

MOMENTUM

Monash Health Foundation News

Summer/Autumn 2026



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Message from the Monash Health Foundation Director



John De Rango
Director
Monash Health Foundation

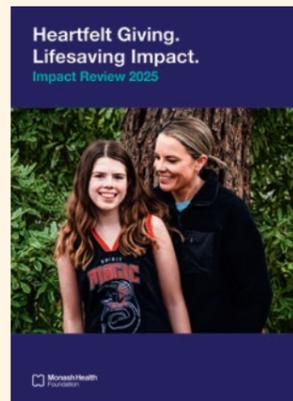
With the commencement of the New Year, it has been a pleasure to reflect on the year past and the profound impact your support has made and continues to make on the care we provide, every day. The impact for our patients and their families is very real.

Please enjoy this edition of Momentum as we share with you inspiring stories of hope from our patients, and updates on how your support, generosity and partnership is transforming care and experiences across our service.

At Monash Health, we tried to make the holiday season special for our patients and families. Thanks to our community's incredible generosity, our young patients had visits from Santa, footy stars and the Aus Open – and opened thousands of gifts on Christmas day. It was a joy to bring smiles to our patients and families spending the holidays in hospital.

We are looking forward to all the amazing events on the calendar in 2026 in support of world-leading care for our community. If your New Year's resolution was to get your step count up – we have you covered! We can't wait to see everyone come together for this year's Monash Children's Hospital Walk to celebrate and fundraise for our inspiring patients and their dedicated care teams.

On behalf of our patients, their families, and the entire Monash Health team, thank you for your continued support.



Monash Health Foundation Impact Review 2025

The Monash Health Foundation Impact Review 2025 highlights a year of outstanding support and generosity, making a significant difference in improving outcomes for our patients, community, and our teams who provide their care.

The Impact Review details our achievements throughout the 2024–25 financial year, made possible by the dedication of our fundraisers, donors, employees, community organisations, corporate partners, and trusts and foundations.



Scan the QR code to read the achievements and their impact. monashhealthfoundation.org/heartfelt-giving-life-saving-impact-monash-health-foundation-impact-review-2025/

Cover image: Our cover features 6-year-old Monash Children's Hospital patient Olivia, her Mum Laura, little brother Nathan and Dad Jon. Their family will be walking with us at this year's Monash Children's Hospital Walk in support of Olivia's rheumatology care team, who help treat her juvenile arthritis.

Monash Children's Hospital Walk

Join us on Sunday, 1 March 2026, for a fun day out, all for a great cause!

Take part in a 1km, 5km, or 10km walk at Jells Park and help raise funds for Monash Children's Hospital.

Bring family, friends, and neighbours to enjoy a morning of activities, entertainment, and connection. Whether you're taking part in the Walk or just soaking up the atmosphere, there's something for everyone!



Register and start fundraising today at mchwalk.com.au



Little steps, big impact

Funds raised at the Monash Children's Hospital Walk 2026 will support our paediatric rheumatology team, which cares for children and adolescents with a wide variety of conditions affecting muscles, joints and conditions of inflammation.

With your support, we can purchase a **dedicated musculoskeletal point-of-care ultrasound machine – an Australian-first initiative for paediatric rheumatology care.**

This new equipment will be central to launching a comprehensive musculoskeletal assessment program to revolutionise how we diagnose and manage these complex conditions.

The program will allow the team to make real-time assessments of tendons, muscles and joints, enabling earlier diagnosis and more precise treatment of conditions. For families, this means faster, clearer answers, reduced uncertainty, less time spent at hospital appointments and a simpler path to treatment.

Your fundraising efforts will not only help us purchase this cutting-edge technology but also support specialised training for the paediatric rheumatology team – ensuring that we deliver the highest standard of care now and for years to come.

With your support we can help Monash Children's Hospital patients like Olivia, Bradach and Ellie, live their best lives.



Olivia



Bradach



Ellie

Creating special moments for patients, families and staff

Hawks AFLW stars fly in for a visit

The team from Hawthorn Football Club AFLW dropped in to spend some time with our very special patients and share their love for footy.

Hawks Greta Bodey, Najwa Allen, Daisy Flockart, Lavinia Cox, Grace Baba and Sophie Butterworth visited us at Monash Children's Hospital, gifting Hawks merchandise, signing autographs and lifting spirits.



Pictured: Hawks Najwa Allen and Greta Bodey visit the wards at Monash Children's Hospital.

The Aus Open feeling made its way to kids in hospital

Thanks to Tennis Australia, Waterdrop and Australian Tennis Foundation, kids in hospital were able to get amongst the summer fun of the Aus Open and have some joyful moments.

The hospital was a buzz of smiles and laughter, with interactive games, activities and giveaways in the foyer, extra special visits on the wards and some very impressive rallies.



Pictured: Aus Open activity zone in Monash Children's Hospital foyer.

Carlton AFL players spread festive cheer

We welcomed some very special gift-bearing Navy Blue guests to Monash Children's Hospital over the holiday season.

12 players from the Carlton Football Club kicked goals across Forest, Avary, and PICU wards as part of the club's Christmas toy drive, delivering donated gifts and festive cheer to patients and their families.



Pictured: Players from Carlton Football Club delivering a Christmas toy drive at Monash Children's Hospital.

Does your organisation have a fun and healthy way to engage your brand with us? We'd love to hear from you.

To learn more about partnership opportunities with the Monash Health Foundation, please email foundation@monashhealth.org

Pioneering surgeon leaves a lasting legacy



The late Dr Elizabeth Lewis AM's remarkable career and enduring generosity have made a profound mark on Monash Health and the countless lives her work continues to touch.

As a medical pioneer Elizabeth was unassuming in person. Clear and direct maybe, but never with unnecessary airs or graces.

She was the first female neurosurgeon in Australia, but never made a fuss of the fact. 'At school (Melbourne's Presbyterian Ladies College) we were told we could do anything if we put our minds to it, so I just sort of got on with it,' said Elizabeth.

'I suppose I always had the desire to do something useful for the community, and medicine interested me.'

Her lifetime of service began humbly as a Girl Guide cleaning the basement of the (then) Queen Victoria Memorial Hospital.

In time, her medical career blossomed, including three years in England before returning to work as Honorary Surgeon at Queen Vic and Royal Children's Hospital.

During this time Elizabeth developed an interest in neurosurgery and returned to Cambridge to study adult neurosurgery.

She again returned to the 'Queen Vic' as the first neurosurgeon on site, with an additional appointment at the Children's.

Working with children was particularly satisfying, she was to recall. 'When they recover, they jump out of bed and get going, without any fuss.'

In her decades of service Elizabeth personally cared for thousands of children, but her contribution extended beyond care of individual patients.

She relished her roles as a medical leader, serving as Secretary of Senior Medical Staff and later Chairman and Medical Director of the (then) Children's Program.

That early desire to do something for the community resurfaced in her later career when she worked extensively within Papua New Guinea to strengthen local hospital and rehabilitation services.

It now extends beyond her lifetime with a bequest of \$2.3 million to Monash Health – the largest in the history of the Monash Health Foundation.

The extraordinary gift in her Will has been dedicated to establishing a scholarship program that will train paediatricians from overseas at the Monash Children's Hospital, ensuring that her commitment to health care in low-resource settings will continue to benefit communities in the Pacific Islands well into the future.

The new training program led by the Director of Monash Children's Simulation Centre, Professor Ram Nataraja, will support 36 clinical and educational scholarships – building paediatric healthcare capacity and making lasting change in countries where specialist training is limited.



Pictured: The late Elizabeth Lewis (Left) with Associate Professor Atul Malhotra, senior neonatologist at Monash Newborn (Center) and longtime friend and former colleague, Dr Merrilyn Murnane AM (Right) – August 2024.

Are looking to create a legacy that reflects your values and supports exceptional healthcare for generations to come? A gift in your Will – large or small, can help strengthen healthcare, support patients and families, and create a lasting impact well into the future.

If you'd like to learn more about leaving a gift in your Will to Monash Health, please contact us on **(03) 9594 2700** or email bequests@monashhealth.org. We'd be very happy to talk with you or answer any questions.

Effie's gift of hope

When standard treatments couldn't stop the spread of Effie Atkins' cancer, she chose to enrol in a clinical trial at Monash Health.

Nine years on, the 74-year-old is still the life of the party, and inspiring her community to give, so others can have access to the same opportunity she did.

We celebrated Effie's 'Dr Hope' Fundraiser at Vanilla Lounge in Oakleigh, over last year's spring racing season, where she brought together her friends, family, community and oncology team for a fabulous day out to support innovative research and additional clinical roles at Monash Health's Cancer Clinical Trials Centre.

The event was the perfect reflection of Effie's warmth and bright spirit, with Greek dancing, singing, delicious food and fabulous fashion!

'We are absolutely thrilled with the outcome of the Dr Hope Fundraiser. The generosity and passion



shown by Effie and our community will have a lasting impact on cancer research at Monash Health and the care we provide our community,' said John De Rango, Director of Monash Health Foundation.

'We extend our heartfelt thanks to Effie, her family and friends, and everyone who contributed to this beautiful event. Their dedication in raising over \$42,000 to support access to Cancer Clinical Trials at Monash Health is truly a gift of hope.'

'This extraordinary achievement is a testament to what can be accomplished when people come together to make a meaningful difference in the lives of others.'



Pictured: Effie Atkins with her Monash Health Oncology team, Professor Zee Wan Wong, Dr Sophia Fretzas and Dr Daphne Day.

Every breath counts



Pictured: Monash Children's Hospital Clinicians Dr Cathy McAdam and Dr Rob Roseby.

This March, our amazing Monash Children's Hospital clinicians, Dr Rob Roseby, Dr Cathy McAdam, Dr Sabine Hennel and Dr Toby Van Hest, will be taking part in the Chain Reaction Challenge – cycling 1,000km from Sydney to Melbourne in 7 days, to raise vital funds and give young patients the best chance at a healthier, happier life.

Funds raised for Monash Children's Hospital will support our Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) to purchase more life-saving ventilators to provide essential breathing support for our most critically unwell babies and children.

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of the Chain Reaction Challenge and a huge milestone for Dr Rob Roseby who is returning to the challenge with the support of his team mates, after recovering from a serious bike accident.



Make a donation and show your support today by visiting chain-reaction.org.au/fundraisers/monashchildrenshospital2026



Milly's story

Nicky and Warren's beautiful baby girl Milly was rushed to the emergency department when her Maternal and Child Health Nurse noticed her stomach was distended during a routine appointment.

What followed was every parent's worst nightmare. Milly was transferred to Monash Children's Hospital, where she cardiac arrested twice. In a critical condition and on life support, her parents were told to prepare for their final moments with her – but 'Miracle' Milly, with the care and support of Monash Children's doctors and nurses, kept fighting and defied all the odds.

After a long hospital journey, which included 33 procedures to date, with the support of her care team, the now 5-year-old Milly is thriving and will be starting her first year of school.

'We are lost for words expressing what this team [Monash Children's Hospital] means to us. They gave us parenthood,' said Nicky.

'Milly wouldn't be here without the ventilator equipment. It's vital, and it's a lifeline.'

Funds raised from the Chain Reaction Challenge will help purchase more state-of-the-art ventilators to ensure more patients, just like Milly, receive life-saving care, when they need it most.

Why your support matters

Letter from a Monash Children's Cancer Centre patient family



“Our son Elliot was diagnosed with a Wilms tumour in 2025, when he was just two. What started as a normal day quickly turned into something no parent ever imagines – scans, specialists, and then the words ‘your child has cancer’.

Within days, Elliot began chemotherapy straight away, before undergoing major surgery to remove the tumour along with one of his kidneys. After surgery, he continued further chemo and radiation. It has been an incredibly intense and emotional journey, but one we've walked together as a family.

Elliot is so young that he doesn't understand the full weight of what he's been through – the central lines, the anaesthetics, the medications, the long hospital stays. But he faces every single part of treatment with a strength and gentleness that amazes us. Even on the hardest days, he finds a way to smile, to dance, to play. He has no idea how brave he has been.

As a family of six, life changed overnight. We've spent months balancing hospital life with school runs, sports, work, and trying to keep things as normal as possible for our older three children – Lexi, Harper and Hazel. They've shown more compassion and resilience than we ever expected kids their age to have. Some of the most meaningful moments during this journey have been seeing all four children together at the Cancer Centre, supporting each other in ways only siblings can.



Picture: 2-year-old Monash Children's Cancer Centre patient Elliot and his mum Meaghan.

We honestly could not have made it through without the support of the incredible team at Monash Children's Cancer Centre, along with the Kids with Cancer Foundation and the other hospital charities. The resources, emergency financial support, meal vouchers, activity packs, play therapy, social workers, and the emotional care provided have made an enormous difference in our ability to get through this as a family. It's one thing to fight childhood cancer – it's another to do it with people around you who genuinely care, check in, guide you, and make sure you never feel alone.

We've spent so many hours inside these walls that the Cancer Centre has become a second home – a safe place where Elliot has been comforted, where we've cried, where we've celebrated wins, and where we've felt completely held during the scariest parts of his treatment.

The kindness of charities like the Kids with Cancer Foundation has been overwhelming. Their ongoing support has helped ease the pressure in moments when everything felt too big. Knowing there are organisations dedicated entirely to families like ours has meant the world.

Elliot still has a journey ahead, but we've found our strength through the support around us – the nurses, doctors, play therapists, social workers, and every charity that steps in when families are at breaking point. We truly couldn't have done this without them.

Our son is the bravest little boy – and although he may not understand everything he has endured, we know one day he'll understand just how many people helped carry him through. ”

Meaghan Long, Mum of 2-year-old Elliot

Fundraise your way

Fundraise for purpose

Do you have a great idea to fundraise in support of Monash Health?

Whether you are looking to fundraise in tribute of someone, for an area of healthcare you have a personal connection to, or just have a great fundraising idea, we can help you make it a reality!

Learn more about fundraising for purpose by visiting fundraiseforpurpose.org



Arthur's gift to the Monash Children's Cancer Centre

4-year-old superstar Arthur and his family have been busy fundraising to support children undergoing cancer treatments.

Arthur has been a patient at Monash Children's Cancer Centre since being diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia in 2022, spending many long days in our care for appointments and treatments. He has since reached remission and rung the bell!

His heartfelt gift of a new cubby house for our outdoor area will continue to bring joy and the opportunity for play to many more children and their families during their visits.



Picture: 4-year-old fundraiser Arthur in the new Monash Children's Cancer Centre cubby house.

Rotary District 9815's transformative gift

Colin and Leanne, from Rotary District 9815, recently presented a heartfelt donation of over \$200,000 to support programs at the Monash Children's Cancer Centre.

The initiative began with Leanne's Rotary Partner Project, with an initial goal of \$20,000... a true testament to the power of community.

Colin and Leanne worked with Rotary Clubs from across the District to raise the funds during Colin's tenure as the 2024/2025 Governor.

Their commitment is deeply personal. The couple is carrying on Leanne's late brother Terry's legacy, who spent the last years of his life raising funds for children with cancer while facing his very own battle.



Picture: Colin and Leanne Byron, members of Rotary 9815.



For children, a procedure like this would be done under general anaesthetic. But now, under adult care, Taylah had to undergo the procedure awake, with the risks of using anaesthetic considered too high.

'I had to start doing the procedures awake – that was awful. They gave me medications to make me drowsy, but I still knew what was going on.'

'One of the amazing Monash Health nurses suggested I use a meditation app which helped. Something I still use today if I'm really anxious.'

After Taylah's relapse, her treatment continued for just over a year, and by the age of 21, she was in remission.

Despite being in remission, leukemia requires continuous monitoring and treatment for the years to follow. This meant Taylah still had a long journey of enduring treatments and long-term side effects ahead.

Now 25 years old, Taylah remains cancer-free and is pursuing her career in science and medicine.

Looking back on her journey, Taylah says 'If I had something where my mind could escape the treatments – like virtual reality – where you are not just looking at the hospital room or seeing the needles and the things going into your body, it would have been a much easier experience.'

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, we have raised over \$50,000 from our 2025 Festive Season Appeal. With your much needed support we can now help give 15 – 25-year-old cancer patients, like Taylah, access to the same proven pain and anxiety management tools used in paediatric care at Monash Health.

The funds raised will purchase, implement, and maintain *Smileyscopes* – virtual reality headsets with engaging content for this age group, like guided meditations, and *Buzzy Bees* – vibrating medical devices to help relieve the perception of pain.

'Meditation and visualisation really helped me. Imagine how much more impactful this would be through virtual reality,' says Taylah.



If you would still like to make a donation to this appeal, you can do so online today at monashhealth.org/foundation-2025festive/, call us on (03) 9594 2700, or scan the QR code

From hospital rooms, to whole new worlds

Taylah's story

Taylah was a vibrant, active teenager. Then... at just 14 years old, she was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia – an aggressive cancer.

'I was taken straight to hospital and began chemotherapy immediately – I was in shock and so afraid. I remember pleading with my mum to find any way to spare me having to go through the cancer treatment and awful procedures, but there was no other way. And I was just 14 years old,' says Taylah.

A cancer diagnosis for a child is devastating. Having to endure the distressing treatments that follow make it even more unbearable.

Taylah went through two and half years of gruelling chemotherapy and underwent a multitude of steroid treatments. She had countless intramuscular injections, which took an enormous toll on her physical and mental health. A journey that demanded extraordinary strength and resilience.

At 17, Taylah completed treatment and was given the all clear. She completed year 12 and went on to study Biomedical Science. She was living life to the fullest... but that was short lived.

At 19, Taylah found a lump in her breast and tests confirmed it was the leukaemia again... Taylah had relapsed and went straight back into treatment.

Previously, Taylah had been treated in Monash Children's Hospital. But at 19, when Taylah was faced with her heartbreaking relapse, she would be treated as an adult, which was vastly different to the cancer care experienced in her teenage years.

One of the most difficult moments she recalls was having to endure a lumbar puncture, having a needle inserted into her spine.

Creating calm: new sensory spaces support neurodiverse patients

We are excited to announce that new dedicated sensory spaces are now open on the Aviary Ward at Monash Children's Hospital!



Pictured: Bec McGrath, Associate Nurse and Midwife Manager, Monash Children's Hospital, Peter Bishop, Chief Executive Officer, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Emma Goodes, Nurse Unit Manager – Aviary Ward, Monash Children's Hospital, Peter Papamihail, Executive Manager – Business Operations, Ronald McDonald House Charities, Sally Scerri, Head of Operations, Ronald McDonald House Charities, and Dani Smith, Director of Operations, Monash Children's Hospital, in the new sensory space.

This project was made possible thanks to the generosity of Ronald McDonald House Charities, through their Family Centred Care Grant to the Monash Health Foundation.

The sensory spaces will support neurodiverse children, adolescents and young people who experience heightened sensitivity to noise, light, and movement – which can be particularly overwhelming for those with autism, ADHD, sensory processing differences, or complex neurodevelopmental conditions.

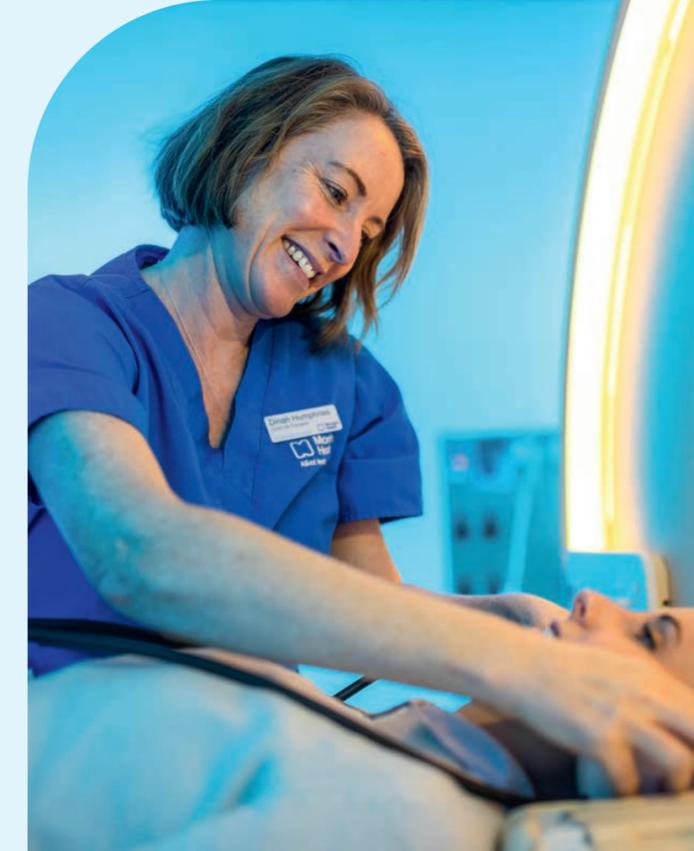
'The vision of this project was about creating not just a room, but a refuge within the ward – a place where neurodiverse children can feel safe, calm, and in control of their environment,' said Emma Goodes, Nurse Unit Manager, Aviary Ward.

'With the support of the Ronald McDonald House Grant, we have been able to re-purpose some of our spaces to support emotional regulation and reduce distress for our patients and families who might be facing any challenges during their stay.'

The dedicated sensory space will support patient and family wellbeing with vibroacoustic therapy chairs, sensory lighting and acoustics, bubble lamps, room projectors and safe clinical integration of sensory features.

'We have already had so much positive feedback from families about how these inclusive spaces and tools will support them in bringing their own coping strategies into the medical setting, to provide a positive and safe experience.'

Thank you to Ronald McDonald House Charities for helping us create calm and comfort on the ward.



Support Monash Health directly with a donation

There are lots of ways you can donate



- 1 Scan the QR code or visit monashhealthfoundation.org/donate.
- 2 Detach and post this form in the reply paid envelope supplied or return to: **Monash Health Foundation, Locked Bag 29, Clayton South VIC 3169.**
- 3 Call 03 9594 2700 to pay by bank transfer.

