

OpenHouse

Supporter newsletter



NEW TREATMENT CHAIRS

Refreshing our day therapy unit

GO THE DISTANCE 2026

In honour of Bella Bradford

RINGING THE BELL

A decade after treatment



**Chris O'Brien
Lifehouse**

Cancer care, choose hope

SPRING 2026



I'm delighted to welcome you to the Spring edition of OpenHouse, the newsletter that celebrates the impact of our donor community.

Along with the inspiring stories within this OpenHouse, I would also like to acknowledge and celebrate Gail O'Brien AO, who recently completed her tenure as Board Director after 17 years of service. Gail will continue in her role as Patient Advocate and will take on the honorary titles of Director Emerita and Patron of Mission.

As a member of our community, you know only too well how Gail's contribution is woven into the very fabric of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, and her legacy and ongoing work will continue to be felt in the care we provide, the research we advance, and the lives we touch every day.

This edition of OpenHouse features stories about just some of the things that make Chris O'Brien Lifehouse special. I hope you enjoy reading it and know how grateful we are for your support.

With gratitude,

Professor Michael Boyer AM
CEO, Chris O'Brien Lifehouse



Your support helps provide world-class care, groundbreaking research, and hope for people facing cancer. [Please donate today.](#)

New treatment chairs in Day Therapy

The Day Therapy Unit at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse has welcomed the arrival of nine brand new treatment chairs for patients receiving intravenous infusions such as chemotherapy or immunotherapy as part of their cancer treatment.

The reclining chairs, specifically designed for infusion therapy, will upgrade the chairs that have been in the unit since the hospital opened in 2013. Since that time, thousands of patients have been treated in Day Therapy and our 36 treatment chairs are now reaching retirement.

Day Therapy Nurse Unit Managers, Leanne Enright and Kate Bilton, are excited to unveil the new treatment chairs that will provide even greater comfort to Chris O'Brien Lifehouse patients.





Day Therapy Nurse Unit Managers, Kate Bilton and Leanne Enright, welcoming a new chair

“We are committed to providing patients with the very best in cancer care and that includes supporting their comfort during long treatment sessions.

For most patients in Day Therapy, they need to stay in the treatment chairs for hours at a time.” - Leanne

Patients with breast cancer or pancreatic cancer can spend 60 to 70 hours sitting in an infusion chair over the course of treatment.

Chemotherapy is usually delivered in cycles with periods of rest in between and can be given over a few days, weeks, or months, or even on a long-term basis. Immunotherapy is usually given in cycles of two to four weeks, and some patients can stay on immunotherapy for up to two years.

Kate says: “The new treatment chairs will help us deliver extra comfort while delivering life-changing care to our patients. They will also help staff deliver care safely and effectively with new features such as hands-free height adjustment which will allow us to adjust the chair while keeping our hands sterile.”

These nine chairs are a wonderful start, but there is still more to do. Stay tuned this Christmas to find out how you can help.

Finally ringing the bell



Julie McGrath celebrating her milestone



“Everyone, from doctors to the volunteers, made Chris O’Brien Lifehouse a soft place to land.” - Julie

A decade ago, Julie’s life changed suddenly when she found a lump in her breast while showering. At 54, she was quickly told she had breast cancer and was referred to Chris O’Brien Lifehouse. Like many, she expected a scary and overwhelming experience. Instead, she found something very different.

“From the moment I walked in, I felt looked after,” Julie says. “It was stressful, of course, but the care was incredible.”

Julie had chemotherapy and radiation therapy, facing some difficulties, including a short hospital stay after her first treatment. Even so, she says her time with us was supportive and encouraging. The friendly atmosphere and real care from the staff helped her feel less alone during her treatment.

Now, ten years on, Julie has reached a remarkable milestone. At her most recent check-up, she was told she no longer needs follow-ups. Julie never had the chance to ring the bell at the end of her treatment because her final chemotherapy session was cancelled. To mark the moment, we’ve invited Julie back to finally ring the bell - a powerful celebration of everything she has overcome.

“It’s a strange but wonderful feeling,” she says. “To walk away without another appointment, there’s a real sense of closure.”

Inspired by her experience, Julie has chosen to leave a gift in her Will to support future patients. She describes the Will-writing process as simple and hopes her contribution will help drive cancer research and continue improving care.

Because of supporters like you, more people like Julie can celebrate reaching important milestones.

Write your Will for free

From 13-20 October, Chris O’Brien Lifehouse supporters can write a simple online Will at no cost through our trusted partner, SafeWill.

It’s a simple way to gain peace of mind and give back to the causes closest to your heart.

Scan the QR code for a reminder when Free Will Week begins. There is no obligation to leave a gift, but any future gift can help support world-class cancer care, treatment and research for generations to come.



Go the Distance to honour Bella

In 2026, the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse signature fundraising event 'Go the Distance' will honour former patient Bella Bradford who passed away in October 2024 at the age of 24. Bella spent a great deal of time in our You Can Centre and she shared her cancer journey across social media with many thousands of followers around the globe.

Bella's mother Jill said her daughter wanted to spread the word that people should strive to live life every day to the absolute fullest.

"It's bittersweet," Jill says. "If she can make a difference and help improve someone's life with joy, kindness, gratitude and courage – it will bring great comfort and she would be proud."

Bella shared with her friends, family and followers an inspiring list of 20 things she learned through having cancer. Her life lessons included how you can't go from zero to 100 in one step and making every day count.

Go the Distance 2026 honours Bella's legacy of kindness, gratitude and courage.

Every dollar donated, every kilometre travelled in Go the Distance will count for people with cancer.



Bella with her mum Jill, and her sister, Ash

"We would do anything to have Bella here with us, but she taught me so much about life." - Jill

During the 30-day challenge in September, Go the Distance participants will walk, run, roll or swim to raise vital funds for cancer care at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, helping us provide additional but essential patient care services to help reduce the burden of cancer.



Learn more about Bella's story and the incredible support of participants taking part in the September challenge this year.

Friends and family of Bella honouring her memory



The wedding surprise that brought everyone to tears



Photos of newlyweds Jack and Katerina

Jack Mills spent his 25th birthday at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse while he was undergoing treatment for laryngeal cancer. During the operation to remove the tumour and his larynx (voice box) surgeons were able to preserve the laryngeal nerve which allows him to still talk, albeit with a change in his voice.

The kitchen project manager from Dubbo also underwent six weeks of radiation therapy, staying at the You Can Centre at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse over this time. Jack describes the centre set up as phenomenal, saying: "It was game changing, from the moment you enter that space you are not in a hospital anymore, you are home!"

His family have since made a generous donation for the purchase of a new guitar for other young cancer patients to enjoy in the You Can Centre.

Jack's mother Rachel says:



"We are so thankful for the team at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse that saved his life. Jack has the most beautiful soul, and we love him so much." - Rachel

That beautiful soul was on display during his wedding vows in March this year when he surprised bride Katerina with a recording of his vows. Jack had secretly recorded his vows before his surgery so Kat could hear them in his original voice. This unexpected gesture left the entire wedding in tears.

We're so grateful for the Mills' kind donation of a guitar and wish all the best to Jack and Kat.



Jack with his parents Rachel and Andrew Mills

Vale Professor Richard Scolyer AO

It is with profound sadness that we acknowledge the passing of Professor Richard Scolyer AO, an extraordinary clinician, researcher, advocate, and friend of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Richard will be remembered as one of Australia's most influential cancer researchers, his relentless pursuit of scientific discovery, and his commitment to collaboration. He changed the lives of countless patients and families, and helped position Australia as a global leader in cancer research.

We have been deeply moved by the extraordinary outpouring of support, with over \$281,000 donated in Richard's honour. These kind donations will support research through the Richard Scolyer Chair in Brain Cancer Research, which will inspire future generations of researchers working to accelerate discoveries, expand clinical trials, and improve outcomes for people diagnosed



Professor Richard Scolyer AO and his wife Dr Katie Nicholl

with brain cancer.

On behalf of everyone at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, thank you to everyone who donated, and for honouring Richard's memory in such a meaningful way. He leaves behind an extraordinary legacy. It lives on through the lives he changed, the discoveries he advanced, the researchers he inspired, and the future he helped shape for generations to come.

May he rest in peace.

Giving Day's lasting impact

When our community came together for our first-ever Giving Day in 2023, you helped raise an incredible \$4.55 million to fund a new linear accelerator (LINAC) for our Radiation Oncology department. Thanks to your generosity, that investment is still making a difference today.

In April this year, Chris O'Brien Lifehouse was recognised as a Novalis Certified centre, an independent certification grounded in

international standards and informed by leading radiation oncology organisations. We are now one of the few centres in Australia with this honour.

Our new LINAC was a key part of achieving this milestone. It supports sub-millimetre positioning accuracy and helps clinicians deliver highly targeted treatment approaches while helping minimise radiation exposure to surrounding healthy tissue.

This recognition is a direct result of what philanthropy can achieve. Your support has helped bring world-class cancer care closer to home and continues to improve treatment and outcomes for patients in our community.

Get involved



Every fundraiser, big or small, helps provide exceptional cancer care, research and support for our patients and families.

Join one of our signature fundraising events, or create your own! Whether it's a morning tea, bake sale, golf day, trivia night, birthday fundraiser or something completely unique, every dollar you raise helps make a real difference.

We'll be with you every step of the way, providing fundraising tips, resources and support to help make your event a success.



Ready to get started?

Scan the QR code to explore our upcoming events or create your own fundraiser.

Go The Distance

1-30 September

Set your own challenge this September! Walk, run, roll or swim your chosen distance and raise funds for Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. It's flexible, fun, and open to everyone.

SurFebruary

1-28 February

Get on board for a feelgood summer challenge. Commit to surfing, swimming or standup paddleboarding every day in February and raise funds for the SurFebruary Cancer Research Fund.

Spill the tea

In late April we were delighted to host a morning tea for some of our passionate donors at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. More than 40 people were able to join us at this special event and to hear from CEO Professor Michael Boyer AM and Gail O'Brien AO about the impact of their kindness.

Our guests were also taken on a behind-the-scenes tour of some of our most innovative sites including the Integrated Prosthetics & Reconstruction (IPR) manufacturing laboratory, the Arto Hardy Family Biomedical Innovation

Hub and the You Can Centre which sits at the heart of our Adolescent and Young Adult Service.

We were excited to share updates on research, new equipment, and critical supportive care and how the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse donor community is supporting this essential work.

Thank you to our morning tea guests who shared warm messages of appreciation after this lovely event. We are so grateful to have such wonderful caring supporters who are redefining cancer care and hope to host a similar event in 2027.

For more information, please contact:

@ development.office@lh.org.au

👉 donate.mylifehouse.org.au



**Chris O'Brien
Lifehouse**