



# Bear Cottage Superhero Week Corporate Support Proposal 2021



Sydney Children's  
Hospitals Foundation



## Become a Superhero...

For a day, a week or even a year and raise vital funds for respite and end-of-life care for our beautiful kids.

# Bear Cottage Children's Hospice



## About Bear Cottage

Bear Cottage is a 'home away from home' providing the best medical care and support for terminally ill kids so families can focus on making every living moment count.

The only children's hospice in NSW, Bear Cottage provides vital respite and end-of-life care for children with terminal illnesses and their families.

At Bear Cottage, we care for children from across Australia and from all walks of life. Every child who needs Bear Cottage lives with a life-limiting

condition. Sadly this means they are unlikely to see their 18th birthday ... and for some, their first.

For these special children there is no happy ending or miracle cure. That's why Bear Cottage is so important.

Specifically designed like a 'beach house', Bear Cottage is a medically-supported 'home away from home' where care is delivered in a way that allows children and families to feel at home. It is a peaceful haven when the end of life is near.

Bear Cottage offers families a physical and emotional break from the stress of caring for a terminally-ill child. We've deliberately created an environment where we can give so much love and care they can laugh and have fun and focus on having happy times together.

Bear Cottage staff don't wear uniforms. The children's rooms are designed like a normal bedroom and we even have a family pet, Beau, our adorable Labrador.

At Bear Cottage everyone can relax and re-energise. Parents can enjoy time without having to worry about household chores. Most importantly we encourage families to spend quality time together creating special memories that will last long after their child has passed away.



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# Our importance

**At Bear Cottage, we believe a child's life, however brief, should be enriched, enjoyed and celebrated.**

Children's hospices seek to enhance the quality of life for children with life-limiting illness by providing support, comfort and reassurance to families at their time of greatest need.

At Bear Cottage, life-limiting illness is an everyday reality, which is why we remain dedicated to providing support to families through difficult times. As a medical facility, Bear Cottage is set up to provide excellent paediatric palliative care 24 hours a day, with access to some of the best medical resources in the world. Nurses provide medical assistance, administer medications and offer support and guidance to patients and their families around the clock.



As a respite facility, Bear Cottage is a home away from home. Staff and volunteers are on hand to take care of the cooking and cleaning, allowing families to forget about the stresses of everyday life. As part of the holistic care provided to children at Bear Cottage, full-time child life therapists, social worker and volunteers work with children to engage them in play, music and art therapy. This service creates a space for children to relax and give parents time to recuperate and spend time with one another. Families needing respite will often stay at Bear Cottage for between seven to ten days. Depending on availability, families are able to receive up to four weeks booked respite per year. There is no limit on length of stay for end-of-life care.



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# Our future . . . why we need Superheroes

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When a family is told that their child's life will be cut short, their everyday existence takes on a monumental change. As they embark on this terrible journey, they need special support to get them through.

Estimates suggest there are well over 5000 children aged 0 to 19 years across Australia requiring palliative care. In the last 19 years, Bear Cottage has supported more than 1000 families, through their heart-wrenching journeys. In the last year alone, Bear Cottage has cared for over 300 children with a life-limiting illness. In the last 12 months, 16 children have come to Bear Cottage for end of life care; surrounded by love and support in a happy, safe environment for their final days.

**Families do not pay to stay at Bear Cottage. Bear Cottage relies on donated funds to survive.**

Each year we need to raise \$4 million to keep Bear Cottage running. Money raised through our fundraising campaigns such as Superhero Week goes toward operating expenses and maintenance of our unique facilities.

Your support of Superhero Week will help ensure that families stay free, essential and life-changing camps can be delivered, specialist care including play, music and art therapy is always able to be delivered, and that ongoing development and enhancement of the very best of evidenced based programs can be assured.

We need **Superheroes** to help us raise the money necessary to ensure all our facilities are maintained to a high standard and will always be available for our patients and families. Facilities such as:

- Individual and beautifully decorated children's rooms
- Family suites
- Multi-sensory room
- Sensory garden
- Beautiful gardens with ocean views
- Spa
- Multi/media games room
- Wheelchair accessible play area
- Parent's retreat and quiet area
- Commercial kitchen and dining room
- "Clifton Gardens" – our end-of-life room

Bear Cottage provides a range of state-of-the-art services and programs to deliver the very best care to every child and their family. Bear Cottage offers these services to help families cope. Every service is tailored to meet the need of each individual child and family and make a families' experience as stress-free as possible.



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# Our care . . . for the whole family

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We need Superheroes to help us raise the money necessary to ensure consistent and sustainable delivery of these vital support services and programs will continue. Services and programs such as:

- **Respite and Therapy**  
Families caring for a child with a life-limiting illness often require additional support. At Bear Cottage our social worker and family support team provides assistance and coping strategies to families. The team is available from when a child is first referred and continues to offer support throughout the end-of-life period, including ongoing bereavement and emotional support.
- **Allied Health support**  
Bear Cottage offers play, music and art therapy as a fun and creative outlet for children and families. The different areas of child life therapy are powerful tools for alleviating anxiety, promoting feelings of control and giving opportunities for self-expression. It is also used as an avenue to help families cope with their child's illness.
- **Camps**  
Each year, Bear Cottage organises a number of innovative camps to bring together children and families dealing with a life-limiting illness. These camps provide the opportunity to connect with other families and children with similar medical conditions. Bear Cottage organises sibling camps, mum and dad camps and our bereaved families'. We also hold a 'Gramping' camp for grandparents.
- **Footprints in the Sand**  
This bereavement support program is designed to complement other support programs. In addition to our annual Bereaved Families Camp, we hold an annual Remembering Service and regular bereavement BBQs.

**We need your superpowers to ensure our doors stay open and patients and their families can continue to come to Bear Cottage.**



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# How your support helps

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Some example of how donations contribute to the care and services provided at Bear Cottage include:

**\$50** could go towards a hydrotherapy session in our spa for our Bear Cottage children.

**\$100** could go towards paints, pencils, canvases and other art supplies to ensure the children at Bear Cottage can express themselves.

**\$150** could go towards a thumb-print necklace for families to always have their children with them.

**\$200** could go towards monthly cleaning supplies for our housekeeper.

**\$500** could go towards a day for our art therapist to work with the children and families at Bear Cottage.

**\$1,000** could help us ensure that our chef can make yummy and healthy meals for children, families and guests at Bear Cottage.

**\$5,000** could go towards our monthly electricity bill.

**\$10,000** could provide a family much needed respite at Bear Cottage for a week.

**\$20,000** could go towards the upkeep and maintenance of Bear Cottage, keeping our garden beautiful, our windows clean and our pantry full.

## How you can help ... “Get your cape on!”

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Superhero Week – **from 25th July until 31st July** – is Bear Cottage’s major annual fundraising campaign. It is an important week in our calendar and a vital opportunity to raise awareness about the courageous patients and families who rely on our care, why our service is so important, and how community support is critical to our survival.

Superhero Week is a wonderful time when schools, individuals, corporate and community partners join forces with us – strength in numbers – to show support for terminally-ill children and their families.

You’re invited to become a Superhero – to ‘*Get your cape on*’ – and by joining this amazing campaign, help raise much-needed funds for Bear Cottage.

Although Superhero Week kicks off on the 25th of July, fundraising activities can be arranged at a time convenient to participating individuals, schools, community groups, businesses and corporations.

Superhero week has been designed to cater for maximum involvement with the least inconvenience for participants – it’s all about superheroes using superpowers to give super support to our special little Superheroes!

**For information about registration please visit [www.superheroweek.com.au](http://www.superheroweek.com.au)**



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# Superhero Week – facts and figures

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Since 2012 over 1000 schools, pre-schools, community and corporate groups have taken part in Superhero Week from all over Australia.

From humble beginnings in 2012 with **\$10,000** being raised by a handful of local schools, Superhero Week has grown and in 2020, with the help from superheroes in the community and corporate environment, we raised **over \$330,000!**

We have spread the word about Superhero Week with:

- Television commercial donated by Foxtel Media
- Digital online promotion through Foxtel digital channels
- Local and national newspaper coverage
- Yearly promotion of the event on Channel 7 Sunrise and news coverage on Channel 9 and 10



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# Corporate Superheroes - Testimonials

There is no better feeling than doing something real to help others in need.

When employers and staff combine their strength to create strong and effective fundraising partnerships, the results can be extremely rewarding. Working together for a good cause and engaging other suppliers or workplace associates can dramatically boost donations.

## John Holland CPB Ghella



Superheroes come in all shapes and sizes and for some of our Sydney Metro team building the historic first rail tunnels under Sydney Harbour, it was an honour to dress as a caped crusader for Bear Cottage Superhero Week to raise essential funds for children with life-limiting illnesses and their families.

At John Holland, we are committed to not only delivering projects on time and on budget, but in also giving back to the community at every step of the way.

The team raised an astounding \$140,000 which will go directly toward helping some of our littlest superheroes fight some of life's biggest battles.

With caring at the heart of everything we do at John Holland, being able to give back to the community and to hopefully put a smile on some little faces is very rewarding,”

*Sydney tunnelling Project Director (AKA Batman) Terry Sleiman (pictured with John Holland CEO Joe Barr)*



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# Corporate Superheroes - Testimonials

## Reuben Rose, Asset Insurance Brokers

I've been involved in a myriad of "team building" exercises and these are almost universally despised by staff, who manage to bond together mainly over the mutual hatred of having to complete some scavenger hunt. I guess that, via a circuitous route, such events do achieve their goals - teams will gladly work together if it means they don't have to do another such exercise in the foreseeable future - but perhaps the destination is less important than the journey.

Superhero Week, by contrast, is a completely different story. In the two different companies I have been involved with over the past six years, it has been a strong force for galvanising people together and former colleagues still contact me about being involved each year by default. Quite aside from supporting the only hospice in NSW that caters exclusively to families of children with life-limiting illnesses - which is motivation alone - Superhero Week has become a highlight of light-hearted office silliness, shenanigans, food and optimism.



In many ways, it reflects Bear Cottage itself. Despite the tragic circumstances, Bear Cottage is a place that exudes positivity, happiness, joy and has plenty of room for silliness and adventure. To bring these attributes into so serious a situation for families takes an enormous amount of thought but it's interesting to observe how catching that positivity can be, with so little as a costume, or a craft, or a meal. Likewise, into offices pressured with deadlines, tasks and dilemmas, having a day where the company allows - nay, even encourages - recognition of a world outside the organisation and a light-hearted activity which provides much-needed financial support, yields plenty of benefits. There's nothing quite like seeing a staff member dressed as Batman trying to order coffees across the road to bring a smile to people's faces. Even more so if they manage to give the order in the character's voice.



With the prevalence of superhero films and nostalgia at an all-time high, oftentimes involvement has garnered media attention and certainly provides content for social media platforms wherein companies can show social conscience for a cause which is completely apolitical - nobody wants to see families struggling with the death of a child alone and everyone who has a child wants to know that there are heroes out there, somewhere, ready to help in the most dastardly of circumstances.

To support and join such heroic theatrics not only provides much-needed funds, it provides a great boost to company morale, a cohesive cause to rally colleagues behind, and boosts a company's social profile enormously. Not a bad trade for a bit of spandex and, perhaps, some cupcake-based shenanigans.



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**The best part about supporting Superhero Week is that you can tailor your fundraising activities to best suit your organisation's structure and staff. We can work with you to help create a plan to maximise involvement and build morale within your organisation.**

We want to keep the fun in fundraising... and the ideas are endless. Examples of activities undertaken by some of our existing partners include (but are not limited to):



- Collecting donations from staff
- Sponsoring a crazy activity – like the Chief Executive attending a meeting dressed as Batman
- Swear jar collections – you may like to keep this one going beyond Superhero Week!
- Donating your coffee costs during Superhero Week (or beyond perhaps?)
- Dollar-matching funds raised by your staff
- Holding a sales event(s) and donating a percentage of earnings raised to Bear Cottage
- Engaging your suppliers and customers to donate to your fundraising activities
- Holding a BBQ or a morning tea – Superhero-themed of course!

Some other ways you can help maximise our Superhero campaign for Bear Cottage include:

- Promoting Bear Cottage on your social media channels
- Talking to your clients and contacts about Bear Cottage and encouraging their support too
- Using your advertising space to promote Bear Cottage and Superhero Week
- Displaying our life-sized Superhero cut-out characters in your office with a collection tin and charging for a photo opportunity
- Purchasing our Superhero tee-shirts for those who would prefer not to wear lycra or our superhero-themed merchandise.



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# Recognising our Superheroes

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**It is our pleasure to acknowledge all partners who *'get their capes on'* during Superhero Week. We are happy to discuss options – including inclusion on our Superhero website – further with you.**

The opportunity to show appreciation and gratitude to our donors is important to us. Your commitment to helping ensure a future for Bear Cottage means a great deal and we welcome the chance to publicly recognise your support and where possible include partners in thank you functions and events. We will share and celebrate your Superhero achievements on our Superhero website and across our social media channels which have a large audience.



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# Working together

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## Event partnership and sponsorship

Partnering with our fundraising events is an exciting and engaging way for your company to align with Bear Cottage. Some of our annual events include Superhero Week, City2Surf and our A Bear Affair Gala Ball. Tiered sponsorship levels are available for our corporate partners and more information on these opportunities are available by contacting our Supporter Relations Manager.

## Staff engagement and corporate volunteering

Bear Cottage delivers a program of events that offer great staff engagement and fundraising opportunities to complement your corporate philanthropy program. There is also a range of corporate volunteering activities offered on-site which can be negotiated to suit your requirements. *Please note that a minimum annual financial contribution to Bear Cottage is required to participate in on-site activities (terms and conditions apply).*

Staff have the opportunity to participate in activities such as:

- Volunteering activities at Bear Cottage
- Sponsorship of our annual Superhero Party for our children and their families
- Bear Cottage team-based events such as City2Surf
- Our A Bear Affair Gala Ball
- Christmas Wrapping Station

## Workplace Giving Program and Gift Matching

Workplace Giving (payroll giving) is one of the easiest and most effective ways you can help our sick kids and their families, by encouraging employees to donate a small contribution from each pay packet to Bear Cottage.

**For further information about Bear Cottage's Superhero Week or partnering with Bear Cottage, please contact:**

**Bronwen Simmons**

Community Relations Manager

Bear Cottage

Phone: 9976 8304

Email: [bronwen.simmons@health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bronwen.simmons@health.nsw.gov.au)



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# Our Superheroes share their stories

## Angelina's Story



**Without warning, everyday people can be forced to show superhero strength they never knew they had. And that's just what Angelina and her family have done, since her shock diagnosis just two years ago.**

At age 14, Angelina was a typical, bubbly, high school student who just loved hanging with her friends. She was thriving at school, especially in drama class. Angelina had big dreams to run a beauty therapy business one day. Life was good.

Then, from nowhere, the Year 8 student collapsed in a school hallway.

At first, her mum Niki put it down to tiredness, but soon she noticed that Angelina seemed unusually

exhausted and clumsy. Most worrying, Angelina started having frightening seizures, that got worse and more frequent.

Nine months and many tests later, Angelina and her family were told some unexpected news: she had Lafora disease; a very rare and sadly incurable disorder that affects the whole body but mainly the brain. Now 16-and-a-half, life has changed unimaginably for the family in just two years. Lafora disease, that come with what's more commonly known as 'childhood dementia', causes symptoms such as confusion, behavioural and speech difficulties. The once high-achieving student can no longer go to school, read, write, or even hold a pen. Even basic decisions like what to wear are a struggle. Family errands are overwhelming, and unpredictable bright lights cause seizures, so Angelina requires around the clock care.

For mum Niki and the entire family, including Angelina's older sister and three stepsiblings, her diagnosis has been absolutely devastating. Yet, while they have struggled to cope, even in the toughest moments, each has been amazed by Angelina's superhero strength – as well as their own. They know that at some point she will become bedridden but are thankful that she is still walking and talking and are determined to make every moment count.

"Angelina is very ambitious and independent still and she wants to do everything herself. She is determined to fight, which is a good thing," says Niki.

**"But every day is extremely challenging," says Niki. "The whole family is on high alert all day every day. We must monitor her constantly."**



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The truth is, even superheroes need support. Burnt out and overwhelmed, Angelina's family realised they couldn't do this on their own and thankfully they could turn to Bear Cottage – somewhere the entire family can escape to for some much-needed respite.

As the parents, siblings and carers of children with life-limiting conditions know, Bear Cottage is the perfect home away from home, providing love, support and around the clock care. It gifts families precious time together. It's the kind of gift Angelina's family treasures the most – a special place they can relax, make memories and connect with other families, all while meeting the complex needs of Angelina's life-limiting condition.

When asked what Angelina enjoys most about Bear Cottage the list is long. "She loves the nurses, the deep bubble bath, watching movies and the whole social engagement and interaction that take her away from the confines of home life. She forgets that she is sick when she is there and feels normal for just a little bit. It's like a holiday for her and she never wants to leave. It's also a time she gets to be a bit independent without her mum especially when her sister joins here and as a young teen it's exactly what they want. If she could have her way she would move in permanently." says Niki.

A stay at Bear Cottage also provides support for Niki and the rest of the family – "I love how I get a break from the intense care that is needed when looking after Angelina. The nurses help so much that I get to have a good rest from feeding, bathing and dressing her. Other perks are not having to cook or clean too – so you really get to revive to keep going as daily life doesn't stop and Angelina needs constant monitoring day and night.

Bear Cottage has never been more vital to this family, particularly as Angelina's health has recently started to deteriorate. With the future so uncertain, it's a relief to know they can rely on Bear Cottage being there.



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## Moustafa's Story



The word “superheroes” can sometimes be overused but when it comes to describing Moustafa and his family, you couldn’t find a more perfect description.

Moustafa is 10 years old and lives with a rare disorder known as VACTERL syndrome. The complex disorder affects multiple parts of his body including his heart, vertebrae, kidneys and limbs and has meant that Moustafa is unable to walk, talk, eat or even breathe on his own or with-out aid – In other words, Moustafa is completely dependent on mum and dad”.

Moustafa’s life is dictated by his medical needs. Everything from eating, playing, sleeping and bathing right through to medication and social interactions require a relentless routine that must be overseen by his mum and dad 24/7. This is in addition to the constant medical appointments and hospital admissions. Just leaving the house requires a super human effort.

As Moustafa gets older this complex regime only becomes more complicated and the responsibility of caring for him gets bigger and bigger. But despite the devastating impact of Moustafa’s condition, his incredible family take every challenge in their stride.

“Caring for Moustafa has taken a huge toll on everyone, we have had to adjust our entire life to ensure the family stays afloat” says Dad Mahmoud.

“But for everything we have to go through, we know Moustafa goes through so much more. Despite all his hardships, he is still able to smile and shows so much willpower and determination. That’s what keeps us going... in our eyes Moustafa is a real super hero”

Knowing that no battle should be fought alone, Moustafa’s family turned to Bear Cottage last year – a place they described as “paradise on earth”.

“Upon our first stay we were blown away; the best way I can describe it is as a five-star hotel that is run by doctors and nurses,” says Mahmoud.

“Being at Bear Cottage allowed us to put a stop to our hectic 24/7 routine and truly be a family. We had the opportunity to rejuvenate, relax and focus on ourselves without compromising Moustafa’s needs.”

“The best part of Bear Cottage is that it accommodates and focuses on the entire families’ needs individually and also as a family and so we are all taken into consideration and are given a voice in our silent world” Moustafas parents said.



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Mum Eman says, “It also gives Moustafa a way to make the most out of his childhood. The fact that he can be included in everyday activities without boundaries and limitations means everything to him and to us.”

For Moustafa’s siblings, Aminah (13), Zena (11), Layla (6) and Yusef (4), Bear Cottage provides them with a place where they can escape from their normal reality and enjoy just being kids too.

“Bear Cottage is a world where kids with special needs and their families can be normal, even if it is just for a while. It has given our children the opportunity to enjoy themselves and have some normal, childhood experiences without being judged. They get to meet other kids going through the same thing but most importantly, we all get to enjoying just being together as a family.” says Mahmoud.

Knowing the incredible difference Bear Cottage has made to their lives, Moustafa’s family are encouraging everyone to support Superhero Week this July and help raise vital funds so Bear Cottage can continue to be there for superheroes like Moustafa when they need it most.

“Bear Cottage has given us a rope of hope – we don’t know where we would be without it.”



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## Dynamic Duo



Jennifer and beautiful little Alexander are two of our very special Bear Cottage Superheroes.

Two and a half year old Alexander was born with a number of significant complications and had many months in hospital before he was able to come home. With brain, heart and respiratory issues, he requires around the clock care and whilst Jen has some support, being his primary caregiver meant sleepless nights and the weight of all parental responsibilities and high level medical care resting on her shoulders.

As a parent raising a child with chronic medical needs without a partner, life is not easy, but in October 2016 Jen was pushed to a new limit. Diagnosed with cancer, she wondered what her pending surgery and extensive treatment and recovery time would mean for the care of Alexander.

That's when she first connected with Bear Cottage and they have continued to visit for regular respite ever since. "I knew from reputation that we would be greeted with a warm smile and hug and accepted unconditionally. I wasn't prepared for the instantly calming atmosphere, the homely feel, well-stocked bookshelves, hand-made quilts on each bed and the gracious volunteer playing the Cottage's grand piano and inviting children to gather around and enjoy the music.

As a mother I was overjoyed and inspired to see my son encouraged to interact in art therapy and music classes, where he is assisted to paint his own hand print or listen and explore a range of musical instruments. He is cared for like someone's only child and not 'just' a patient. Our visits to Bear Cottage allow me to be the best mum I can possibly be and to maintain equilibrium in my life. I am unable to change my palliative child's chronic and complex condition – that much I know and accept. But as Alexander's mother, I can now just focus my time and energy on making his fraught and unpredictable life as comfortable as it can possibly be. I feel very fortunate that Bear Cottage is able to understand Alexander's complicated medical needs and provide so much care for us both." Your support during Superhero Week helps us continue to provide this vital support to special superheroes like Jen and Alexander. Thank you!



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## Family ties – Belinda, Bear Cottage mum

“Asking for and accepting help has never been something we’ve been comfortable with. When our daughter, Erin (now 10) was born we knew eventually we’d need a bit of help. Erin suffered a fetal-maternal transfusion within the final hours of pregnancy, this means that most of her blood drained out of her body before birth.

Erin had a number of blood transfusions at birth but her brain was badly damaged as a result. Erin has cerebral palsy and we were told that with the amount of damage to her brain, it would be unlikely if Erin survived past her first birthday.

We first heard about Bear Cottage in the early days of Erin’s life. Unfortunately our stubbornness prevented us from visiting or having any contact.



When Erin was 7 years old, her airways started collapsing and we were again given the heartbreaking diagnosis that Erin’s condition would more than likely be fatal. After spending a long, hard and emotional 7 months locked up inside our house, to keep Erin at a stable air temperature we were at breaking point. We needed to open up and allow someone else to help us to care for Erin and to allow us the opportunity to have a break and spend some much needed time with our son Denver (now 12).

I arranged for Erin, Denver and myself to spend a week at Bear Cottage and for my husband Darin to join us at the weekend. I didn’t really know what to expect. I was amazed at how relaxed, comfortable and welcome we felt. Denver enjoyed meeting other siblings, being involved with the music therapy, visiting the beach and spending quality time together. He was made to feel very welcome by all of the staff and volunteers and loved the attention he was receiving from everyone.

After the first few days, my husband asked me “Does it really feel like a break?” Yes it really did, so much more than expected. I was able to sleep in, go for walks, relax, do yoga and enjoy the good parts with Erin like cuddling and not having to worry about the day to day care of feeding, bathing etc. Darin joined us on the weekend and was able to relax and see for himself what I’d been telling him all week. At the end of our first week, honestly we didn’t want to leave.

In the years following, we have been able to visit Bear Cottage as a family numerous times. I’ve attended a mum’s camp where I was pampered, spoilt but most importantly I was able to meet some amazing mums and connect with them in a relaxed and fun way.

Denver has really embraced being a part of the Bear Cottage family. He has attended sibling camps where he was able to meet and bond with other siblings who ‘just get it’.



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Denver was inspired to approach his school and nominate Bear Cottage to raise awareness and funds. With the help of his teachers and the school community, the school held a Superhero Day where all the teachers and students dressed up as superheroes, had a teddy bears picnic and held a raffle. Denver even contacted Arnott's Biscuits to see if they could donate Tiny Teddy Biscuits for the students to enjoy as part of their day. He was beyond excited when they agreed. The day went well and the school was able to raise almost \$2,000 to present to Bear Cottage.

Denver loved telling his friends and fellow students about Bear Cottage, what it is and why it is such an important place for families. As parents, we are so proud and happy that he has been able to fulfil his dream to give a little back to this place that has made him feel like he was a part of it.

Bear Cottage is an amazing place for families like ours. We've met many great people that we've been able to bond with, share stories and experiences with on our own terms knowing that we have all been through so much and all understand the feelings that we have experienced with our children's diagnosis.

**Bear Cottage is not only caring and beneficial for the sick child, it is special to the entire family, and I can now see how important that is for all of us."**



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## Three Superheroes

Superhero Week celebrates and honours bravery, commitment and strength.



Patrick, Scott and Philip are three special Superheroes. They live with Muscular Dystrophy and every day face many challenges. They first discovered Bear Cottage, and each other, a number of years ago. Like heroes of comic book fame, remarkable things happen when Superheroes join forces and things were no different for these three guys.

Bear Cottage is a place where Patrick, Scott and Philip enjoy freedom and independence. Today their determination and motivation is thanks to the incredible mateship they've fostered over the years. Like most teenagers they love hanging out with friends and catching up. A favourite activity at Bear Cottage is just chilling out, surrounded by happy smiling people.

Get to know these cheeky guys and there's no surprise that Harley Quinn (Margot Robbie) from Suicide Squad is high on their list of favourite Superheroes. Super-cool Batman is right up there too – for using his intelligence in the absence of special powers. But they reserve a very special place for every Paralympian for showing "that no matter what your ability, put your mind to it, and you can do it".

Although the complexity of their health condition brought them to Bear Cottage, it is their infectious love of life that strengthens their special bond.

While time at Bear Cottage provides invaluable respite for their families, for the boys, the chance to catch up and reconnect is priceless.

"We don't have many friends like us outside of Bear Cottage so it is important for us to stay connected. There's always plenty of nonstop talking and laughing. It's a really unique place offering time to have fun, build with Lego or just be cheeky together."

**These three Superheroes have discovered that there's strength in numbers and at Bear Cottage we're delighted to help facilitate such amazingly powerful friendships.**



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## Jamieson



Living in Dundedoo, it's not easy to do and get to a lot of things. Bear Cottage has helped me in so many ways.

I'm a 14 year old girl and I live with my Mum, Sister and Brother. We've been coming to Bear Cottage for around six years now. I remember when I first came to Bear Cottage it wasn't at all what I expected. I thought it would be more like a hospital but it isn't, it's very homely. I find everyone so kind and I feel so comfortable talking to everyone and making friends.

When I come to Bear Cottage I get to do things that I don't get to do at home. I know it sounds small but a bath is huge for me and having a long warm bath is something I love to do when I'm at the Cottage. I love getting pampered, which we don't get to do in Dundedoo. At Bear Cottage I have my nails done and get my long locks cut and styled. I also love to go for coastal strolls along the beach with my Mum. It's pretty neat that she can stay with me, and so can my sister and brother. I also love going on the wheelchair swing – you see, I'm a bit of an adrenaline junkie and I get to go pretty high.

This year has been a big year for us. My Mum had a pretty bad back injury and had to have surgery. I was able to stay at Bear Cottage so the nurses and team could care for me whilst Mum recovered.

Speaking of back surgery, I too had back surgery a few years ago and it was so good being able to come to Bear Cottage as a step down from Hospital. The team kept an eye on me and supported me every day. Without Bear Cottage I wouldn't be able to stay in the hometown of my favourite footy team.

I am the Manly Sea Eagles' biggest fan. Staying at Bear Cottage helps me go to the local footy games. Some of the players visit me at the Cottage and have helped make some of my birthday celebrations pretty special. I've also met heaps of great people through different events and fundraisers for Bear Cottage. I'm a creative chick. I love to draw, colour complex pictures and create keepsake objects that I can take home. When my Mum was in hospital, I made two dream catchers. I kept one and Mum had one, that way we were connected in some way and all our bad dreams caught and taken away. There's so much opportunity to make things and make memories at the Cottage. I'm always happy when I'm at 'Bear'.



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## Dean's family



Being able to spend time together at Bear Cottage has been a lifeline for the family of nine-year-old Dean who has a number of life-limiting conditions and requires around-the-clock care. Although Dean is the centre of their world, life is not always easy for his courageous family.

Mum Sarah says although they feel lucky Dean is such a happy and easy-going child, nine years of caring for him has left them exhausted and having Bear Cottage for support enables them to focus on the important things, such as spending quality time together as a family and making every moment count.

“Bear Cottage is about the whole family, which is so important to us,” Sarah said. “We can all come and do as much or as little as we like. We don’t need to cook or do any house work - we can just enjoy time together without having to worry and I can relax knowing that the wonderful nurses are there to take care of Dean when needed.”

For Dean’s younger brother and sister, Todd and Yvette, they “love it all” and with so many fun activities to choose from it’s easy to see why. From music, art, playing with assistance dog Frankie, making friends with other siblings to day trips at the beach - which Dad Scott particularly enjoys as he gets the chance to go surfing!

Dean loves listening to music and having stories read to him by the wonderful volunteers. Enjoying the wheelchair swing in the beautiful garden is also a favourite activity. Bear Cottage provides Dean with a safe and happy place that he can enjoy, both with his family and unaccompanied. “On our last visit driving to Bear Cottage we told Dean where we were going, he laughed and smiled the whole way,” Sarah said.

Dean and his family are true heroes and, with your help, Bear Cottage can continue to provide the amazing care and support that means so much to all families like his.



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