

Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia

IMPACT REPORT 2023

March 2024



**Ronald McDonald
House Charities®**
Western Australia

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SVA Consulting is Australia's leading not-for-profit consultancy. We focus solely on social impact and work with partners to increase their capacity to create positive change. Thanks to more than 10 years of working with not-for-profits, government, and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and what works.

Our team is passionate about what they do and use their diverse expertise to work together to solve Australia's most pressing issues.

Acknowledgement

SVA acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present, and emerging.

Within Western Australia, the term Aboriginal is used in preference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia. No disrespect is intended to our Torres Strait Islander community.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Term	Description
Aboriginal	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
St Catherine's	St Catherine's on Park
FLOs	Family Liaison Officers
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
PCH	Perth Children's Hospital
RMHC	Ronald McDonald House Charities (Australia)
RMHC WA	Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia
SVA	Social Ventures Australia
Voice referendum	2023 Australian Referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice
WA	Western Australia

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Executive Summary

The mission of Ronald McDonald Charities (RMHC) globally is to create, find, and support programs that directly improve the health and well-being of children and their families. The RMHC system comprises of independent Chapters around the world providing essential services to families far from home, jobs, schools and loved ones.

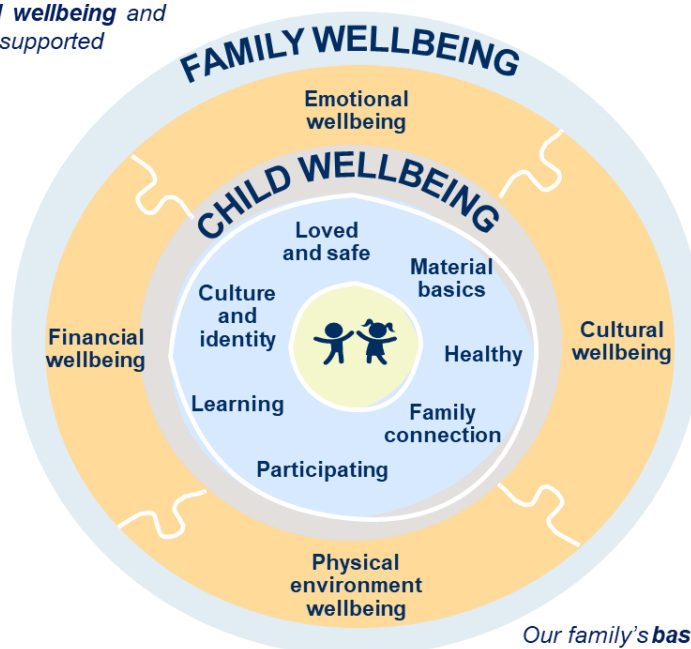
Established in 1990, Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia (RMHC WA) today supports an average of 2,000 new and returning patients and families from every region in Western Australia through supported family accommodation, continued education for young patients and siblings, in-hospital support, child and family experiences and, family respite retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton.

RMHC WA engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA) in 2021 and 2022 to undertake yearly evaluations of its accommodation and support services to better understand and report on RMHC WA’s impact on families (parents, caregivers and siblings) and children receiving treatment, and in turn, identify opportunities for improvement.

This 2023 Impact Report follows on from the 2021 and 2022 reports and provides the key findings and recommendations from the data collected between January and December 2023.

The RMHC WA Wellbeing Framework is centred on the concept that enhanced family wellbeing results in greater child wellbeing. The Outcomes Framework is built around RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework, which focuses on the emotional, financial, cultural, and physical environment wellbeing of families.

*Our family’s **emotional wellbeing** and mental health is supported*



*Our family feels **culturally safe** because our culture and identity and respected, and we feel able and supported to continue to practice our culture*

*Our family feels **financially stable** because our costs of living away from home are supported*

*Our family’s **basic needs** are met in an **environment** that is safe and healthy*

2023 Impact Snapshot

In 2023, RMHC WA had a very high impact on the emotional and financial wellbeing of families staying at the house, with families at the house experiencing a 31% increase in the average emotional wellbeing and 21% increase in financial wellbeing ratings from when they entered the house. Notably, 75% of families reported that without RMHC WA, their emotional wellbeing would have been poor or very poor, and 72% would have found their financial wellbeing difficult to manage or stressful. Ninety percent of families found RMHC WA to be a 'home away from home', providing a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment for their family.

On average across all wellbeing domains, family wellbeing in 2023 was 4% higher than in 2022. By supporting families, RMHC WA is able to support the child receiving treatment. In 2023, RMHC WA had a very high positive impact for residential families and siblings, and for residential children receiving treatment.

Enhanced Family Wellbeing Domains

Before arriving at RMHC our family wellbeing was...

While at RMHC our family wellbeing was...

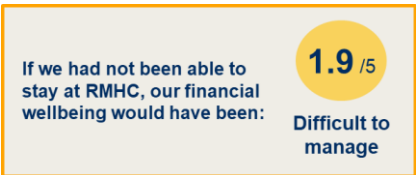
If our family had not been able to access RMHC WA support...



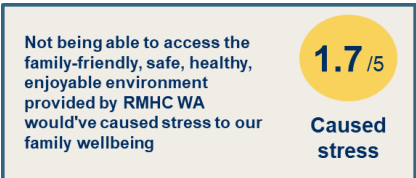
*average of responses scored out of 5



*average of responses scored out of 5



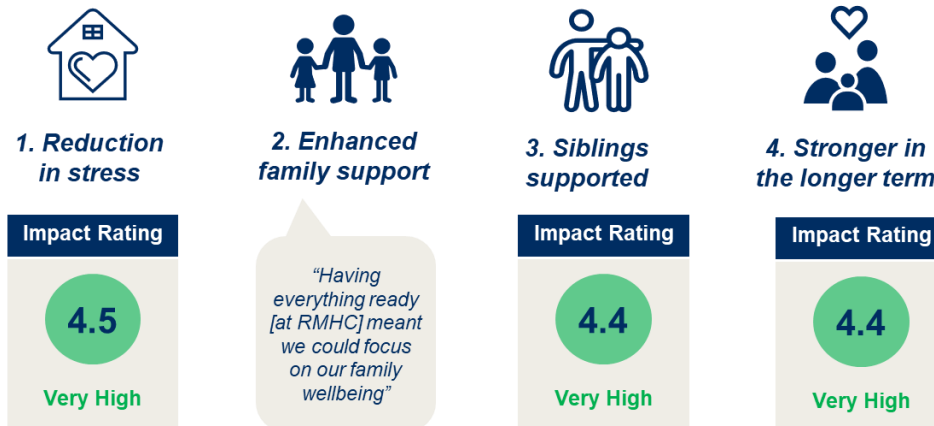
*average of responses scored out of 5



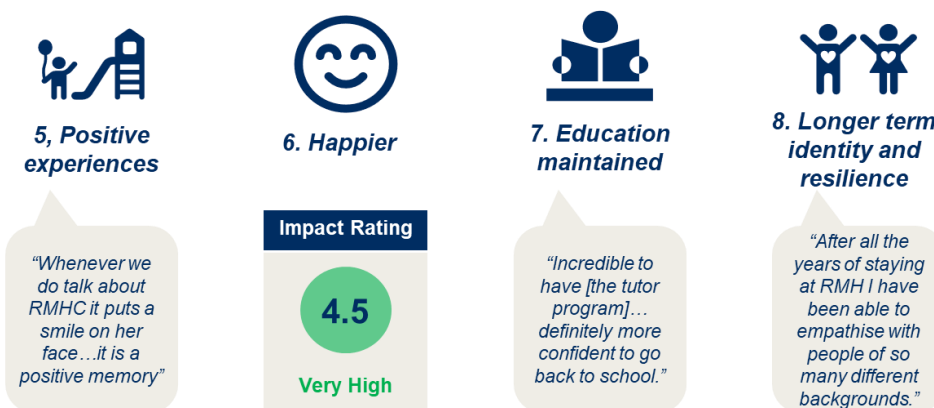
*average of responses scored out of 5



Outcome domains for residential families and siblings



Outcome domains for residential children receiving treatment



Recommendations

- 1** Continue increasing the number of families that can be accommodated
- 2** Build partnerships and relationships to support families and provide follow up care once they leave or 'age out' of RMHC WA
- 3** Invest in additional wellbeing activities for families
- 4** Provide extra support for families with children under 5 years old, particularly single parent/carer families
- 5** Understand family priorities for accommodation when they book in, so families can be booked into most appropriate House for their needs
- 6** Provide FLOs and volunteers with context specific cultural awareness training

About this report

Overview of RMHC WA

Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia (RMHC WA) has been helping Western Australian families with seriously ill children stay together and supported since 1990. When a child is diagnosed with a serious illness, it can have a devastating effect on families. On top of the uncertainty and fear, there's added stress for families who don't live close to the medical care their child needs.

Programs

RMHC WA has a wide range of programs which help families to stay together so they have the support of loved ones when they need it most. These programs include Ronald McDonald House, the Learning Program, Family Retreats and Family Rooms. This impact report focuses on the impact of the Ronald McDonald House on family wellbeing.



Ronald McDonald House

Nedlands House, Perth Children's Hospital and St Catherine's

The Houses provide essential accommodation, care and support for families 24/7, 365 days a year in close proximity to Perth Children's Hospital (PCH). The Nedlands House has 47 bedrooms and is located steps away from PCH. Within PCH, RMHC WA has 14 bedrooms and provides accommodation for parents and carers of children in intensive care. Both houses provide key essential services such as meals and domestic and recreational facilities. Additional programs including the Learning Program, playgroups, sports sessions and wellbeing support sessions are provided at Nedlands House. Families are supported by RMHC WA's Family Liaison Officers (FLOs), along with 440 registered volunteers.

Due to ongoing high demand for RMHC WA support beyond the current capacity at its Houses, RMHC WA extended its supported accommodation to include rooms at St Catherine's on Park (St Catherine's). Families who stay at St Catherine's have access to Nedlands House for meals and recreational facilities, while enjoying studio apartment style accommodation which includes a kitchenette. In January 2023, 15 rooms were available at St Catherine's for families, further increasing to 26 rooms in September 2023.

In addition to the provision of accommodation through Ronald McDonald House, the following programs are also provided for families to access. While these are not the primary focus of this yearly impact report, many families who participated in the evaluation have also accessed the following programs along with staying at Ronald McDonald House.



Ronald McDonald Learning Program

The Learning Program supports primary and secondary students to progress their education through illness by offering one-to-one tutoring by qualified education practitioners in person and online across the state. The Learning Program also provides occupational and speech therapy to support students' needs in tutoring. In 2023, the learning centre launched the Magic Coat tool, developed to help create confident, calm and caring kids who know how to problem solve, feel safe and manage their emotions appropriately so that they have good mental health and wellbeing.



Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

RMHC WA family retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton give families with a seriously ill child, or those suffering from the death of a child, the necessary opportunity to take a break and spend time together in a relaxing environment. Ronald McDonald Family Retreats offer families important time for respite, recovery, healing and reconnecting with each other.



Ronald McDonald Family Room

The Family Room, Kulunga Moort Mia, and Fun on Four Precinct in Perth Children's Hospital, along with the Family Room at Peel Health Campus, are all designed to support the physical, emotional and practical needs of families during their child's hospital stay. The rooms provide a relaxing haven within the hospital to give families a break from the stress of many hours spent by their child's bedside. All family members, including the child that is undergoing treatment, as well as friends can access the Family Room.

RMHC WA's Impact Journey

RMHC WA engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA) in 2021 to undertake an evaluation of its accommodation and support services to better understand and report on RMHC WA's impact on families (parents, caregivers and siblings) and children receiving treatment, and in turn, identify opportunities for improvement.

As a first step, SVA worked with RMHC WA to develop an Outcomes Framework and Evaluation Plan to guide the evaluation process. This included developing a Theory of Change and identifying key outcomes RMHC WA sought to achieve for families and children receiving treatment, as well as relevant indicators and output measures. The 2021 Impact Report was produced, providing key findings alongside recommendations for RMHC WA to generate even greater impact for families in the future.

Following the 2021 Impact Report, the Outcomes Framework and data collection processes were simplified to enable the evaluation to sustainably occur each year without excessive burden on RMHC WA staff and volunteers. Following the 2022 Impact Report, an alumni

survey was developed in 2023 for adults who had stayed at RMHC as a child receiving treatment, to inform outcomes relating to longer term identity and resilience.

This 2023 Impact Report provides the key findings and recommendations from the data collected from January through until December 2023.

2023 Western Australia Snapshot

Understanding the context of services provided by RMHC WA is important for understanding the impact they have had for families in 2023. While 2023 saw Western Australian families recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, they continued to struggle with an emerging global recession, rising inflation and increases in the cost of living.

Higher interest rates are driving many families into mortgage stress, while rents are increasing dramatically amid record low vacancies. The referendum on an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (Voice referendum) caused immeasurable damage to the wellbeing of many Aboriginal Australians, and fuelled uncertainty and division within Australian communities.

Western Australia 2023 Context Snapshot¹



634,000 children and young people live in WA



17% of children and young people are living below the poverty line in WA



154,000 children and young people in WA live in regional and remote areas



50,000 Aboriginal children and young people under 18 years live in WA



419,711 households with one or more children are in WA



\$1.40 left for a single parent family each week in 2023 after meeting their basic living costs



14% increase in elective surgery in WA hospitals in 2023 compared to 2022



87% of Australians are very or quite concerned about the prospect of a severe downturn in the global economy

¹ Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Profile of Children and Young People in WA – 2023, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, 2023

Graham Hansen and Emily Hull, Cost of Living 2023, Western Australian Council of Social Service, 2023

J O'Donnell, Mapping Social Cohesion Report, Scanlon Foundation Research Institute, 2023

Australian government, [Elective Surgery](#), Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023, accessed 16 January 2024

In 2023, RMHC WA successfully advanced its strategy to increase House capacity towards meeting current and future growth in demand. With its imperative to meet immediate demand in 2023, RMHC WA directly invested in additional room capacity at St Catherine’s, increasing capacity from 15 to 26 rooms.

All patients and families at St Catherine’s were supported by RMHC WA’s Family Liaison Officers, Family Support Coordinators, volunteers, Wellbeing Coordinator and, access to all RMHC WA facilities at Nedlands House and Perth Children’s Hospital.

Ronald McDonald House Nedlands



659 new and returning families



872 stays



7,752 nights of accommodation provided



8.9 nights average length of stay



Ronald McDonald House Perth Children’s Hospital



631 new and returning families



701 stays



4,193 nights of accommodation provided



6.0 nights average length of stay



Alternative Accommodation: St Catherine’s



747 new and returning families



954 stays



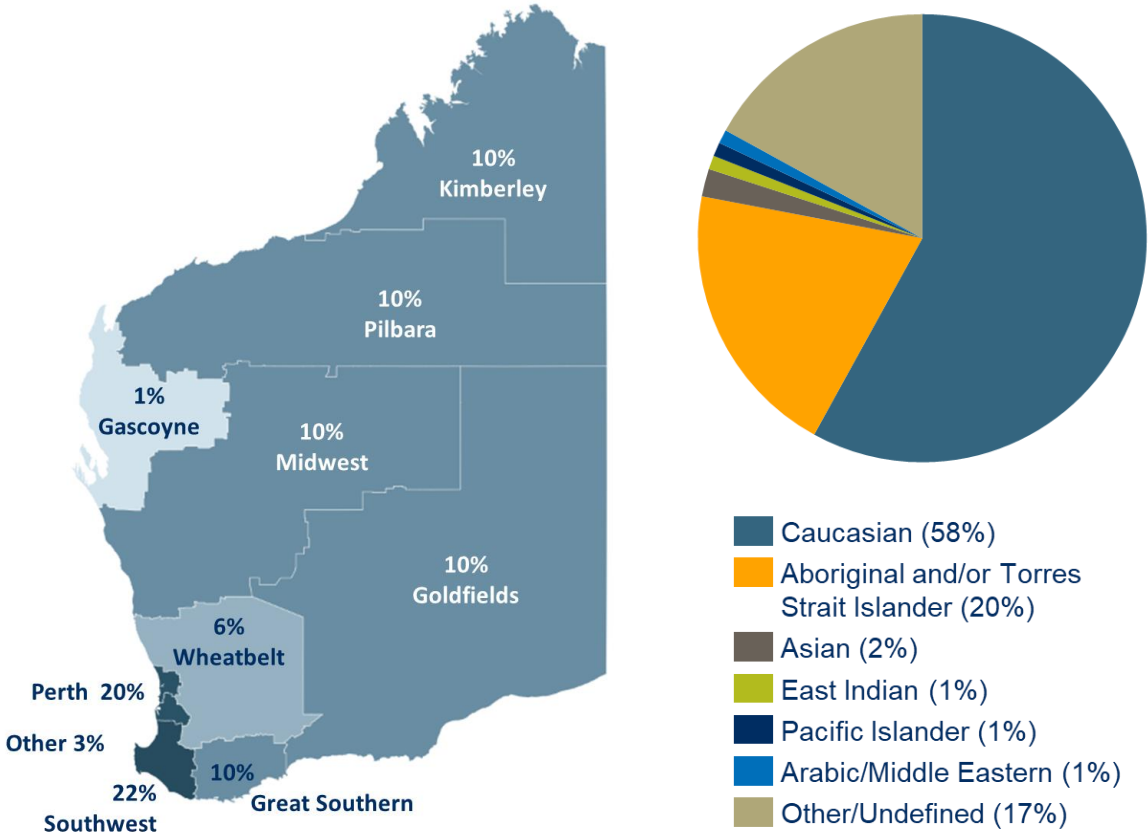
5,930 nights of accommodation provided



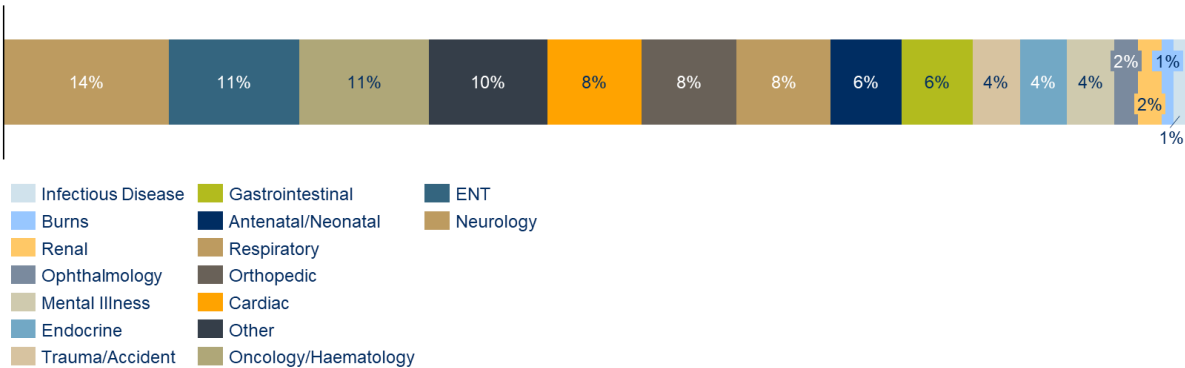
6.2 nights average length of stay



Families came from all over Western Australia, with the majority identifying as Caucasian or Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander



Children staying at RMHC WA have a vast range of medical conditions, with the majority requiring treatment for neurological and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) conditions, followed by oncology and a range of other treatments.



Wellbeing Framework

In 2021, SVA worked with RMHC WA to develop an Outcomes Framework, which comprises RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework and Logic Model. Guided by the Outcomes Framework, an Evaluation Plan was developed which includes data collection methods, frequency and roles and responsibilities. These are available in the 2021 Impact Report. Following the 2021 Impact Report, the Outcomes Framework and Evaluation Plan were revised to reduce the administrative and reporting burden on RMHC WA staff and volunteers, and to ensure RMHC WA’s focus on enhanced family wellbeing is central to the outcomes framework.

RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework

RMHC WA Wellbeing Framework is centred on the concept that enhanced family wellbeing results in greater child wellbeing. RMHC WA’s purpose is to ‘play a unique role in enabling, facilitating and supporting family-centred care within the Western Australian maternity, child and adolescent health systems’. The Outcomes Framework is built around RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework, which focuses on the emotional, financial, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of families. By focusing on the wellbeing of the family, the wellbeing of the child is improved.

*Our family’s **emotional wellbeing** and mental health is supported*



*Our family feels **culturally safe** because our culture and identity and respected, and we feel able and supported to continue to practice our culture*

*Our family feels **financially stable** because our costs of living away from home are supported*

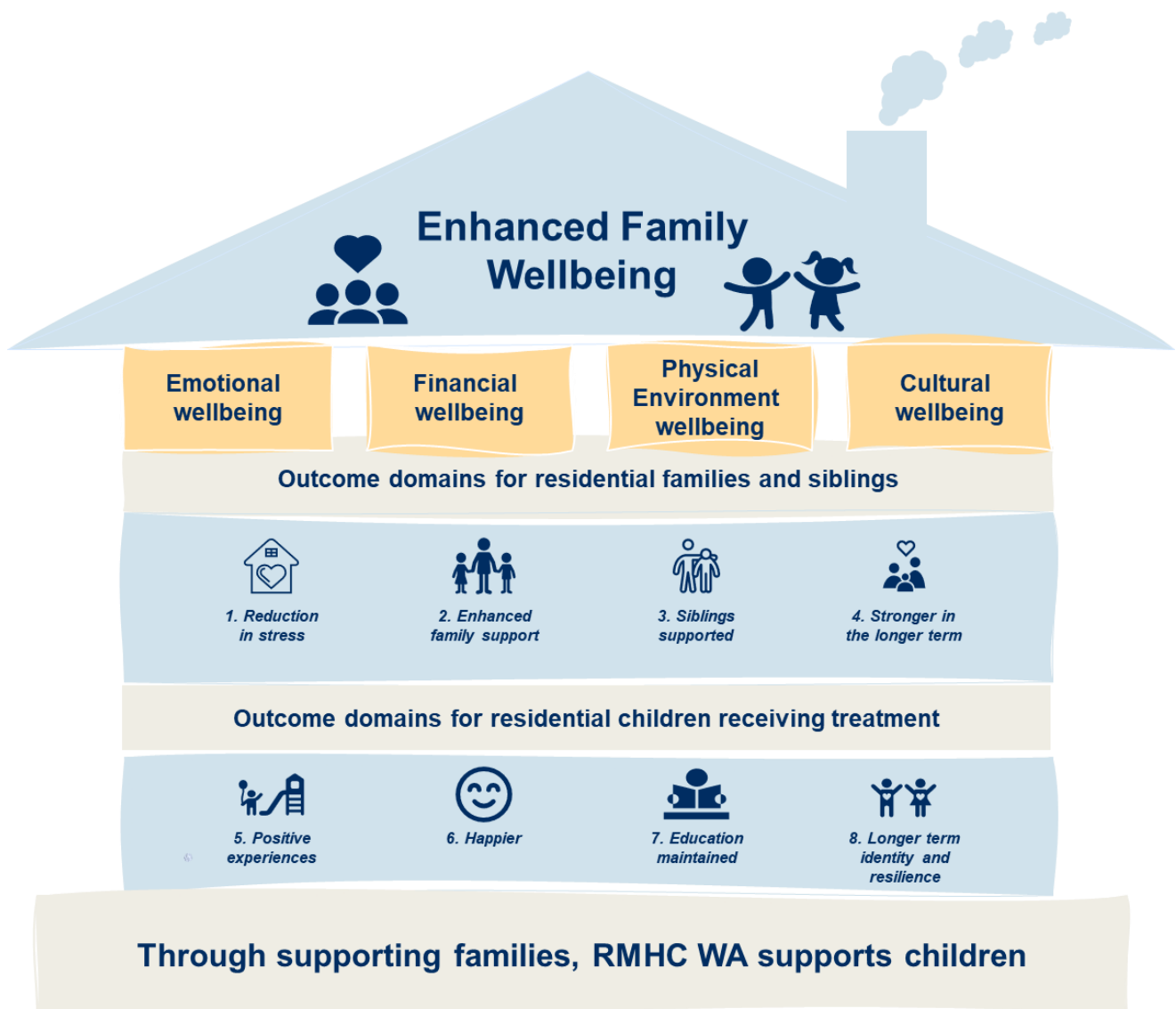
*Our family’s **basic needs** are met in an **environment** that is safe and healthy*

Outcomes Framework

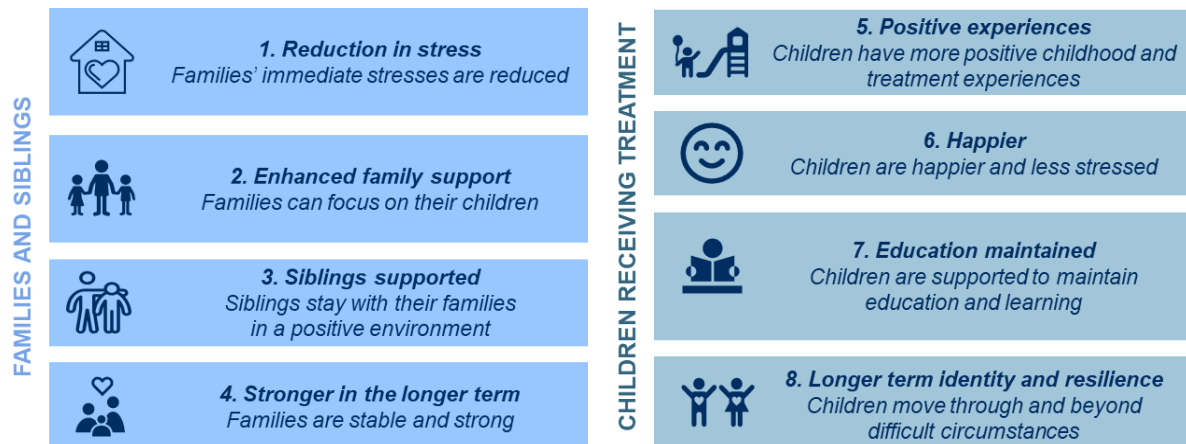
The Outcomes Framework outlines the key outcomes RMHC WA seeks to achieve for families and children’s wellbeing. For each outcome domain, a set of priority outcomes and indicators were developed.

Acknowledging the holistic nature of outcomes, the Outcomes Framework includes:

1. Overarching family wellbeing domains (emotional, financial, environmental, and cultural)
2. Outcome domains for families (parents/carers and siblings)
3. Outcome domains for children receiving treatment.



Descriptions of outcome domains for families and children



Data collection tools and analysis

A variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were used to acquire a deeper understanding of RMHC WA's impact. These draw upon different perspectives from parents and caregivers, alumni (adults who stayed at RMHC WA as children), as well as Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) who work closely with families and children receiving treatment and Perth Children's Hospital representatives.

Tool 1: Exit survey for parents and caregivers

The survey included 22 questions (with several sub-questions) to assess the changes in family wellbeing, and outcomes for families, siblings and children receiving treatment as a result of staying at the RMHC WA Nedlands House, PCH and St Catherine's .

Surveys were provided to RMHC WA families in hard copy format for completion, or via an email link. Where possible, FLOs assisted with the data collection at the Houses. Survey responses were collected from January to December 2023.

Tool 2: Interviews with parents/caregivers

SVA interviewed parents who stayed at the RMHC WA Nedlands House, PCH House and St Catherine's during 2023 to understand what had changed for their family as a result of staying at the Houses. A total of 16 interviews with parents/carers were conducted, with a mix of cohorts represented.

Total of 110 x survey responses

	20 x First Nations
	51 x Nedlands House
	27 x Perth Children's Hospital
	37 x St Catherine's on Park
	74 x short term stays (<14 days)
	21 x medium term (14 days – 1 month)
	15 x long term (1 month +)
	8 x metro (less than 100 km)
	28 x regional (100 – 300 km)
	49 x rural (300 – 900 km)
	24 x remote (900 km +)

One interview was also undertaken with a representative from Perth Children’s Hospital to help provide context and additional insights from the perspective of the hospitals RMHC WA is partnered with.

Tool 3: Alumni survey

An alumni survey was developed and distributed in 2023 to adults who had stayed at RMHC WA as children receiving care, to inform outcomes relating to longer term identity and resilience. Two alumni survey responses were received from a cohort of 12 alumni that were invited to participate.

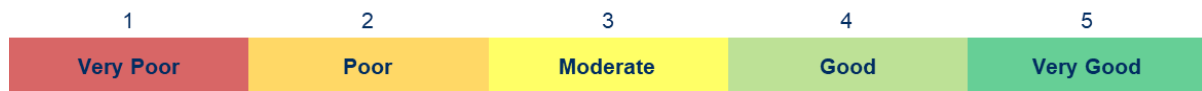
Tool 4: RMHC WA staff focus group

SVA led a focus group with RMHC WA’s FLOs. The purpose of this focus group was to present and test the survey results with staff to develop further insights, and garner broader feedback on the RMHC WA house environments, programs and family experiences. Seven FLOs attended the 2023 focus group, held in January 2024.

Data analysis

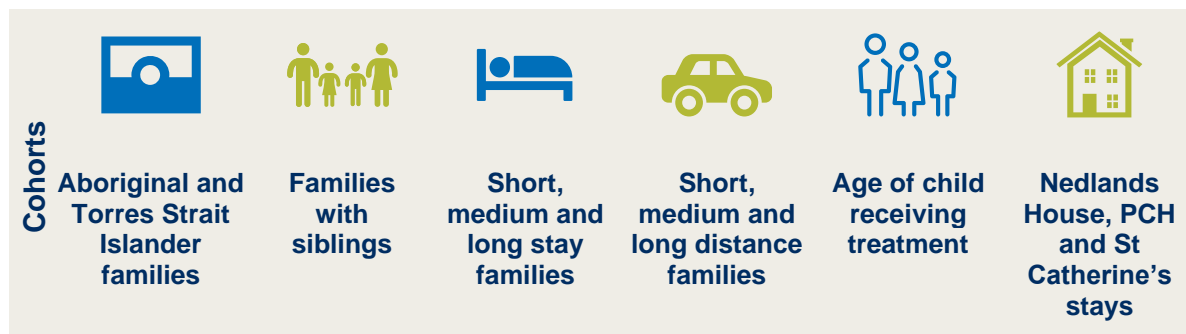
Wellbeing ratings

All survey questions requested a response along a five-point Likert scale, enabling question averages to be calculated as a score out of 5. These averages are called ‘wellbeing ratings’ throughout this impact report.



Cohort insights

In addition to overarching trends and insights, survey data was analysed by the following cohorts. Where this analysis revealed cohort specific insights, they are discussed by outcome domains throughout the report. Where responses were consistent across cohorts, no cohort insights are provided.



Limitations

The number of survey participants (110) represents a sample size of approximately 6% of the total number of families (1,859). This is lower than an ideal sample size of 10%, however has increased from 2022 (77) and 2021 (29).

Enhanced Family Wellbeing



“ A lot of lives would be completely different if the house wasn’t there. We are very fortunate to have something like that.”

- Parent / Carer



Emotional Wellbeing

When asked about emotional wellbeing, families referenced the physical services provided, the personal support provided by the FLOs, and the supportive friendly environment of RMHC WA as reducing stress and positively influencing their emotional wellbeing. The support provided by other families in the house was also highlighted as a key emotional support for families. In 2023, RMHC WA also engaged a Wellbeing Coordinator who provided dedicated support sessions for parents/carers and staff. Thirty-one one-on-one parent/carers sessions, 14 phone calls with parent/carers, and nine sessions with staff were provided.

In 2023, RMHC WA had a very high impact on the emotional wellbeing of families staying at the house, with families at the house experiencing a 31% increase in the average emotional wellbeing from when they entered the house.

Before arriving at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing was:

3.0



While staying at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing was:

4.0

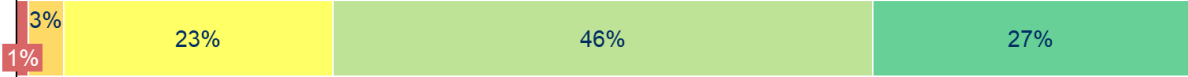


*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



At RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



Very Poor Poor Moderate Good Very Good

The number of families who stated their wellbeing was good or very good increased from 37% of all respondents on entry, to 73% of all respondents on exit. In particular, 75% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their emotional wellbeing would have been poor or very poor.



Thankful to have anywhere to go when it was such a fragile time. They had my back. ‘We’ve got you for as long as you need’.

- Parent / Carer



[When we arrived we were] Very lost and broken. Shattered. Was all a blur. Staff were amazing. Absolutely lovely.

- Parent / Carer

If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing would have been:

1.9 /5
Poor

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...



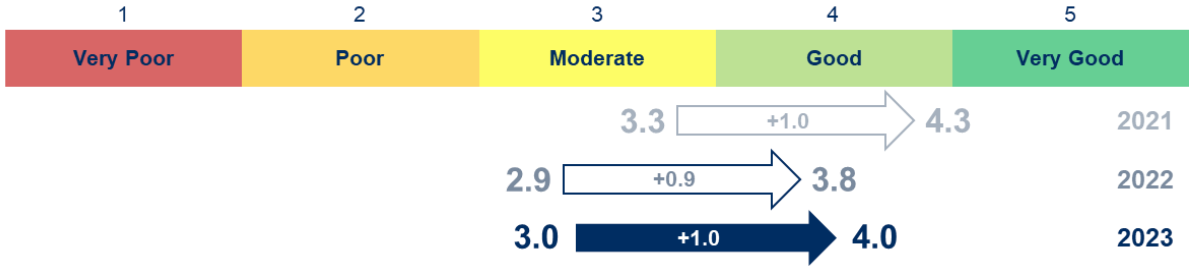
Very Poor Poor Moderate Good Very Good

2023
2022
2021

RMHC WA had a similar positive impact on emotional wellbeing in 2023 compared to 2022, however overall wellbeing ratings were slightly higher in 2023

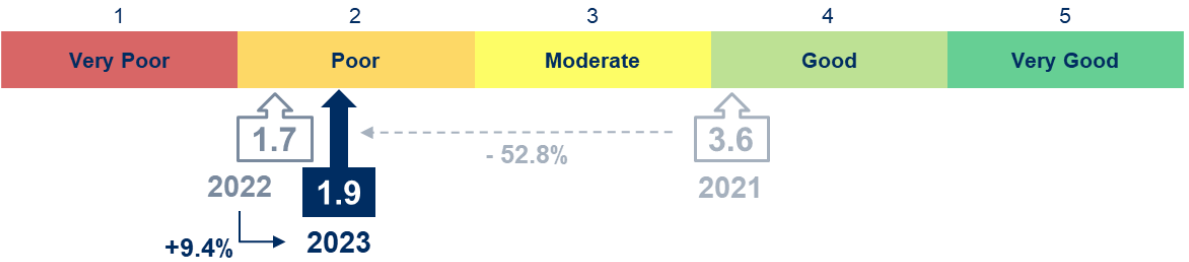
In 2023, the average impact RMHC WA had from entry to exit for families was very similar to 2022, with an increase of 1.0 in 2023 compared to an increase of 0.9 in 2022. The overall average emotional wellbeing of families in 2023 increased slightly from 2022 by an average of 7%, still remaining lower than 2021 scores but showing a positive increase since 2022 as families continue to recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



The reported emotional wellbeing of families if they couldn’t access RMHC WA was also very similar to 2022, remaining much lower than 2021. While 2023 saw WA families recover from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing financial and social stress that continued throughout 2023 with rising inflation, increases in the cost of living, and the uncertainty and division caused by the Voice referendum are likely to have influenced emotional wellbeing.

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...



“Emotional wellbeing has benefited so much from being able to stay there. Take off so much stress. Made so many friends. Get close to the FLOs. Connected with the chefs. Good energy to be around. Everyone was really positive all the time. Took a lot of stress off each day.”

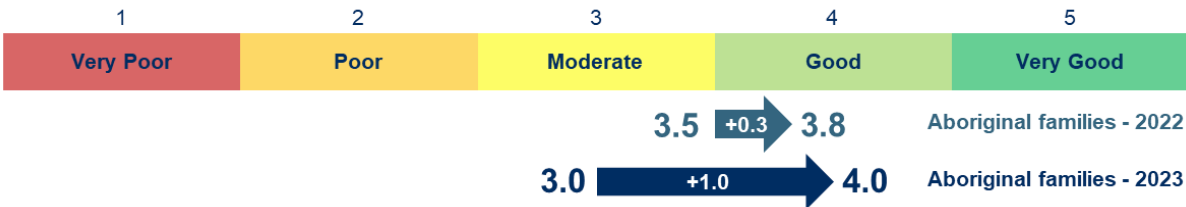
- Parent / Carer



Families who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in 2023 had lower emotional wellbeing when entering the house compared to 2022

While in 2022 Aboriginal families reported higher levels of emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC WA (3.5) compared to non-Aboriginal families (2.7), in 2023 both cohorts reported the same level of emotional wellbeing when entering (3.0). This meant that in 2023 Aboriginal families were entering RMHC WA with lower emotional wellbeing than in 2022, and so RMHC WA had a much greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal families in 2023 (average increase of 1.0), compared to in 2022 (average increase of 0.3). The impact RMHC WA had on non-Aboriginal families remained consistent throughout both years (increase of 0.9).

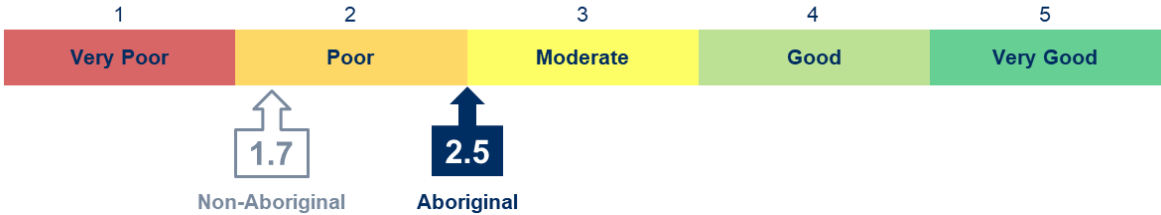
Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



The lower wellbeing of Aboriginal families entering the house in 2023 could be due to various factors, including socioeconomic differences from 2022, the severity of the child’s illness or external contextual factors such as the negative impact of the Voice referendum on the wellbeing of Aboriginal communities.

Despite this, Aboriginal families believed that they would have had higher emotional wellbeing if not able to access RMHC WA in 2023 (2.5) compared to non-Aboriginal families (1.7). This 2023 rating was also 0.3 points higher than Aboriginal families expressed in 2022 (2.2).

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...

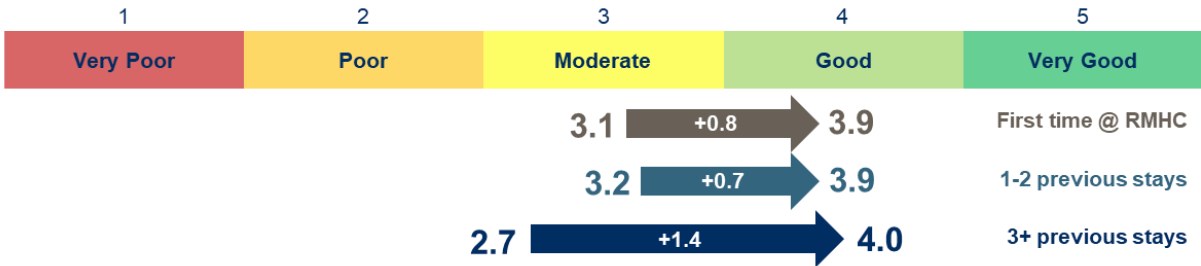




RMHC WA had a greater positive impact on the emotional wellbeing of families who are regular visitors (stayed more than 3 times)

RMHC WA received approximately 595 repeat families in 2023 (32%), with repeat families making up a higher proportion of the survey participants (50%). The survey results revealed that families who are regular visitors of RMHC WA (stayed more than three times) entered the house with lower emotional wellbeing and benefitted more from RMHC WA support.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



Emotionally – they became our family... They became our support network and were there every day.”

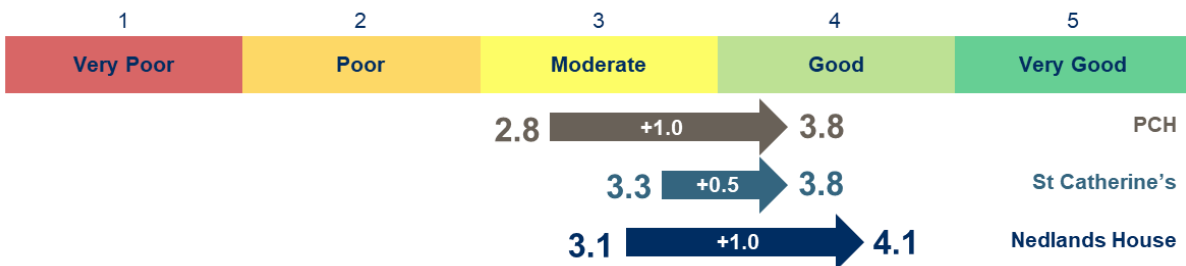
- Parent / Carer



RMHC WA had a greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of families staying at PCH and Nedlands House, compared to St Catherine’s

Nedlands House and PCH both had a significant impact on the emotional wellbeing of families (increase of 1.0), while St Catherine’s had a moderate impact (increase of 0.5). As PCH provides accommodation for parents whose child is in ICU and so likely suffering from an immediately life-threatening condition, it is not surprising that families at PCH reported lower average emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC WA. Similarly, families at PCH would have experienced lower emotional wellbeing if they did not have access to RMHC WA.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's emotional wellbeing was...



If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family's emotional wellbeing would have been...



The social and communal nature of Nedlands House is likely a contributing factor to the higher emotional wellbeing of families who stayed at the Nedlands House. Consistent with interviews undertaken in 2022, a common theme throughout 2023 interviews was the importance of the social connections made by families while at RMHC WA. Being surrounded by others in similar situations helped improve the emotional wellbeing of families.

“

Families in house provided support for each other. Could sympathise with each other. It was comforting to talk to other people. Everyone showed empathy for each other.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Made lifelong friends. All live in different parts of WA. Having those families because the children were going through a medical illness, we could provide a different kind of support. Relate to one another.”

- Parent / Carer

This social aspect was a key part of the support provided at the Nedlands House, however many families who stayed at St Catherine's also appreciated the independence from the social nature of the Nedlands House. For those families or parents/carers who are less social or who have a larger family unit, having an alternative accommodation option was well received.



Financial Wellbeing



Without it I have no idea where we would have gone or how we would have afforded to stay anywhere else. I was amazed. What an awesome place to have."

- Parent / Carer

In 2023, RMHC WA had a high positive impact on the financial wellbeing of families, with a 21% increase in the average financial wellbeing rating from entry to while families were at the house. The number of families who stated their wellbeing was good or very good increased from 50% of all respondents on entry, to 74% of all respondents while at RMHC WA. In particular, 72% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their finances would have been stressful or difficult to manage.

Before arriving at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing was:

3.2



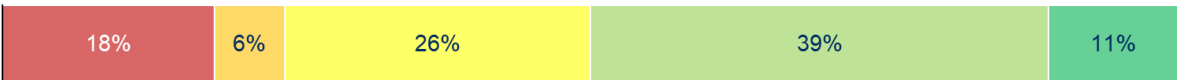
While staying at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing was:

3.9

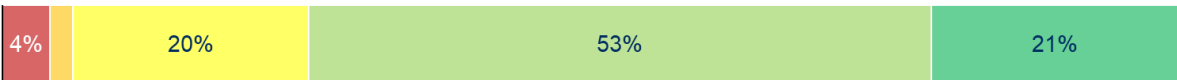


*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...



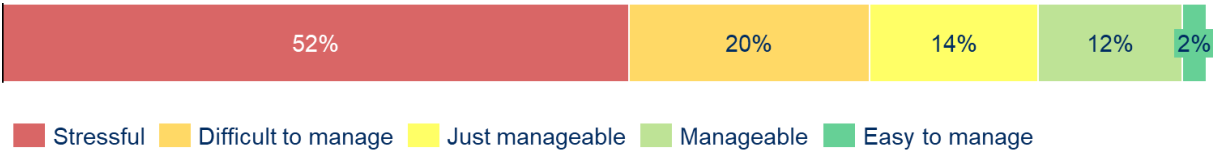
While staying at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...



Stressful Difficult to manage Just manageable Manageable Easy to manage

If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing would have been:

1.9 /5
Difficult to manage



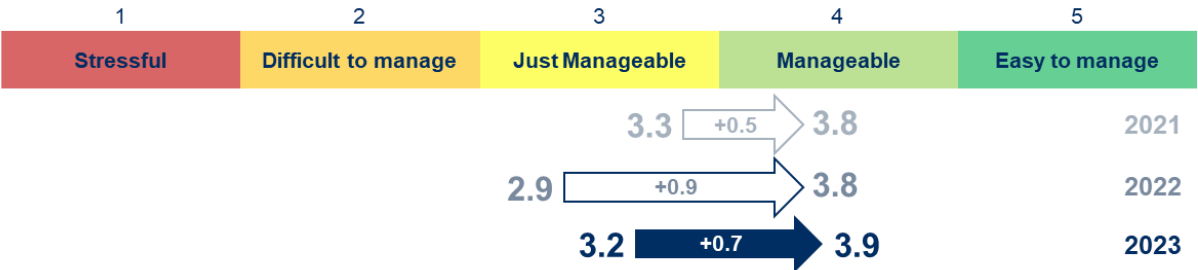
“Without the house would have had to move – wouldn’t have coped financially. With being so far away don’t know how we would have survived.”
- Parent / Carer

“Been able to be financially stable [because of RMHC WA]. If we couldn’t stay here financially we would be severely struggling.”
- Parent / Carer

RMHC WA had a moderate impact on financial wellbeing in 2023 compared to 2022, with families experiencing less improvement but higher financial wellbeing before arriving and while at the house

2023 saw an improvement in the financial wellbeing of families compared to 2022, with families arriving at the house with slightly greater financial wellbeing and minimally higher financial wellbeing while at the house. This did mean that RMHC WA had a slightly lower positive impact on financial wellbeing in 2023 compared to 2022, however the impact had in 2023 was still moderately significant.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s financial wellbeing was...



Parents/carers overwhelmingly expressed gratitude at the financial support RMHC WA has provided, with some families attributing their ability to have a roof over their heads or food on the table for their children to the support provided by RMHC WA. This was particularly the case for families whose parents have had to stop working to care for their sick child.

“

Without RMHC we'd be living under a bridge. Because don't see how else we'd be able to manage it... We don't have money to rent a house.”

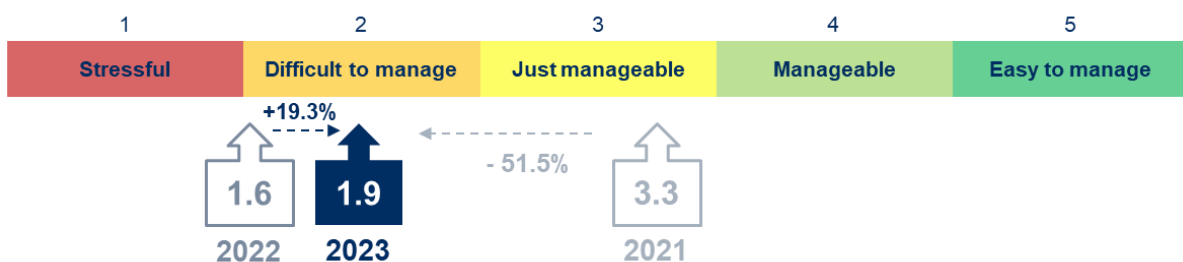
- Parent / Carer

“

Being able to stay there was amazing. Not having to worry about somewhere to stay. I haven't worked since she got sick. Can't feed kids at home so wouldn't have been able to afford it.”

- Parent / Carer

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family's financial wellbeing would have been...



While in 2022 the food provided by RMHC WA was regularly mentioned as a key cost saver for families, in 2023 interviewees also mentioned the cost saving of not having to pay for parking every day at the hospital due to the proximity of RMHC WA. This further highlights the additional ways RMHC WA supports families who are facing ongoing financial pressure from increases in the cost of living.

“

Financially I didn't have lots of extra cash lying around to purchase meals. To be able to have evening meals and breakfast made such a difference.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Financial burden – especially when we stayed for several months. Even parking – being able to walk across and not have to pay for parking several times a day. We can't use public transport.”

- Parent / Carer

It is important to note that the wording of survey questions changed from 2021 to 2022 (previous scale was: very poor; poor; moderate; good and very good). As the connotations of 'very poor' compared to 'stressful' are different, this could have also influenced the difference between 2021 and subsequent years.

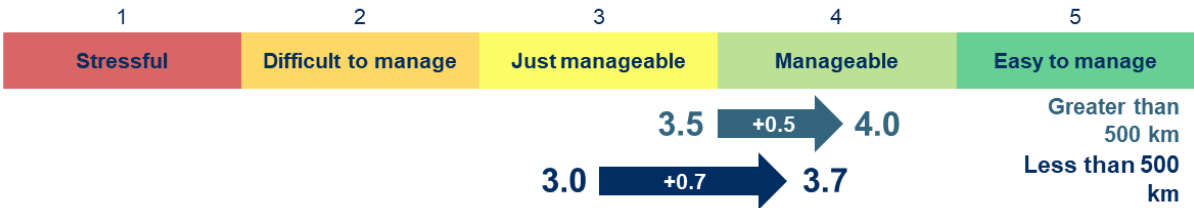


Families within 500 km of Perth had lower average financial wellbeing

Families who live within 500 km of Perth struggled with lower financial wellbeing compared to families who live greater than 500 km from Perth. This is the opposite of 2022 results, where families who lived over 500 km from Perth had much lower financial wellbeing.

While the financial wellbeing reported by families within 500 km of Perth dropped slightly from 2022 to 2023, this 'swap' is largely due to an increase in the reported financial wellbeing of families over 500 km from Perth. 2023 survey data showed an average increase from 3.5 to 4.0 in reported financial wellbeing while at RMHC WA, compared to a 2022 increase from 2.7 to 3.5. This change could be due to a shift in the socioeconomic contexts of families who stayed at RMHC WA between 2022 and 2023, however this is difficult to determine with the data available.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...





Cultural Wellbeing



Always different cultures there... feels very much that everyone can interact together."

- Parent / Carer

In 2023, RMHC WA had a minimal impact on the cultural wellbeing of families staying at the house, with families staying at RMHC WA experiencing a 3% increase in their average cultural wellbeing rating while at the house. The number of families who stated their cultural wellbeing was good or very good increased from 77% of all respondents on entry, to 85% of all respondents while staying at RMHC WA. Just 24% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their cultural wellbeing would have been low or very low.

Of the 110 survey respondents, 18% stated that members of their family identified as being Aboriginal, 21% identified their religion as Christian or Catholic, and 11% identified as another culture or religion. Forty-three percent stated that their culture or religion was not applicable, and 9% stated that they would prefer not to say. Of the Aboriginal survey respondents, it is anecdotally believed that Noongar families are overrepresented and so RMHC WA is working on increasing representation from across Western Australia.

Before arriving at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing was:

4.0



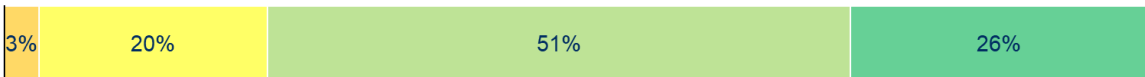
While staying at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing was:

4.1



*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family's cultural wellbeing was...



At RMHC WA my family's cultural wellbeing was...



Very Low Low Moderate Good Very Good

If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing would have been:

3.2 /5
Moderate

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s cultural wellbeing would have been...



While no survey or interview participants specifically discussed the cultural safety of RMHC WA in relation to different religions or cultures, many talked about the welcoming and inclusive culture of the house.

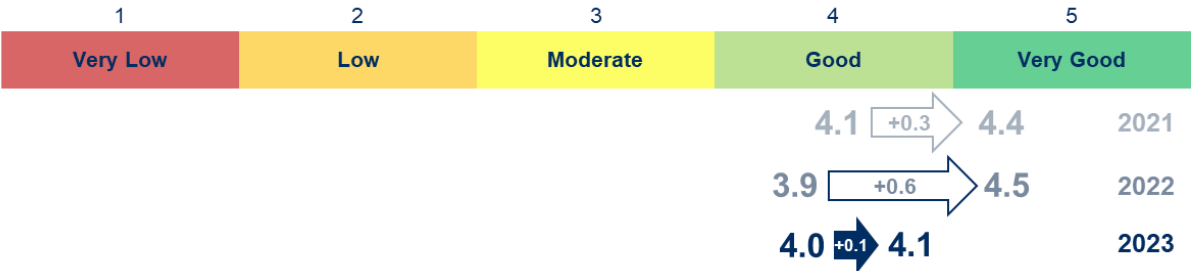
“Always different cultures there... feels very much that everyone can interact together.”
- Parent / Carer

“Supportive space... opens up conversations that otherwise wouldn’t happen... I do like that side of it.”
- Parent / Carer

RMHC WA had a minimal impact on cultural wellbeing in 2023 compared to 2022 and 2021, where there was a higher increase

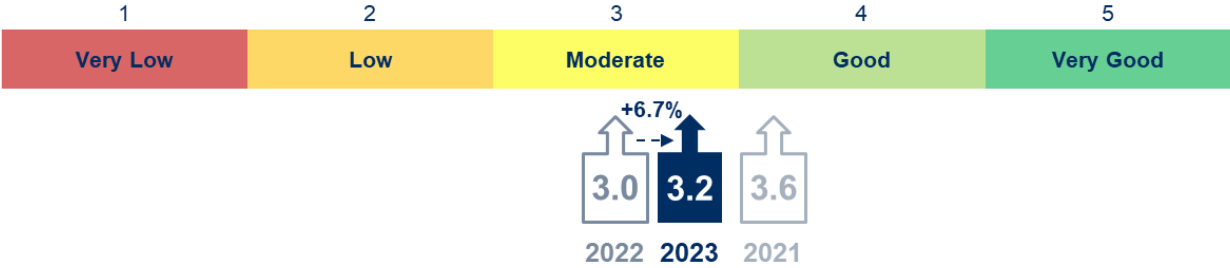
In 2023 RMHC WA had a very minimal impact on family cultural wellbeing compared to 2022 and 2021. In particular, in 2023 family’s cultural wellbeing while at the house increased by just 0.1 points, compared to an increase of 0.6 and 0.3 in 2022 and 2021 respectively.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s cultural wellbeing was...



In 2023, if families had not been able to stay at the House, they would have experienced slightly higher cultural wellbeing than in 2022, remaining lower than 2021.

If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s cultural wellbeing would have been...



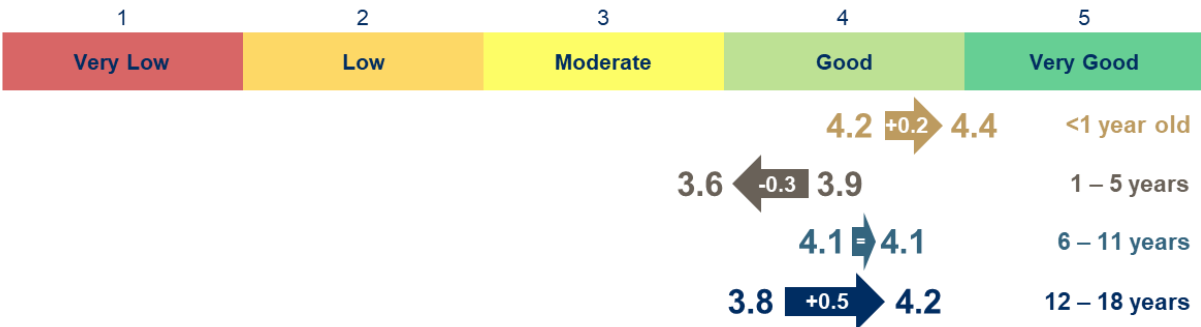


RMHC WA had a higher positive impact on the cultural wellbeing of families whose child receiving treatment was 12 – 18 years, while families whose child receiving treatment was 1 – 5 years struggled

RMHC WA had a higher positive impact on the cultural wellbeing of families whose child receiving treatment was between 12 – 18 years of age. Families whose child receiving treatment was between 1 – 5 years struggled the most, with their cultural wellbeing declining while at the house.

As families with children 1 – 5 years old are often in a stage of life where maintaining wellbeing can be more challenging amongst changes to routine and other stressors, this may have influenced these results. The RMHC WA learning centre is also only available for children over four years, and so there is a potential gap in support for families with children in this age bracket. This is particularly pertinent for single parents who may not have other sources of support for minding children while at the hospital with their child receiving treatment. While the provision of creche facilities or alternatives is challenging due to the regulatory and operating landscape of RMHC WA, other ways to support these families should be explored.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s cultural wellbeing was...





RMHC WA support means regional families with chronically ill children do not need to move to Perth for ongoing or long-term treatment. Families acknowledged that maintaining connection to their homes and communities through the patient journey helped to maintain their wellbeing.

During interviews many parents/carers commented on how without RMHC WA support they would have had to move to Perth to help manage their child's treatment. By providing the RMHC WA Houses, families can stay in their location and community of choice, keep their children in their school and maintain a semblance of 'normal life', particularly for siblings. By maintaining normalcy and agency throughout their child's illness, families can maintain their cultural wellbeing within their community.



Certainly means we can stay in remote WA. If we didn't have RMHC WA we would have had to move to Perth by now, which is not something we want to do."

- Parent / Carer



Would have had to move a long time ago but didn't want to... RMHC WA has made it possible for my kids to stay in their school."

- Parent / Carer



Physical Environment Wellbeing

“

There is a home away from home that you can walk in and make your own. Its sitting there ready for you.”

- Parent / Carer

In 2023, families found RMHC WA to be a ‘home away from home’, providing a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment for their family. Eighty-seven percent of participants agreed or strongly agreed that not being able to access the RMHC WA house environment would have caused stress to their family wellbeing. Many families mentioned the RMHC WA environment during interviews as being a major factor in improving emotional and cultural wellbeing. In particular, while the physical environments of Nedlands House, PCH and St Catherine’s are all quite different, results were consistent across the three accommodation options.

My family home is a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment.

4.6



RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home that is safe, healthy and enjoyable for our family.



4.4

*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

My family home is a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment.



RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home that is safe, healthy and enjoyable for our family.



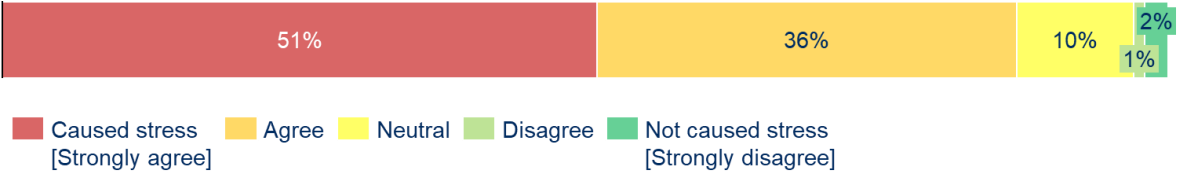
Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Not being able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing.

1.7 /5

Caused stress

Not being able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing.



“

Physical environment was very accommodating. Daughter utilises wheelchair/walker. Even though the house is full you don't feel like you're crammed on top of each other. Felt like a home. Had a second kitchen – had our own fridge and cupboard. Could use at any time.”

- Parent / Carer

“

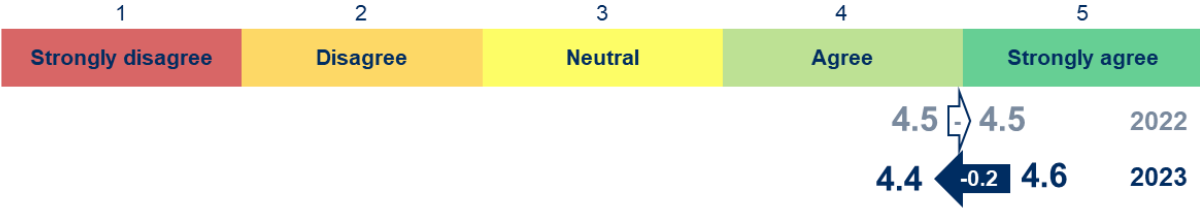
Accommodation was warm. Surrounded by people who are willing to help and other families with children who are unwell. They understand what you're going through. Whole house set up for the families – not something that other accommodation can meet.”

- Parent / Carer

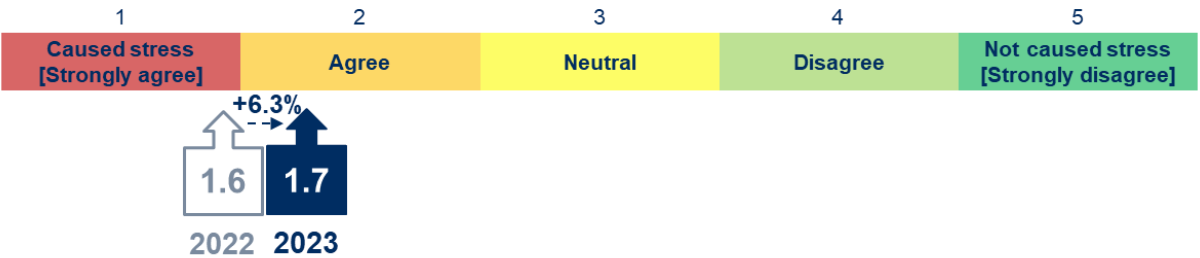
Survey results for environmental wellbeing in 2023 was consistent with 2022

Due to the environmental wellbeing survey questions changing between 2021 and 2022, no comparison is provided with 2021 survey results. Between 2022 and 2023, families expressed similar sentiments regarding the RMHC WA environment, stating the house felt like a 'home away from home', and not being able to access it would have caused stress to their family wellbeing.

My family home is a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment → RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home...



Not being able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing.



Families appreciated the different environments provided by Nedlands House, PCH and St Catherine’s depending on their needs

During 2023, a much higher percentage of families who had stayed at St Catherine’s were surveyed (33%) compared to 2022 (4%), and insights from the different accommodation options was able to be analysed. As previously mentioned, while there was a mix of accommodation used by survey participants, environmental wellbeing ratings did not change significantly between the three houses, with all families agreeing that each house felt like a ‘home away from home’.

While St Catherine’s does not have the same in-house facilities as Nedlands House, all patients and families at St Catherine’s have access to all RMHC WA facilities at the Nedlands House and were supported by RMHC WA’s Family Liaison Officers, Family Support Coordinators, volunteers and Wellbeing Coordinator. It was a priority for RMHC WA to ensure all patients and families at St Catherine’s facility receive RMHC WA wrap-around support, services and experiences.

During interviews, families did acknowledge the differences between the Houses, particularly the more social nature of Nedlands House and support services provided, and the kitchenette facilities and independence provided at St Catherine’s. While many of the families who stayed at St Catherine’s enjoyed and greatly appreciated the accommodation, they did consistently mention the lack of parking as a key challenge.

“

Been down again a couple of times this year and stayed at St Catherine's – great. Preferred St Catherine's as you could prepare your own food.”

- Parent / Carer

“

She liked St Cat's as well. Enjoyed eating whatever you wanted to eat. Had your own fridge. Didn't need the social aspect as three of us and there a shorter period of time.”

- Parent / Carer

While many families appreciated the independence of St Catherine's and enjoyed staying there, there does appear to be a negative perception of the house amongst some families who haven't stayed there. This may be due to a lack of communication and understanding around the access to facilities at Nedlands House for those at St Catherine's, or could be due to some families finding the social nature and additional support of Nedlands House critical to their wellbeing.

“

Although St Catherine's was perfectly fine and we very much appreciate the accommodation, [Nedlands] is a lot easier with parking, meals and other activities such as the playground.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Have heard St Catherine's is not as good as the normal house. Anxiety about potentially having to stay there. Need to be able to access main housing...”

- Parent / Carer

Outcomes for families and siblings

Outcome domains for residential families and siblings



1. Reduction in stress



2. Enhance family support



3. Siblings supported



4. Stronger in the longer term



We love it there. The kids love it there and that says a lot. He's getting poked and prodded all day. He's always in so much more of a good mood at the house."

- Parent / Carer



Reduction in stress

Families' immediate stresses are reduced

Impact Rating

4.5

Very High



Whole experience with RMHC is taking stress out of everything."

- Parent / Carer



Families' basic needs are met at no cost

In 2023 RMHC WA provided 18,437 nights of accommodation and associated meals for families across Nedlands House, PCH and St Catherine's. In 2023, RMHC WA continued to advance its strategy to increase House capacity to meet current and future growth in demand, investing in additional room capacity at St Catherine's by acquiring additional rooms

to increase capacity from 15 to 26 rooms. All patients and families at St Catherine’s have access to the meals and services provided at Nedlands House.

Nedlands		7,752 nights of accommodation provided
PCH		4,193 nights of accommodation provided
St Catherine’s		5,930 nights of accommodation provided

The provision of basic needs had a very significant impact for parents and carers, removing key stressors from the day to day and enabling them to focus on their children.

“
Having food made for us. To be able to sit in the room with my son and talk to him and not have to think about it.”
- Parent / Carer

“
Breakfast and dinner makes such a difference when you’re time poor.”
- Parent / Carer



Families’ immediate emotional needs are met

Most families (91%) agreed or strongly agreed that RMHC WA helped reduce their general levels of stress and anxiety. These findings were consistent across all cohorts and are similar to 2022 and 2021 data (where 88% and 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement respectively). The proximity of RMHC WA to the hospital was a key alleviator of stress for parents and carers, and the emotional support provided by other families was a key factor in meeting the emotional needs of families.

Helped reduce my general levels of stress and anxiety



“
Being so close to the hospital it makes such a difference. He would get sick in the middle of the night and you can walk straight across.”
- Parent / Carer

“
Families in house provided support for each other. Could sympathise with each other. It was comforting to talk to other people. Everyone showed empathy for each other.”
- Parent / Carer



Enhanced family support

Families can focus on their children



Not having to organise something else. Having everything ready meant we could focus on our family wellbeing.”

- Parent / Carer



Families can focus on caring for their children

While not asked in the survey, many parents and carers interviewed expressed how the support provided by RMHC WA helped them focus on their children. Daily concerns were removed, which gave carers the emotional and physical space to focus both on their child receiving treatment, and on other siblings staying with them in the house and their experience.



Having RMHC WA assist with accommodation component meant that a lot of the stress was alleviated, and I could focus on the kids. Absolutely makes a huge difference.”

- Parent / Carer



They definitely take a weight off your shoulders and let us focus on giving our child the care that she needs while they look after anything else for us.”

- Parent / Carer



Families feel supported in the hospital environment

While RMHC WA does not provide any care or support related to the child's treatment, they provide other supports for families within the hospital environment that help provide a foundation for the family. In particular, the PCH accommodation for parents and carers of children in ICU provides significant support, enabling parents to have a break while remaining close to their children. In addition, as parents have a place to access support and rest, this relieves pressure on the hospital staff who are providing care to the child.

“

Does relieve pressure on staff. Parents are not sleep deprived. Can think clearly. Make rational decisions. By the simple fact that they've gone away and had a sleep. Very helpful.”

- Hospital representative

“

I don't know where we'd be without them to be honest. Without them, might be more clinical approach. RMHC WA are very family focussed. They're in tune with their parents.”

- Hospital representative



Siblings supported

Siblings stay with their families in a positive environment



“

Allowed us to be able to stay closer together and stay connected as a family instead of being split apart.”

- Parent / Carer



Siblings remain close to their families

Of survey respondents with siblings, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that RMHC WA helped their other children feel less stressed or anxious. Many parents and carers interviewed stated that this was due to the family unit staying together and children being able to be close to their sibling receiving treatment. Having siblings nearby also helped the child receiving treatment, as siblings could encourage the child receiving treatment and help them feel less alone.

Helped our other child/children feel less stressed or anxious



“

Did better at his appointment with [his sister] there – she can support him and be positive, then he'd want to do it with her.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Made a big difference for son having sister very close. Otherwise it rips families apart.”

- Parent / Carer



Siblings can access play and learning environments together with their sibling receiving treatment and other children

The positive environment of RMHC WA and spaces provided had a significant impact on family wellbeing, with 94% of families with siblings surveyed agreeing or strongly agreeing that RMHC WA helped their other children to feel included and happy. This is very consistent with 2022 survey results, where 96% of families agreed or strongly agreed that RMHC WA helped their other child/children to feel included and happy. In 2023 the playground, playgroup, learning centre and presence of other children around were all mentioned by parents and carers as contributing to their children’s wellbeing.

Helped our other child/children to feel included and happy



Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

“

Older daughter loved the house, the playground was her favourite part of the house. Always felt comfortable there. Good to have other kids around to play with.”

- Parent / Carer

“

A place we can all spend time together.”

- Parent / Carer



Stronger in the longer term

Families are stable and strong



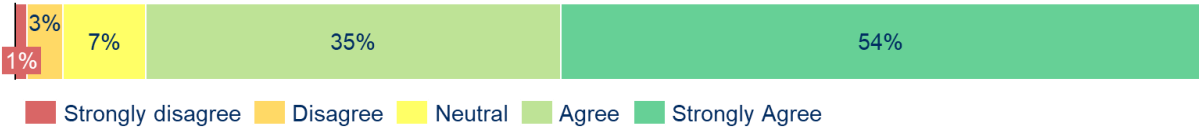
Having accommodation for family and children meant I didn't have to choose between my children."

- Parent / Carer

Disruption caused by child's illness has a reduced long term impact on family

89% of families surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that staying at RMHC WA helped their family maintain a sense of their normal life and feel closer to each other. These results are consistent with 2022 survey data, where 93% of respondents agreed that staying at RMHC WA enable them to maintain a sense of their normal life and feel closer to each other.

Helped my family maintain a sense of our normal life and feel closer to each other



They were able to manage our needs even though they were constantly changing."

- Parent / Carer



Helped keep us together instead of having the family split 19 hours apart."

- Parent / Carer



Families are stronger

89% of families surveyed felt that staying at RMHC WA helped their family feel stronger and more resilient to cope with their difficult circumstances. This remained consistent across families with and without siblings, with 90% and 87% strongly agreeing or agreeing respectively.

Helped my family feel stronger and more resilient to cope with our difficult circumstances



“

It allows you to use all your effort on your only child. Don't have to worry about cooking, or getting food in. Don't have to worry about it. All I have to worry about is that my son's ok and can be in this journey. Can look after his mental health as well, can be there to catch him and support him when he needs it. Be mindful of all the changes, do all that needs to be done.”

- Parent / Carer

Outcomes for children receiving treatment

Outcome domains for residential children receiving treatment



5. Positive experiences



6. Happier



7. Education maintained



8. Longer term identity and resilience

“

My daughter was a lot happier at the house. You're put in a very difficult circumstance that no one wants to be in, but you walk into that house and everyone treats you with a smile – makes such a difference.”

- Parent / Carer



Positive experiences

Children have more positive childhood and treatment experiences

“

He loves it. Always tells everyone about the house. Tells everyone about 'Donald's house'. He gets really excited about going down to Perth.”

- Parent / Carer



Children have positive childhood experiences

While there were no survey questions, parents shared in interviews how staying at RMHC WA helped their child receiving treatment to have positive experiences. This is particularly true for children who regularly visit Perth for ongoing treatments and can stay at RMHC WA instead of the hospital. Being able to stay in the RMHC WA environment instead of the hospital helped the child receiving treatment to have a more positive treatment experience.

“

Her recovery was more pleasant because she was able to be at that comfortable place [RMHC WA] instead of in the hospital. She got an infection in her wound so had to stay a couple of weeks but could do that from RMHC WA.”

- Parent / Carer

“

They love it because it's something different. Celebratory events – always something fun on.”

- Parent / Carer

The additional activities and events run by RMHC WA often helped take children's minds off their treatment and enabled them to focus on positive experiences instead. Many Parents and carers said they were particularly grateful for their children's smiles when RMHC WA is mentioned, despite the difficult and often painful circumstances surrounding the stay.

“

I loved the art and craft classes, plus I used the games room a lot. Nice quiet areas to sit and relax after spending the day at the hospital.”

- RMHC WA Alumni



Happier

Children are happier and less stressed



“*For her, whenever we do talk about Ronald it puts a smile on her face because we did meet some great people there it was always a happy environment. Whenever we talk about what happened it is a positive memory.*”

- Parent / Carer



Children feel safe and supported

90% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staying at RMHC WA helped their child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported.

Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported



Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

“*She’s a lot happier when she goes there. She has anxiety so she likes to know what it’s going to be like. Knowing she’s going there, its familiar. She’s legally blind. She knows where things are in the house. Gives her a sense of security.*”

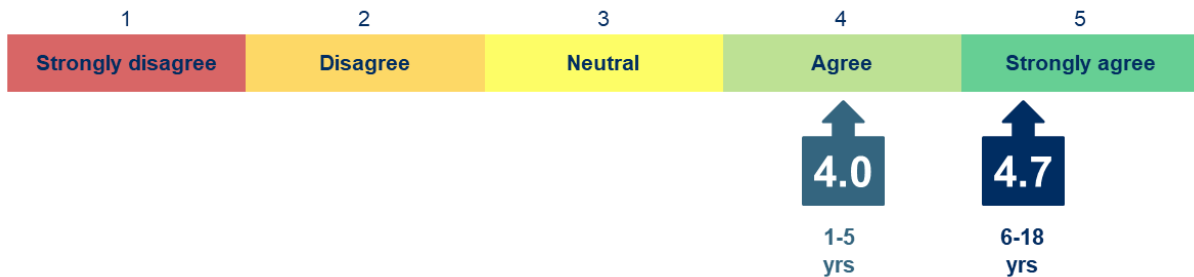
- Parent / Carer

“*Son loves going there. Gets to talk to other kids and has an absolute blast. Like a little home away from home. You know where everything is and see the same volunteers every time and build up a rapport.*”

- Parent / Carer

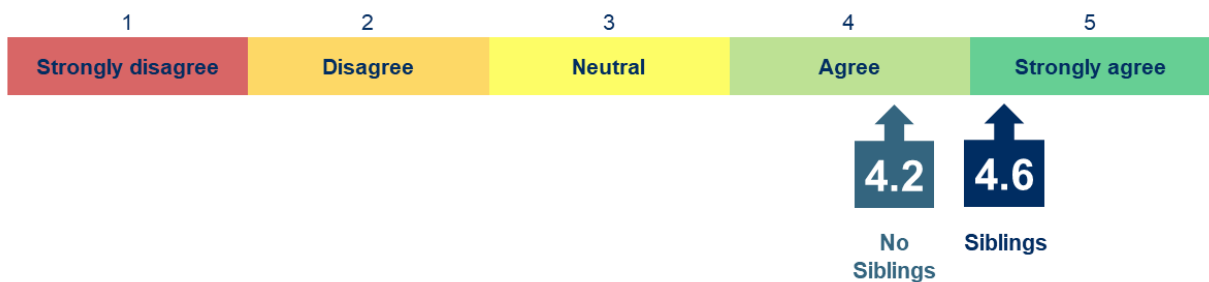
Parents whose child receiving treatment was aged between 6 - 18 years most strongly agreed that their child felt calm, safe and supported by staying at RMHC WA during treatment.

Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported



On average, families with siblings also felt that their child was more calm, safe and supported compared to families without siblings. This is likely to be due to the extra social support and positive experiences that are provided by siblings for children receiving treatment.

Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported



Children feel less anxious and more confident

The friendly environment and proximity of RMHC WA to the hospital were key factors in helping children to feel less anxious and more confident while at RMHC WA. Gus the dog was also mentioned by many parents and carers, particularly those who have a dog at home, as helping their child feel less anxious during their stay. The familiarity of RMHC WA was also a key factor for repeat families in reducing anxiety for children as they were coming to a place they were already familiar with.

“

Loves Gus. Does use Gus as a therapy tool. Seeks out Gus and wants to be able to sit there and pat him for hour and a half. Really misses his own dogs and loves animals. To be able to sit with Gus and pat him – he loves it. If he’s having a rough time, he seeks him out to pat him.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Makes it much easier for her anxiety to know we’re going to RMHC. Safe familiar place. Makes the whole trip much easier.”

- Parent / Carer



Education maintained

Children are supported to maintain education and learning

“

The learning program was incredible, and I am still so incredibly grateful to Steph and Miss Helen who always supported each of my little achievements and encouraged me to apply for the scholarship which I won. Having that learning centre to go into in the afternoons after a big day of appointments was the best. And I loved during school holidays the extra activities that were put on like movie nights etc.”

- RMHC WA Alumni



Children supported to maintain education and learning during treatment

RMHC WA offers multiple learning opportunities through their Learning Program and Family Room programs. Play-based learning and private tuition are some of the different activities patients and siblings can take part in. Not all children want to attend, or feel comfortable attending sessions, however the opportunity is provided for those who want to take it up.

RMHC WA's play and learning programs in 2023 also expanded to include the Magic Coat tool, developed to help create confident, calm and caring kids who know how to problem solve, feel safe and manage their emotions appropriately so that they have good mental health and wellbeing.

“

Daughter went to the learning centre every day... Absolutely loved it – was the best thing ever.”

- Parent / Carer

“

She likes the school, gives her something to look forward to. More for the social side of things. Made some friends that she'll talk about for a long time.”

- Parent / Carer



Children are ready and more confident to return to school

In 2023, 4,290 hours of tuition were provided, with the caseload total increasing from 222 students to 290 students over the course of 2023. Eighty-six percent of tutoring is provided face to face, with 13% provided online once the child has returned home. Parents and carers with school age children who participated in RMHC WA tutoring attributed the support with helping their child maintain their education and feel more confident to return to school.

“

Got tutor near end of stay but still has hours allocated at home, which she is still using at home. Incredible to have that – helped her through the transition. For her to be able to catch up on what she’s missed out on. Definitely more confident to go back to school.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Really enjoying the tutor. Tutoring was really good – really helpful for him. They organize reading eggs and Mathletics – been a big thing for him when he was sick and couldn’t do schooling, he could at least do that on the device so he wasn’t missing out.”

- Parent / Carer



Longer term identity and resilience

Children move through and beyond difficult circumstances



Children are empathetic and resilient adults who develop an identity beyond their illness

Parents and carers interviewed highlighted the importance of social connections their children make while staying at RMHC WA as a key factor in ongoing resilience and happiness. Being around diverse families and illnesses and experiencing the generosity of the FLOs and volunteers in the House has a long term influence for children staying in the House.



They see the diversity of kids and illnesses and that creates a perspective. Being in a supportive environment where you see everyone being supported. They recognise the kindness that has been shown to them. They hold in high esteem that community support. They all want to volunteer to give back. They see people doing that because they care not because they get anything out of it. That environment is kindness. Great modelling for them."

- Parent / Carer

Two alumni surveys were received back from adults who had stayed at RMHC WA as children, providing additional insights into the impact RMHC WA has had for children receiving treatment as they get older.



After all the years of staying at RMH I have been able to empathise with people of so many different backgrounds, I have worked as a support worker and am currently working as a special needs' education assistant. I understand how important it is to be patient and support people no matter what they have going on."

- RMHC WA Alumni

Recommendations

1. Continue increasing the number of families that can be accommodated

Surveys and interviews show the positive impact that RMHC WA has for families, and how many families rely on RMHC WA particularly for their emotional and financial wellbeing when a child gets sick. Families were very supportive of the work that RMHC WA does, with many mentioning the only improvement they could make is to increase the number of rooms they have. Increasing the number of rooms and families that can be accommodated will help RMHC WA to increase the impact they have for WA families.

When increasing capacity, RMHC WA is encouraged to consider:

- Larger rooms and self-contained apartment type spaces for larger families and those who prefer more privacy or would like to cook for familiar food for their family.
- Ensuring communal spaces and opportunities for families to still engage in the culture of the RMHC WA House, as this was highlighted during interviews as a key support for maintaining families' emotional wellbeing.

“

Whenever we can't get into RMHC WA it increases the stress. It's like a disaster. Daughter uses wheelchair full time and finding wheelchair accommodation is a nightmare at short notice.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Just a huge relief. Pressure is off because you know you have somewhere to go. Sometimes it has been impossible to get accommodation. Not enough capacity. Monumental pressure if there's nothing available at all.”

- Parent / Carer

This recommendation was also provided in the 2021 and 2022 Impact Reports and is an ongoing priority for RMHC WA. Since the 2022 Impact Report, RMHC WA has:

- Increased the number of rooms leased at St Catherine's from 15 to 26 rooms
- Gained commitment from the State Government and the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation to support RMHC WA establish a temporary Ronald McDonald House providing supported accommodation for up to an additional 50 patients and families per day, part of a longer term plan to expand the Nedlands House to accommodate an additional 100 families per day by 2028.

2. Collaborate or build partnerships with peer organisations to support family wellbeing beyond the services provided by RMHC WA

RMHC WA provides such an excellent service and support for families that when families go home, they can often struggle from the sudden lack of support, particularly if they stayed at RMHC WA for an extended length of time. Families with children becoming adults that are still dependent on family care (for example children with disabilities) can also find the time they 'age out' of RMHC support very stressful.

RMHC WA is encouraged to collaborate or build partnerships with peer organisations to support family wellbeing beyond the services provided by RMHC WA. This may include organisations that provide in-home care or follow up support both regionally and within Perth, with RMHC WA linking families with these services prior to them leaving the house.



When [my daughter] is 17/18 we can no longer stay at RMHC WA, but she will still need ongoing care. Where do we go from there?"

- Parent / Carer

3. Invest in additional wellbeing activities for families

Additional wellbeing activities such as yoga, meditation, arts and crafts, cooking or exercise classes would be beneficial for parent and carer wellbeing. These could be organised through RMHC WA, or through partnerships with local fitness or yoga studios.

RMHC WA is also encouraged to continue increasing the number of outdoor spaces for families to gather and for children to play in, particularly for Aboriginal families and other families who prefer not to be inside all day and who don't have the flexibility to visit outdoor spaces in Perth. Communal vegetable gardens and other opportunities for families to work in the garden and spend productive time outdoors would also be beneficial for emotional and environmental wellbeing.



Having a few activities for the parents would have been nice, for both parents, together and/or apart."

- Parent / Carer



It would be nice to have a bit more of an outdoor space for kids to play around in. Be able to sit in the sun. Outdoor seating would be good. A bit of an outdoor area but no seating.

- Parent / Carer

A similar recommendation around outdoor spaces was also provided in the 2022 and 2021 Impact Reports. Since the 2022 Impact Report, the RMHC WA Fun on Four space at Perth Children's Hospital has undergone a revitalisation project to improve the outdoor space for parents and families.

RMHC WA engaged artist Jarni McGuire, a Whadjuk, Ballardong and Yuat woman living in Boorloo (Perth) to create the outdoor artwork for families to enjoy and connect with culture.

4. Provide extra support for families with children under 5 years old, particularly single parent and carer families

During 2023, families whose child receiving treatment was between 1 and 5 years old struggled across many areas of wellbeing when compared to other age groups. The RMHC WA learning centre is only available for children over four years, and there is a potential gap in support for families with children in this age bracket.

Acknowledging that providing a creche is challenging due to the regulatory and operating environment, RMHC WA is encouraged to explore additional ways they could provide extra support to families with young children between 1 and 5 years or connect families with external services that could provide child minding support or other activities. This is particularly relevant for single parents or carers with no family or support network in Perth.

“

A little more for the younger kids to do other than the playroom and the one day of playgroup would be nice just to keep them more occupied and not so cooped up in the room or doing the same thing in the playroom.”

- Parent / Carer

“

Having more activities for younger children with a variety of people.”

- Parent / Carer

A similar recommendation around additional social support for parent, carers and families was provided in the 2022 Impact Report. Since the 2022 Impact Report, RMHC WA has engaged a Wellbeing Coordinator who provided support sessions for parents, carers and staff. Thirty one one-on-one sessions and 14 phone calls were provided to parent and carers and nine sessions with staff.

5. Understand family priorities for accommodation when they book in, so families can be booked into most appropriate House for their needs (availability dependent)

There are clear differences between Nedlands House and St Catherine's accommodation, with families preferring one or the other depending on their family needs. Instead of using St Catherine's as primarily an 'overflow' accommodation, RMHC WA is encouraged to embrace the strengths of each accommodation option, working to understand family preferences when they book in and so accommodate the family accordingly.

By accommodating families who value independence, are less social or who prefer to cook their own food at St Catherine's, Nedlands House will be more available for families who highly value the social nature or additional activities and support provided at Nedlands House.

While accommodation options for families will still be dependent on availability, this approach may help improve family wellbeing as their needs are more effectively met.

“

I liked the independence of St Catherine's. Meant we could come & go freely without the obligation of having to eat / stay at RMH. I liked to be able to cook & eat in my own kitchenette in a private room close to Children's Hospital.”

- Parent / Carer

6. Provide FLOs and volunteers with context specific cultural awareness training

To assist RMHC WA FLOs and volunteers to continue providing a safe space for families of different backgrounds and cultures, RMHC WA is encouraged to provide dedicated, place based cultural awareness training specific to the WA and RMHC context. RMHC WA is encouraged to work with a recognised provider to provide bespoke training that fits the needs of the RMHC WA context and the situations FLOs and volunteers are faced with on a day-by-day basis.

