



Ronald McDonald House Charities® Australia

Social Return on Investment (SROI) Report



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
Australia

March 2020

SVA Social
Ventures
Australia



Foreword by RMHC® Australia

Our mission is to support the ever-changing needs of seriously-ill children and their families. This report reveals the impact of the multiple ways in which we seek to fulfil this mission.

Since our first Ronald McDonald House opened in Sydney in 1981, we have continued to expand the programs we offer, and the locations we offer them. Over that time, these programs have become an essential part of the healthcare infrastructure in Australia. Families rely on us during some of the most stressful periods of their lives, and the hospital system relies on us to help them focus on treating the children in their care.

This report is an important moment for RMHC. It allows us to step back and understand the many ways in which our work impacts the lives of families, and the health and education systems. I continue to be touched by the scale of the impact that RMHC has on families. This is only possible through the ongoing efforts of thousands of people: families; volunteers; our staff; hospital and allied health staff; and our corporate partners.

Barbara Ryan
CEO

Ronald McDonald House Charities® Australia





Foreword by Social Ventures Australia

This report is the culmination of several months of work to understand the many ways in which RMHC impacts the lives of families with seriously ill and injured children. In preparing this report we heard from over a thousand people, who shared their experiences with us. We have synthesised those experiences to tell the story of RMHC's impact in the following pages using the Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology.

SVA is Australia's leading practitioner of SROI, which is an internationally-recognised framework for understanding, measuring, and valuing social, economic, and environmental outcomes. We remain at the forefront of developing and implementing outcomes management and SROI frameworks and evaluations for social purpose organisations.

We thank all those who generously contributed their time to help us develop this report: families; volunteers; staff; doctors; social workers; and many others. And we hope that this report provides useful insights that will help RMHC to continue to refine and build its impact.

Simon Faivel
Director, Consulting

Social Ventures Australia



About this Report

RMHC Australia commissioned SVA Consulting to undertake an evaluation of its programs – RMHC House, Family Room, Learning Program and Family Retreat - to determine the socio-economic returns for all stakeholders.

The Social Return on Investment (SROI) methodology was used to identify, measure and value impact of the RMHC Programs for each stakeholder, including families, sick children, hospitals and the volunteers.

SROI is an internationally recognised, principles-based approach for understanding and measuring the impacts of a program or organisation. It provides a framework for accounting for a broader concept of value than is traditionally measured.

The methodology and the approach used to conduct this evaluation were approved through the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Human Research Ethics Committee.

The outcome of the SROI analysis is a story about the value of change created, relative to the investment. The SROI ratio is a shorthand for all of the value for all of the stakeholders. For example, a ratio of 3:1 indicates that an investment of \$1 delivers \$3 of social value.

This report provides a summary of results from four individual Social Return on Investment analyses, for the following programs:



Ronald McDonald House®



Ronald McDonald Family Room®



Ronald McDonald® Learning Program



Ronald McDonald Family Retreat®

The analyses looked back at 18 months of the programs' operations and activities between January 2018 to June 2019.

RMHC Australia

We keep families together and close to the care their child needs

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.

RMHC Programs and Services

RMHC 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.

RMHC Australia Programs are delivered by

11

Local Chapters

~240

Staff

~2145

Volunteers



Ronald McDonald House

Ronald McDonald Houses are located adjacent to hospitals and provide family-friendly accommodation and other support at no cost for families with a seriously ill or injured child being treated at the partner hospital.

18

Houses in seven States and Territories



Ronald McDonald Family Room

The Ronald McDonald Family Room Program is designed to support the physical, emotional and practical needs of families during their child's hospital stay. As of December 2019, RMHC had 19 Family Rooms in operation across Australia. The Family Rooms are located close to the hospital wards where infants and children are being treated. All family members, including the child that is undergoing treatment, as well as friends can access the Family Rooms.

19

Rooms in five States



Ronald McDonald Learning Program

The Ronald McDonald Learning Program assists students in a mainstream class who have missed school due to serious physical illness or injury catch up on missed education.



Local RMHC Chapters operate a Learning Program



Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

The Family Retreats Program provides families with an opportunity to getaway from the everyday, where families can rest, recharge and reconnect as a family. The Program is offered to families with a seriously ill child or families who are grieving the loss of a child.



Retreats in QLD, NSW, WA

Families can enjoy up to seven days of free accommodation, offering an escape for those who might otherwise be unable to afford any time out due to the pressures of caring for a seriously ill child.



Ronald McDonald Care Mobile*

Children living in rural and remote communities don't always have access to health care near their home or school. The RMHC Care Mobile, in partnership with Royal Far West, regularly visits rural areas of NSW, allowing children access to health care.



Care Mobile

*This program was not evaluated as part of this project

Australian Capital Territory



Western Australia



South Australia



Ronald McDonald House

No. of families who stayed at a House



Ronald McDonald Learning Program

No. of children who completed 40 hours of tutoring (equivalent)



Ronald McDonald Family Room

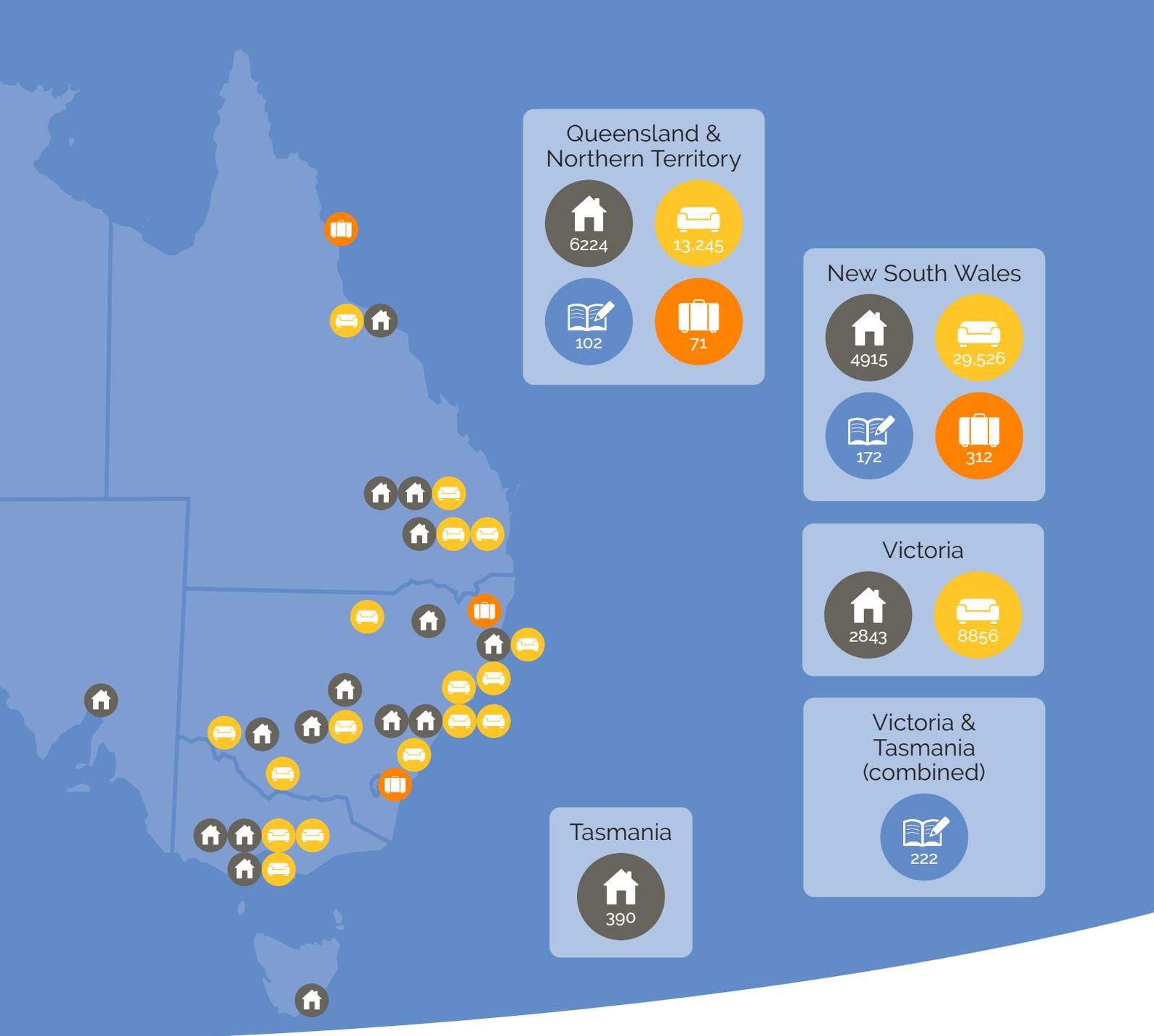
No. of families who visited a Family Room



Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

No. of families that had a holiday at a Family Retreat

*The Learning Program has children continually starting, completing and suspending their participation in the program. Rather than using the total number of children 'enrolled' in the program, this analysis calculated the equivalent number of children that would have received all 40 hours of tuition -i.e. 'completed' the program.



Between January 2018 and June 2019 approximately...

-  **17,600** families stayed at a House
-  **66,440** families visited a Family Room
-  **700** children completed 40 hours of tutoring in the Learning Program*
-  **500** families had a holiday at a Family Retreat



Executive Summary

The SROI analysis tells a powerful story about the impact RMHC Programs have on families, communities and the health and education systems.

RMHC provides much more than just a place to sleep

RMHC provides holistic support to families throughout their child's journey with illness or injury.

RMHC is there for families during the hospital stay

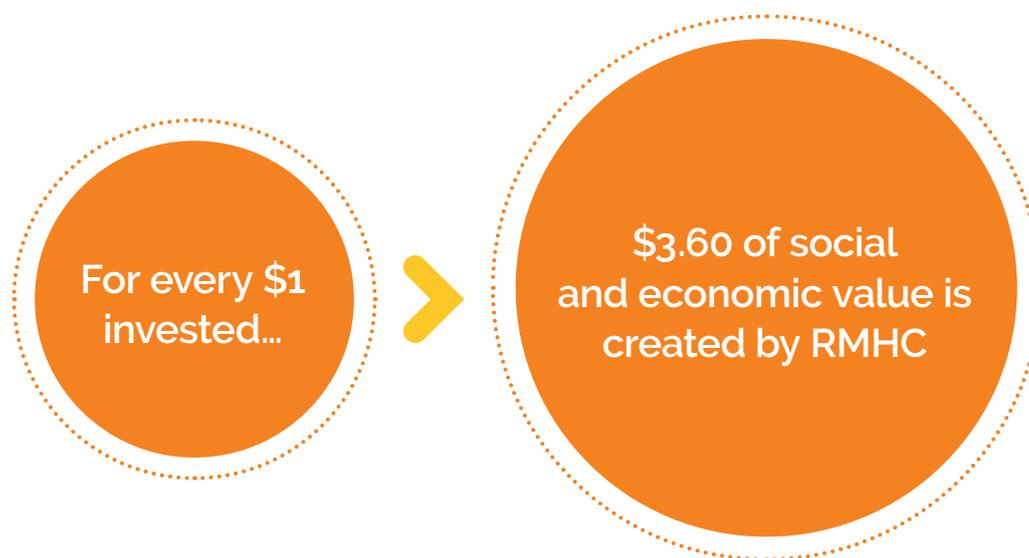
When a child is in hospital, the Ronald McDonald House and Family Room help families to stay connected and focus on the child's recovery. These programs provide valuable practical and emotional support to families during a difficult and stressful time. By having this support, families experience improved physical, emotional and financial wellbeing and are better able to support their child's clinical journey and engage with hospital staff.

RMHC also supports families in between and after hospital stays

When a child leaves the hospital and returns home, the Ronald McDonald Learning Program plays a vital role in assisting school aged children return to school-life and minimising the impact of any time away. The Ronald McDonald Family Retreats create the environment for families to connect, have fun and process the significant changes they may be experiencing between or after hospital stays.

Together, these programs play an essential role in enhancing family-centred care; and form an essential part of the healthcare and education systems.

When the total investment from RMHC's donors, government, volunteers, and corporate partners is compared to the social value created for families and the community, the result is an SROI ratio of 3.6:1. That is:



"[RMHC] do an amazing job, providing a foundation of support for families when they are managing some of the hardest times. Your staff are always bright and friendly, and go above and beyond. Thank you for all you do." – Hospital Worker



Executive Summary

The SROI analyses of the RMHC House, Family Room, Learning Program and Family Retreat identified that RMHC creates value for a range of stakeholders:



Sick children experience an improved clinical journey as a result of physical and emotional proximity to the family.

RMHC's suite of programs enable a family-centred approach to caring for sick children from the time they are in hospital to transitioning back to school and everyday life.



Parents and family members feel better connected and less stressed, improving their capacity to focus on supporting their child through treatment.

RMHC's Programs remove major stressors, and help families spend time together in family-friendly environments.



Hospitals experience a reduced mental load and save on resources.

RMHC's Programs have become a vital part of the hospital infrastructure. Hospital staff can discharge patients to a nearby location and are therefore able to serve more people. Hospital staff also experience reduced mental load and are better able to focus on clinical outcomes when families are well rested and less stressed.



Education system avoids some of the costs associated with students who miss significant periods of school.

Ronald McDonald Learning Program helps government and schools avoid the cost of students repeating school, and avoid the lifetime costs associated with students not completing school.



RMHC has the trust and goodwill of the community, which are essential for sustainable operations.

RMHC has been consistently rated as one of the most trusted charities in Australia. This trust is important to charities as it helps attract funding and volunteers both of which are essential to the sustainability of the charity and its ability to meet its purpose.



Volunteers and tutors have a rewarding experience that gives them a sense of purpose.

Volunteers and tutors are essential to the delivery of RMHC's Programs. Their work primarily benefits families, but also provides the volunteers and tutors themselves with a sense of purpose and job satisfaction.

Impact Snapshot

The benefits that the different stakeholders experience include wellbeing outcomes, educational outcomes and cost savings for the families, healthcare and educational systems.



Parents and Families

The House is much more than a just a place to sleep: the home-like environment and support from other families and staff improves family wellbeing



88%
of parents said the house helped them feel less stressed or anxious

The Family Rooms help relieve some of the physical toll that a child's illness has on parents / guardians



90%
of families experienced improved rest and physical wellbeing

The House relieves some financial pressures that families face when staying far away from home



\$1,265
in net savings per family during an average House stay of 11 days (or \$115 per night) on accommodation, parking, food, laundry

The Learning Program helps parents understand their child's learning needs and how to support them



90%
of parents report being better able to support their child's learning needs



Hospitals

The proximity and facilities of the House (including specialist isolation rooms), allow hospitals to delay admission, or discharge patients a little earlier resulting in significant cost savings



~18,000
in avoided bed nights p.a.

Resulting in >



~\$31.8m p.a.
in reallocated resources for the partner hospitals



RMHC

RMHC has gained a significant trust and goodwill of the Australian community which is essential to its sustainability and ability to deliver services aligned to its purpose



7th
Most trusted charity in Australia in 2019

This trust is valued at

~\$27m p.a.

based on the value of raised funds and donated goods



Children

For each student that completes the 40 hours of tutoring provided by the Learning Program



~\$47,000
Social and economic value is created

At a critical point in transition back to school, the Learning Program supports children simultaneously build self-confidence and engage with their learning



86%
of parents believe their child had improved self-confidence



94%
of parents believe their child's education benefited

Having well-rested and less-stressed parents staying close by to sick children in the **Family Room** and **House** has positive impacts on the sick child's wellbeing



69%
of parents thought the House helped their children experience more positive clinical outcomes



Education system

The Learning Program supports children at risk of repeating a year or dropping out of school to continue to stay engaged in school at the level of their peers

45
children per year estimated to avoid repeating school



41
children per year estimated to have avoid dropping out of school



\$3.1m p.a.
of government expenditure saved due to improved education attainment



Volunteers

Volunteers want to give back to their community, and felt a sense of purpose as a result of their work with the House and Family Room Programs



~82,000 hours
contributed to the Houses and Family Rooms by volunteers

The value of volunteer time is estimated at
\$1.6m p.a.

The six steps of the SROI Analysis

Understanding change

Engage stakeholders, including:

- Ethics approval from the Sydney Children's Hospitals Network Human Research Ethics Committee, with site-specific approval provided by the human research ethics committees at the hospitals where site visits were conducted
- Interviews with 35 families, 24 staff, 13 volunteers, and 6 clinicians
- Site visits to Houses in Sydney, Melbourne, and Perth
- Survey responses from 852 families, 245 teachers and allied health professionals, 73 hospital workers (including doctors, nurses, social workers, and administrative staff) and 348 volunteers
- Organisational data and documentation

1 Define the scope

Define project scope including:

- Timing of the analysis
- Stakeholders to be consulted
- Ethics requirements.

2 Understand the change

Engage with stakeholders to understand what changes they experienced.

Understand relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. Define the logic model.

3 Measure the change

Identify and measure the material outcomes that are likely to be experienced by stakeholders through the program.

Scope

This report covered:

- 18 months, January 2018 to June 2019
- All Houses, the Family Rooms, the Learning Programs, and the Retreats operating in Australia during the period of analysis
- Outcomes for sick children and their families, volunteers, health and education systems, and RMHC itself

Measuring

Using the evidence collected, we

- determined who experienced change / outcomes, what change has happened,
- how much of the change was experienced by different stakeholders.
- We documented this in the Impact Maps.

Value Change

Through analysis of interviews, survey data, and 3rd-party research, we identified material changes for each stakeholder group, and identified financial proxies that estimate the value of that outcome to that stakeholder.

Tell the story

This report is a summary of the four individual program reports that were prepared for the RMHC House, Family Room, Learning Program, and Family Retreat Programs.

The report is structured to present both the consolidated story of change, as well as the summary of the individual Program analyses.

4 Value change

Understand the relative importance of changes. Identify relevant financial proxies to value the outcomes. Determine if the change would have happened anyway, or is a result of other factors.

5 Calculate SROI

Calculate the adjusted value of the outcomes.
Compare to the investment.

6 Tell the story

Synthesise and share the story behind the numbers.

Calculating the SROI

Comparing the value of investments with the value of the social and economic value created allows us to calculate an SROI ratio. The SROI ratio is a shorthand for all of the value for all of the stakeholders. For example, a ratio of 3 : 1 indicates that an investment of \$1 delivers \$3 of social value.

Ronald McDonald House

Ronald McDonald Houses enable family-centred care for families with a seriously ill or injured child. The House reduces stress, and helps families feel connected and focus on the recovery of their child.



Improvements in wellbeing for parents, other family members and sick children

The Ronald McDonald House provides families with significant wellbeing benefits through family centred care, such as reduced emotional and financial stress.

The family-focussed design of the Houses creates an enabling environment for positive outcomes for sick children and their families. This is particularly the case for families in long-term treatment, for whom the House becomes a second home, and a source of fun, friendships, and happy memories.

"By being able to stay at the House has meant that we have been able to deal with our son's diagnosis together as a family unit, rather than having to shoulder the burden in isolation. Be being able to stay connected as a family, our son feels better supported and we all have a greater understanding of each others needs." – Parent



Selected outcomes:

- Reduced mental load for parents
- Improved emotional wellbeing
- Sick children and their siblings are happier and less stressed
- Family members feel better connected to one another
- Hospital staff have reduced mental load

Cost savings for families

By offering substantial cost savings, Ronald McDonald House helps relieve a major source of stress for families. Hospital treatments can result in disruptions to work and financial strain.

Accommodation and meals in a House help families focus on their child's recovery.

"If the Ronald McDonald House was not available for families, there would be an immense gap because finding affordable accommodation near the hospital is almost impossible." – Hospital Worker



Net savings per family during an average House stay of 11 days on accommodation, parking, food and laundry

Selected outcomes:

- Cost savings to families

Savings for the healthcare system

Ronald McDonald Houses have become an essential part of the hospital infrastructure, creating substantial value for hospitals and the health care system. Doctors are able to discharge children to a House, knowing they are close-by in the event that further treatment is needed.

Children are then able to recover in a more family- friendly environment, and that hospital bed can be used by another child in need.

"Without a House at the hospital, there would be a greater burden on hospital staff to provide care to in-patient children and babies because parents would be around less. Children would feel lonely. Parents would be more likely to sleep rough, like in a chair next to the bedside or on a friend's couch – meaning they would be less rested and more troubled." – Hospital Worker



Bed nights avoided p.a.

Selected outcomes:

- Hospitals are able to discharge certain patients to a House
- Hospitals able to discharge immuno-suppressed patients to an isolation room at a House

Ronald McDonald Learning Program

The Ronald McDonald Learning Program takes a holistic approach to helping children return to school from illness and injury, providing tailored support that helps boost children's confidence and recognises the role of the family and school in the child's recovery journey. By delivering this critical support at the right time, the Learning Program impacts the lifetime outcomes of many children.



Improvements in wellbeing for children and their families

One-on-one support concurrently builds confidence and reduces learning gaps.

A child's educational engagement and attainment is intrinsically linked to their confidence and self belief as a learner. Over time, tutors in the Learning Program build a strong and trusting relationship with students that provides a solid foundation to effectively target critical learning gaps and build confidence, with incremental progress generating improved self-esteem for children.

"Our tutor created a tailored program to help my son close some of his learning gaps from missing so much school. He really looks forward to his weekly sessions and is so proud of the achievements he has made. His learning outcomes have soared and we are so grateful." – Parent



Selected outcomes:

- Students more likely to finish school and fulfil potential
- Reduction in stress and mental load for parents

The Learning Program helps parents understand their child's learning needs and feel empowered to support their child's learning. As a result, parents feel less isolated in their journey; more hopeful for their child's future; and are better able to advocate for their child's needs with the school, during and after the program is completed.

Tutors also support schools and teachers to better understand and address students' needs by providing practical support, transition planning and information as they progress through the Program and beyond.



of parents report being better able to support their child's learning needs



of parents believe their child's education benefited

Selected outcomes:

- Better able to support their child's learning
- Improved educational outcomes

Savings for the education system

The Learning Program has lifelong impact. By providing support at a critical point in time for children, the Learning Program is a springboard from which children's progress continues after completing the 40 hours of tutoring. The Program can also have lifelong benefits due to the early intervention that addresses additional learning needs and education gaps at the time the problem is occurring.

"It affects their [the children's] whole life. If the supports are put into place at a young age when the problem is happening, it affects their life trajectory. If you make a change by one degree at that age, the child will achieve different things across their whole life." – Hospital Worker



of government expenditure saved per year due to improved educational attainment

Selected outcomes:

- Professional development for teachers
- Schools better equipped to support sick children
- Teachers are less stressed
- Avoid costs of children repeating a year
- Avoid lifetime costs to government to support people who disengage from school

Ronald McDonald Family Room

The Ronald McDonald Family Room Program supports the physical, emotional and practical needs of families during their child's hospital stay, better equipping families to support their child's clinical journey. This support is greatly valued by all family members, as well as the hospital staff.



Improvements in wellbeing of family members

The Family Room Program offers unique and valued services and amenities that are not otherwise available in hospitals, including: a place for families to rest, shower, do laundry, prepare meals and access complimentary snacks; as well as a place for families to connect and siblings to play and have fun. With the support offered by volunteers, families are also able to switch from the role of carer to being the recipient of care and support.

Together with a family-focused design of the facilities, Family Rooms contribute to family's improved physical and emotional wellbeing, and help maintain normality.

"The Family Room was like a sanctuary. It was a welcoming environment and after a long day, a place to go to that was homely and relaxing. All the volunteers knew us and were really friendly – it was always really special walking in there and the volunteers would come to you with open arms... It was also a safe and child-friendly place, so my other kids loved going there too!" – Parent



Selected outcomes:

- Improved emotional wellbeing
- Families are more rested and physically well
- Families maintain a sense of normality and control

Cost savings for families

The Family Room Program helps families save money by providing access to complimentary snacks; a kitchen to prepare home meals; and a place to complete practical activities of daily living (e.g. take a shower or do laundry). For families with children who have longer hospital stays, and families who have to change their work routines, these costs can add up over time, creating significant financial stress.

"I am on a carer's pension, so I don't have the money to go and buy meals from the hospital cafe when we are at the hospital - especially when we are there on a longer admission and the food costs really add up. The Family Rooms always offer us fruit, tea and coffee and we often make our own meals. This has helped us save a lot of money and stress over time." – Parent



Savings to families as a result of the Family Rooms over the 18m period

Selected outcomes:

- Families save money

Savings for the healthcare system

Family Rooms generate meaningful value for hospitals and have become an important part of the health system. When families experience improved wellbeing and a greater sense of control over their lives, they are better able to engage positively with hospital staff. In addition, the Family Rooms provide families with a much-needed place to take a break from the clinical environment - this creates more time and space for hospital staff to focus on executing their clinical responsibilities.

"Having the Family Room is not only beneficial for families, it can help the hospital and staff a great deal too. Most importantly, when families get time out, this puts them in a better frame of mind to care for their child and engage with staff. This helps to take the pressure off the team so they can focus on their clinical work..." – Hospital Worker



Of hospital staff felt the Family Rooms reduced their mental load

Selected outcomes:

- Hospital staff have reduced mental load

Ronald McDonald Family Retreat

The Family Retreat Program creates the environment for family members to connect and care for each other, kids to just be kids and families to adjust to changes in life circumstances.



Improvements in wellbeing for family members

The Family Retreat accommodation and location provides a calm and relaxing environment for families and sick kids to relax and recharge – helping to reduce stress and fatigue. In addition, the opportunity to spend quality time together creates the time and space for families to be together and feel better connected. Importantly, the Family Retreat creates an opportunity for sick kids and their siblings to have time away from focusing on illness and enjoy time with each other. This gives the space and time for kids to 'feel normal' and 'just be kids again', which has positive effects on a child's recovery and / or overall physical and emotional wellbeing.

"Having the time to be together as a family was such an important and unifying experience for us. The Family Retreat was also a very calming place - we were able to relax and take naps, play games and go for walks on the beach. We came back from the holiday feeling so fresh and happy. It was wonderful!" – Parent



Selected outcomes:

- Families experience improved physical and emotional wellbeing



Cost savings for families

The Family Retreat Program provides families with free accommodation and holiday activities.

Families may also be provided with complimentary passes to activities such as tickets to the movies or local theme park. These activities give families access to experiences they would otherwise not have been able to afford. By taking away the financial stress of having a holiday, families are given the opportunity to spend time together and create positive memories as a family.

"Having the opportunity to go to the Family Retreat was fantastic - we wouldn't have been able to afford or justify a holiday for ourselves and wouldn't have been able to take a break if it wasn't for the Family Retreats. We feel so thankful for the experience." – Parent

75%

of families would not have been able to afford a holiday

\$3,000

is the average savings per family visiting a Family Retreat

Selected outcomes:

- Cost savings to families

Acknowledgments

SVA would like to acknowledge the participation of the many families, volunteers, staff, medical professionals, educators and other stakeholders who took time to provide thoughtful and thorough input, contributing to the strong evidence base that is critical to this analysis.

SVA would also like to thank the Ronald McDonald House Charities team for supporting the ethics process, for helping us to gather the multitude of program and organisational information required for this project, and for assisting us to arrange site visits and interviews.

This report has been prepared by Social Ventures Australia Consulting

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not for profit organisation that works with innovative partners to invest in social change. We help to create better education and employment outcomes for disadvantaged Australians by bringing the best of business to the for-purpose sector, and by working with partners to strategically invest capital and expertise.

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 are passionate about what they do and use their diverse experience to work together to solve Australia's most pressing challenges.

This report has been authored by SVA Consulting with oversight from Kateryna Andreyeva (Principal) and Simon Faivel (Director).

For more information contact us: consulting@socialventures.com.au

Professional Disclosure

SVA has prepared this report in good faith on the basis of our research and information available to us at the date of publication ("Information") without any independent verification. SVA does not guarantee the accuracy, completeness or currency of the Information.

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