

Impact

REPORT 2024



Your support
in action

Maria is thriving thanks to you

As a tiny baby, Maria was diagnosed with a sarcoma that was crushing her airways, she faced death several times. Today, Maria is embracing every aspect of her life.

She has recently celebrated her 17th birthday, gained her Learner Driver's permit and is wowing audiences with her performances in the school musical production of The Little Mermaid.

In March 2024, Maria is looking forward to being a bridesmaid for her sister's wedding. She will be completing her HSC and is excited about her year 12 formal and finishing school.

Maria had her appointment at the long term follow up clinic this month, which was thankfully all clear. We wish Maria well and can't wait to see what she does next.

To see a thank you video from Maria, please scan or click this QR code



Maria celebrated her 17th birthday in 2023



Dr Emmy Fleuren – Sarcoma Biology and Therapeutics

Thanks to your support, Dr. Emmy Fleuren and her team are making encouraging progress to find better and kinder treatments for children with sarcoma, like Maria.

“What really made my day in 2023 was seeing that one of our new targeted drug combinations can actually shrink mini human sarcoma tumours. With your continued support we are very hopeful that it will continue to perform well in other models in 2024.”

Impact

REPORT 2024

Professor Michelle Haber AM, Executive Director



Like you, we believe that a life should be long. That every child should get the chance to grow up and grow old. To plan exciting futures, chase their dreams, and fulfill their potential.

But cancer cuts life short for hundreds of children every year, before they've even had a chance to make their mark. Here in Australia, more than 1000 children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer every single year. And every week, three children will be lost to this disease.

Everything we do at Children's Cancer Institute is about ensuring that every child with cancer not only survives but goes on to lead a long and healthy life. With you by our side, we have made exciting progress towards this goal.

We're delighted to share with you some of the progress that you have made happen, progress that moves us closer to this vision. I hope you feel proud of your contribution, because we simply couldn't achieve what we have without you.

Thank you.

Front cover: Ka'ili currently in remission from her cancer
Back cover: Ka'ili and her mum Kristy having a beautiful hug

From ZERO to beyond

Late last year, you helped us hit a tremendous milestone. The Zero Childhood Cancer Program (ZERO) – originally only open to children with high-risk cancers – is now available to all children and adolescents with cancer in Australia.

This means that every child, regardless of their cancer type or risk profile, will now have access to precision medicine through this world-leading program.

Led by Children's Cancer Institute and Kids Cancer Centre at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick, ZERO has achieved remarkable results since its first national clinical trial in 2017.

Today, thanks to major funders the Australian Government and Minderoo Foundation, as well as continued support from people like you, ZERO is now available to all children and young people (0-18 years) diagnosed with cancer in Australia.

Through ZERO, we are gaining new insights into the mechanisms that cause cancer and beginning to answer many important research questions.

There's still much to do and with you by our side, we'll make even more progress this year.



Professor Michelle Haber AM and Dr Richard Mitchell, Director of Kids Cancer Centre at Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick.

ZERO reaches milestones in 2023

Progress since 2017

Led by Children's Cancer Institute and Kids Cancer Centre at Sydney Children's Hospital, ZERO has achieved remarkable results since its first national clinical trial was launched in 2017.



ZERO expands
Exciting results demonstrate the clinical impact of ZERO as the **1000th child joins the Program**

Children like Ka'ili are surviving cancer thanks to your support and ZERO



ZERO becomes available to ALL CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS WITH CANCER in Australia

In 2017 when Peta was just nine, she was diagnosed with an aggressive brain tumour called medulloblastoma.

Despite the very best treatments available at that time, Peta relapsed. Tragically, she died six months later. This bright, happy little girl had her dreams cut short.

Today, with your help, we are coming closer to our primary goal to stop more children like Peta from losing their life to cancer.



On the 21st of February, 2019, two years after her diagnosis, Peta took her last breath. She was 11.

Dr Maria Tsoli is developing new therapies for aggressive brain tumours



“Thank you very much for supporting our mission in finding new treatments for children with aggressive brain tumours. We simply couldn’t do what we do without your support.” – Dr Maria Tsoli, Senior Scientist, Brain Tumours Group



To hear Maria's thank you please scan or click the QR code

Making gains against medulloblastoma

Children like Peta are the reason I joined Children's Cancer Institute.

I've worked here at the Institute for 12 years now, and the disease that killed Peta is one of my chief research focuses. I feel a deep connection with children who lose their lives to cancer because I personally receive donated tumour cells from their parents for our tumour bank. This is so we can study the cancer that took their life. Behind every one of those donations is a child's life and it makes me determined to find answers.

Thanks to your support, our research team has been able to accelerate research into understanding how brain tumours influence what we call the 'tumour micro environment' in children with cancer – the cells growing in and around their tumours. This is propelling the discovery of exciting new therapies that could provide potential new treatments for children like Peta with aggressive brain tumours.

Children's
Cancer
Institute

It's not if

Harnessing the immune system to fight cancer

Immunotherapy is a type of therapy that uses the patient's own immune system to fight disease. It's a very promising area for cancer treatment but so far, it hasn't worked as well in children as it does in adult patients.

With your help, our research aims to make immunotherapy much more successful. This year, your support helped us conduct the first-ever comprehensive analysis of the 'tumour microenvironment' in children with cancer – the cells growing in and around their tumours.

Our study showed that cells called T-cells needed to be present in order for immunotherapy to work in children. To find this out, a child's tumour must be genetically analysed, a process called 'immunoprofiling'. We also discovered that far more children could be candidates for immunotherapy than was previously thought.

This powerful new discovery could open up brand new treatment options for children. Another way your support is helping us push the boundaries of research for childhood cancer.



We've discovered that around a third of all children with solid tumours could be candidates for immunotherapy

A/Professor Paul Ekert worked with US researchers to publish exciting immunotherapy research in 'Genome Medicine'



"The paediatric tumour micro environment has never been comprehensively analysed before. We've now been able to do this, and what we've found could have significant clinical implications for children with cancer." – Associate Professor Paul Ekert, Deputy Director - Research Themes



Daphne left her legacy to help stop children suffering

Daphne's legacy of love

There's a wonderful saying, "not all heroes wear capes". To us, Daphne is a true champion of children with cancer.

This extraordinary, big-hearted woman was always known for her grace and graciousness. The Manager of the David Jones hairdressing salon in Perth for decades, Daphne cared for the locks and looks of the city's luminaries, from politicians to visiting dignitaries.

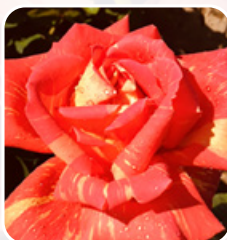
Daphne had a passion for helping children and growing beautiful roses. When she died, she left a percentage of her estate to help keep our vital research going – the impact of this donation will be felt for generations to come.

People like Daphne are incredibly important to our work. They make it possible for our researchers to plan for future projects with confidence and to fund the breakthroughs that save children's lives.

We couldn't do what we do without the Daphne's of this world.

Daphne, we salute you.

If you would like to learn more about this kind of gift, please contact Gayle on 02 7209 6708 or email bequests@ccia.org.au



Daphne's legacy of love lives on through her bequest to Children's Cancer Institute and the beautiful roses she grew



Jacob is all smiles after reaching the end of treatment at The Children's Hospital at Westmead




To read more about Jacob's story please scan or click the QR code

Jacob's family determined to help

"We've got to save these kids. The toll this has taken on us as a family is unbelievable, but we were the lucky ones. Compared to some other families, we had a 'good' diagnosis, and will come out the other side of this. Other families aren't so lucky, and that haunts us. I think about it all the time." – Matt, Jacob's dad

Matt and Dani learned the devastating news that their four-year-old son Jacob had leukaemia on Christmas Eve during the first year of the pandemic. At the same time, both Matt and Jacob contracted Covid-19. What followed was a nightmare lockdown in a tiny room together. Jacob's treatment was gruelling. Experiencing the horror of childhood cancer firsthand has made Matt determined to do all he can to help improve the situation for other children like his son.



Thank you for
helping us find a cure
for childhood cancer.
It's not if. It's **when.**



1800 685 686 | ccia.org.au