon people and the Larrakia people.

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*Our motif was proudly designed in partnership with Townsville Artist Linda Oliver. Linda is a Waanyi woman from her grandmother, and a Kuku-yalangi woman through her grandfather.*

# About us

**Our mission is to improve the health and well-being of seriously ill children and their families.**

**Our vision is that all seriously ill children can live their healthiest lives.**





# A message of hope

## Being stronger together

It's hard to believe that a little over a year ago, few of us had heard of COVID-19, let alone understood the impact it would have on us all.

In 2020, the global pandemic didn't stop kids from getting sick, but thankfully, it also didn't stop fantastic support from our wonderful community and tireless volunteers.

One thing that 2020 did was bring into sharp focus what our Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) families face every day.

We learned about sanitising everything that would stand still and staying apart to support our loved ones facing medical challenges. We have had to learn to live with cancelled plans and manage new ways when COVID-19 changed our routines.

However, despite a challenging year for us all, RMHC North Australia continued to support families in need. With the guidance from our healthcare partners, and leadership of a dedicated team of employees, volunteers and Board Directors, we quickly adapted to continue to provide shelter and creature comforts of home, to families travelling to Townsville seeking medical care for their child.

We are incredibly grateful to our partner hospitals for their continued communication with us, as we all navigated new ways to safely care for children and their families in the midst of a global pandemic.

Our passionate community of supporters also stepped up, and new donors felt compelled to give like never before. We are humbled and thankful for the incredible generosity of our philanthropic community.

Because of you, we have been able to continue providing comfort to seriously ill children and their families, despite incredibly

challenging circumstances. We were able to take some Ronald McDonald House Charities love direct to families staying bedside in the hospital. We took our Learning Program online, providing Zoom Educate sessions between teachers and students. We even created individual packs of goodies to share with patients and their families when leaving the hospital wasn't an option.

Despite everything that 2020 threw our way, we still celebrated some very significant Charity milestones.

We opened our brand-new kitchen, thanks to a community campaign and some significant donors including the Australian Government's Building Better Regions Fund, The Hillery Group and The Rotary Club of Townsville Sunrise.

We also celebrated our Chapter at the RMHC Australia Awards, where the team took out nationally recognised awards for their leadership, innovation and best practice across cultural inclusion and RMHC program expansion.

We proudly watched our friends and long-time sponsors Queensland Country Bank join the RMHC Australia Hall of Fame in recognition of their unwavering support of Queensland families.

And in a year where events seemed to be getting cancelled left, right and centre, we were incredibly fortunate to still be able to hold our 20th RMHC North Australia Golf Day, sponsored for the first time by New Home Solutions Queensland, with a record amount raised for our programs supporting local sick kids.

We even added a new fundraising event to our calendar – the Red Shoe Luncheon, which was a huge success.

As we look to the year ahead, we can't help but feel hopeful for all that we can achieve together. Our priority continues to focus on enhancing our impact to more seriously ill children and their families, and working collaboratively with our healthcare and education partners on how best to support this.

Until we can meet and say thank you in person, please accept our deepest thanks for ensuring that families from across our region have a safe place to land when they face illness and uncertainty.

We know that 2020 was uncharted territory, but like the families that use our services, we feel hope knowing that we are stronger together even when we have to stay apart.



**Denise Lumsden**

Chief Executive Officer, RMHC North Australia



**Matthew Mason**

Board Chair, RMHC North Australia

## Board Directors

Matthew Mason, Board Chair

Paul Rissman, Deputy Board Chair

Janelle Doyle, Secretary

Aileen Cull, Treasurer

Vicki Carson, Director

Brigadier Kahlii Fegan, Director

Michael Jones, Director

Susan Kinobe, Director

Micheal Luck, Director

Emma Meeking, Director

Trevor Prior, Director

Dr. Andrew White, Director



# Our practical care programs

RMHC North Australia supports seriously ill children and their families throughout their health care journey. We play a unique role in enabling, facilitating and supporting family-centred care.

Family-centred care is an approach to health care that is critically important in providing health care to children, especially those with serious medical conditions. With the family-centred care approach, the paediatric patient's family members are fully involved with health care providers to make informed decisions about the health care and support services the child and family receive.

For families who don't live close to the medical care their child needs, being present and staying involved can create added financial, emotional and physical stress to parents and siblings.

Our programs support families across our region by accommodating their needs, relieving some of their stress, and providing the compassionate care they need to help them better care for their ill or injured child.



## Ronald McDonald House

Our Townsville Ronald McDonald House is just steps away from Townsville University Hospital and provides essential accommodation and practical support so families can focus on their child's recovery.



## Ronald McDonald Family Room

We know that even if a family only lives five minutes down the road, that can still seem too far away when their child is in hospital. Our Family Room at Townsville University Hospital provides all the comforts of home within the hospital, providing respite (and even a place to do the laundry!) while only being steps away from their little one.



## Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

Having a seriously ill child is hard for the entire family. Our Family Retreat in beautiful Palm Cove provides the perfect opportunity for families to reconnect and make memories in a fun location, far from the hospital environment.



## Ronald McDonald Learning Program

We believe that falling ill shouldn't mean falling behind in school. Our Learning Program pairs children with a qualified tutor, getting them the support they need to get caught up with their peers. We even offer training for teachers and a scholarship for students to pursue their educational dreams.



## RMHC North Australia Hospitality Cart

Our newest program and proudly the first of its kind in Australia, our Hospitality Cart makes the rounds on the Children's Ward at Mount Isa Base Hospital. Whether it's a snack or something to drink, something to keep entertained or care items like toiletries, we make sure no child or family member is left out.

*"I gave birth to twins five weeks early via cesarean and had to stay in Townsville 8 hours away from my home so I could take care of my boys while they were in Special Care. Staying at the House has given me something positive to look back on during one of the hardest times in my life." – Caitlyn, mum to Grayson and Oliver, Ronald McDonald House family*

*"Women's and Children's Social Workers would like to thank Ronald McDonald House staff and volunteers for the support they provide to families of sick children year-round.*

*The Ronald McDonald Family Room at the Children's Ward at Townsville University Hospital has been a fantastic new asset to our community.*

*We get amazing feedback from people who visit, not just for the facility but for the friendly and kind words of volunteers and staff." – Women's and Children's Social Work Team, Townsville University Hospital*

*"We spent most of last year in Brisbane spread out and split up, so it's been a great week altogether. Just staying at the Retreat's been amazing in itself." – Aleece, mum to Lulu, Ronald McDonald House and Ronald McDonald Family Retreat family*

*"Ronald McDonald House Charities North Australia's generosity with tutoring has been of great benefit to my daughter Ruby and is already making a huge difference to her school experience. Her tutor is incredible, and Ruby really responds to his teaching, care and kindness. She is feeling more confident with her education and is loving learning. We are so grateful for the support of this wonderful organisation." – Jen, mum to Ruby, Ronald McDonald Learning Program student*

*"This place had become our home, and the staff had become our second family. You can't go through something like that without being forever changed and having your eyes opened up to the incredible work this organisation does. Accommodation is the last thing on your mind when you are in the midst of a crisis. Without this amazing organisation, the burden of finding somewhere safe to stay with your family is completely lifted. It's a gift that, unless you have experienced it yourself, is priceless." – Fiona and Tom, parents to Harry, Ronald McDonald House family*

# 2020

While 2020 stopped many of us from doing many things, it didn't stop us from caring for sick kids and their families!



**4,035**

children cared for across all our programs



**3,233**

families supported across all our programs



**7,138**

nights of accommodation provided to families in need



**113**

students received educational support



**15**

families had a tropical getaway



**15,000+**

visits to our in-hospital Family Room



**235**

families provided with care items and boredom busters from our Hospitality Cart



**13,264**

hours donated by our selfless volunteers





# Caring through COVID-19

The health and safety of our families, volunteers, supporters, and staff has always been our number one priority. In 2020, we had to temporarily close four of our five programs for several months and reduce our volunteer numbers. However, we still found a way to extend our support to so many families in need, thanks to the help of our health care partners and our incredibly generous supporters.



**17**

the number of families we supported with alternate family-friendly accommodation at the height of restrictions in Australia, for a total of **247 nights**



**500**

meals personally delivered to House families



**1,001**

the number of families we supported with our Family Room on the Go initiative



**6,019**

the number of items provided direct to sick kids and their families through our Family Room on the Go initiative

*"During what has been a complicated 2020 due to COVID-19, the Ronald McDonald House team has worked closely with social workers to ensure that they could continue their accommodation and support services in a safe way."*

*"The work Ronald McDonald House does to support our community during stressful and emotional times is valued, appreciated and irreplaceable." – Women's and Children's Social Work Team, Townsville University Hospital*

# Family Room on the Go

## *- or FROGs as it is affectionately known!*

A unique way of caring for families during unprecedented times, our FROGs initiative brought the care and compassion of our much-loved Family Room program to families at a time where COVID-19 restrictions made caring for a child on the ward a little harder than usual.

Repurposing a sturdy trolley loaded up with snacks and boredom busters donated by the local community, our staff donned Personal Protective Equipment, made sure their hand hygiene was up to scratch and made the

rounds on the Children's Ward at Townsville University Hospital, bringing our Family Room to families when they were unable to visit themselves.

As an extension of our FROGs initiative, we also created care packages delivered weekly to the Special Care and Neonatal Intensive Care Units to support families on those Wards.

The initiative has been so popular that even as our Family Room has resumed operations, our Family Room on the Go continues to operate!

## The Breen Family

When 20-month old Eleanor suffered a serious accident requiring burns treatment and skin graft surgery that wasn't able to be performed at her local hospital, she and her family made the nearly 400km trip to Townsville to receive the urgent care she needed.

To make matters even more distressing, all of this happened at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Ronald McDonald House Charities North Australia cared for us when we found ourselves in an unfamiliar town, with an injured baby and no friends or family support close by," said mum Leigh.

Due to restrictions at the time, Eleanor and her family were unable to stay directly at our Townsville House - but our Ronald McDonald

House team did everything they could to ensure Eleanor's entire family could stay together.



"The Charity assisted us with family-friendly accommodation, so we could be together and focus on our baby girl's recovery," said Leigh.

"Our unit overlooked the river and walking path. The river walk was our daily outing that kept our spirits up during isolation and COVID-19."

"I am overwhelmed whenever I think of the care package that arrived at our door - milk, bread, groceries and presents for both our children. Sometimes the simplest things mean the most."

## Thank you

We wouldn't have been able to support our families during this unprecedented time if it wasn't for the local community's support who responded to our call for help.

Thank you in particular to our corporate sponsors Queensland Country Bank, Ergon Energy Retail and Evolution Mining, for providing essential supplies, people power, and lots of love!

# Our volunteers continue to shine!

Our league of everyday superheroes donated over 13,000 hours of their time across our five programs in 2020 despite our services' interruptions – just incredible!

While we weren't able to celebrate their fantastic efforts as we would have liked (in person with a big party!), we celebrated by hosting our very first Virtual Volunteer Appreciation and Christmas party!

We had volunteers from across the region log on to celebrate the year that was, tuning in to Charity updates and special messages from our Ambassadors Glen 'Minty' Mintern and Kate Gaze from JCU Townsville Fire, and

celebrating volunteer milestones. Volunteers played a game of virtual bingo, and some even braved the virtual catwalk for the Best Dressed competition!

In place of not being able to host morning teas at our Ronald McDonald House for volunteers during National Volunteering Week, we also took the opportunity to hand-deliver (at a distance!) a special note of thanks.

We are so incredibly grateful for every one of our volunteers for the skills, passion and love they bring to our families each day.

## In their words

*"My daughter was in the Special Care Nursery in Mount Isa from when she was born. When she was seven days old, we were told we would need to be flown to Townsville for specialist care, and we ended up staying at Ronald McDonald House for 25 nights. I decided to become a volunteer to give back to Ronald McDonald House Charities. I wanted to promote and support the service because it had done so much for my family."* – Kellie, RMHC North Australia Hospitality Cart volunteer

*"I find it very rewarding giving a little of my time in helping families who sometimes just need a chat to help them through tough times." – Anne, Ronald McDonald Family Room volunteer*

*"For me, volunteering is a very pleasurable social time spent with like-minded people. This is a very happy place with many laughs, and plenty of hard work is achieved during the time spent here." – Jayne, Ronald McDonald House volunteer*



# Leaving a legacy

*Community and compassion inspired Letizia and Ernst to volunteer their time and leave a legacy by naming Ronald McDonald House Charities North Australia in their Will. We had the opportunity to chat with them about their motivations for giving and advice they have for anyone wishing to get involved.*

## What inspired you to give to our Charity?

Ernie and I do not have family. We like to give to people and to families. This Charity is one that caught our eyes about seven years ago, and for one reason or another, we have been involved in one or two of their programs. I have been involved in the Learning Program as a teacher, and now we are both involved as volunteers.

## What part of our work interests (or inspires!) you the most?

We love the work that RMHC does. It seems to work like clockwork. The House in Townsville can house up to 100 people, including pregnant mums, grandparents and families with sick children. It is truly amazing and inspirational. It is so great to see also how they have community support. There is food supplied for families and gifts for the children for birthdays. The army is involved, which is inspirational to see.

There is a genuine spirit of giving and generosity in the community. The community building is what inspires us the most, and how the Charity is run is awesome.

## What difference would you like your gift to make for seriously ill children and their families?

We are really interested in seeing our future donation go into the building development, family rooms or building projects that the Charity will have. In the meantime, we give where we can. Presently we give our

time volunteering in one shift doing some custodian work, gardening and reading to the children. We are considering giving money to sponsor a room that helps with the running costs for that specific room.

We would like to think that giving a gift or future donation when we are gone at least is going to a great cause and helps the families and children we did not have. It is a way of forward planning.

## What is great about supporting a local Charity like RMHC North Australia?

Supporting a local Charity is great because you get to see firsthand what is going on.

## If someone is considering leaving a gift in their Will - what advice would you give them?

I would suggest that they go to RMHC in Townsville and do a tour. It is a truly beautiful place with a magic vibe of giving and warm and exceptional staff. Then I would suggest maybe getting involved in the volunteering program so that you can feel and be involved for yourself.

If someone just loves kids and wants to make a difference, then they should just do it. Leave a gift in their Will as we have done. It is a relief for us to know that our Will is done and that it will go to such a worthy cause.





# Bringing comfort and joy to Mackay families

*An update on our Ronald McDonald Family Room at Mackay Base Hospital*



In 2019, we excitingly announced our plans to build a Ronald McDonald Family Room at Mackay Base Hospital, in partnership with Mackay Hospital and Health Service and Mackay Hospital Foundation.

This purpose-built facility will support an additional 2,500 children receiving medical treatment at Mackay Base Hospital and their families annually.

Our Ronald McDonald Family Room will provide everyday support for families in the region whilst having a profound impact. We know that free services provided by our Ronald McDonald Family Room program can save families of hospitalised children on average \$37 a day in food and beverage purchases. We also know that 89% of families felt their well-being was better after visiting a Ronald McDonald Family Room, and 89% of families felt more able to relax within the homelike environment.

Much like our Ronald McDonald Family Room at Townsville University Hospital, our Family Room in Mackay will provide local families respite while visiting their sick child in the hospital. They can pop in for a coffee, have a

shower, throw on a load of washing or simply relax, all whilst being steps away from their little one.

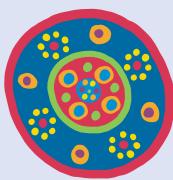
We have been overwhelmed with the support from the community in bringing this program to life. Thank you to the numerous community organisations, individuals, and our incredible corporate sponsors who came on board in 2020 by formally committing their support to Mackay's sick kids!

We're also incredibly grateful to McDonald's Mackay for their unwavering support in all aspects of bringing this program to life.



Organisation	Sponsor level
Flagon & Dragon Mackay	Major Partner
Mackay Hospital Foundation	Visionary Sponsor
Aurizon Community Giving Fund	Founding Sponsor
Coalroc	Courage Sponsor
D&T Hydraulics and Engineering	Courage Sponsor
Global Product Search	Courage Sponsor
Key Solutions Group	Courage Sponsor
Mackay Rod & Custom Club	Courage Sponsor

Organisation	Sponsor level
BHP Mackay	Hope Sponsor
Global Civil and Mining Holdings	Hope Sponsor
CQ Field Mining Services	Hope Sponsor
Mackay Sugar	Hope Sponsor
Mackellar	Hope Sponsor
Macrossen & Amiet	Hope Sponsor
NQ Bulk Ports	Hope Sponsor
Wilmar Sugar	Hope Sponsor



# Celebrating diversity

## Highlights from our Reconciliation Action Plan



2020 was another great year to recognise and celebrate our families' diversity and put actions from our 2019-2021 Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) into place.

### **Relationships**

- Continued to work in close partnership with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group to identify ways to evolve existing cultural inclusion practices
- Positively influenced stakeholders to drive their own reconciliation outcomes by sharing our journey
- Continued to educate staff on the detrimental effects of racism in our organisation
- Staff and volunteer participation in virtual National Reconciliation Week events

### **Respect**

- Continued to increase staff and volunteer understanding of the purpose and significance behind cultural protocols by developing a cultural protocols infographic
- Celebration and acknowledgement of important dates of cultural significance, including National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
- Continued delivery of Cultural Awareness Training hosted by our First Nations Board Director and member of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group Trevor Prior, and filmed the training for wider roll-out in 2021

- Development and placement of Acknowledgement of Country plaques across our facilities during NAIDOC week celebrations

### **Opportunities**

- Identified communication channels to support promotion of paid and volunteer positions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Reviewed HR and recruitment procedures to ensure there are no barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and future applicants participating in our workplace, including members of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group participating in recruitment processes

### **Governance**

- Participated in the RAP Impact Measurement Survey
- Continued regular meetings with Reconciliation Working Group

### **What's next**

- Develop and launch a new Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan
- Delivery of our virtual Cultural Awareness training

*"There were challenges with the RAP this year, particularly in light of COVID-19. However, the team viewed these challenges as opportunities. There is still much work to do in the reconciliation space, and I look forward to seeing what is achieved in the next year." - Trevor Prior, RMHC North Australia Board Director and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group Member*



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Keeping families close™

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