Hope grows with you
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Hope grows with you

Hope is a thing with feathers
That perches in the soul
And sings the tune without the words
And never stops at all

- Emily Dickinson

At The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, as children heal, families hope.
Hope is found in every corridor of the Hospital. Even in the darkest times of their child’s illness, families cling to hope.
Every sick child who comes through our doors, every family who is waiting for a miracle and every disease that still lacks a cure inspires our staff to provide the very best care and deepens our motivation to improve the health and wellbeing of children.
Our success is measured by the quality of care and support we deliver to children and their families. We are committed to providing the highest standard of care in a financially responsible manner. But the cost of care is significant, which is why your support is so vital.
You come from families grateful for the care your own child has received here and from families grateful that your child has never needed our care.
You represent community-minded businesses and communities with heart.
Hope can only grow here with you, our valued supporters.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is the highly respected, largest paediatric centre in NSW, providing excellent care for children from NSW, Australia and across the Pacific Rim. It forms part of the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is world-renowned for providing the best care for sick children and their families. This specialist care, combined with community education, advocacy for improved child health and ground-breaking research into childhood illnesses, is blended within a positive, caring and healing environment.
Established in 1880, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is a public Hospital and registered charity with 3,528 staff working in 150 departments. Sick children and their families are cared for each year in a family-focused, healing environment – including 29,416 inpatient admissions, 51,623 emergency department presentations and 940,514 outpatient occasions of service.
Children with problems such as severe burns, major heart conditions and liver and kidney diseases are referred to The Children’s Hospital at Westmead because it houses leading specialty units within the Hospital grounds.
The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is home to the NSW Paediatric Burns Unit, the NSW Paediatric Liver Transplant Unit, the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, the first Paediatric Tumour Bank in the southern hemisphere, the NSW Neonatal Screening Service and the National Poisons Information Centre.
Research is one of the key ways in which the Hospital provides the highest standard of care and treatment to sick children and their families. The Kids Research Institute at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead undertakes cutting-edge research into childhood diseases, resulting in significant advances in the treatment of cancer, obesity, kidney, heart and respiratory problems, diabetes and muscular dystrophy.

the children’s hospital at Westmead
2012 Statistics

3,528 staff
1,330,000 Bandaged Bears sold (since the Bandaged Bear Appeal first started)
312 beds
300+ researchers at the Kids Research Institute
51,623 emergency cases
29,416 inpatient admissions
940,514 outpatient appointments
1,051,200 songs played in Radio Bedrock
450 Clown Doctor Rounds
150 Hospital Departments
978.6 kilometres run by donors in Team Bandaged Bear in the City2Surf
12,000 books borrowed from our Book Bunker
15,200 sessions taught at our Hospital School
197,000 patient meals served
105,000 coins dropped in collection tins
108,480 Band-Aids used
14,183 operations
91 & 8 oldest and youngest fundraisers
105,120 appointments
2012
When you look up the word ‘courageous’ in the dictionary, you should find a photo of 11-year old Corey.

This bright and spirited boy has had more than his fair share of illness in his short life but is not letting that stop him, with his dreams of becoming a monster truck driver alive and well.

Corey is a cancer patient at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, after being diagnosed with Burkitt’s Lymphoma in early 2012. This rare cancer of the lymphatic system was detected after Corey fell ill during a family trip to Queensland and he has since spent months in hospital receiving chemotherapy.

Sadly, this is not the first time that Corey and his family have battled serious illness. Corey had a heart transplant when he was just four-years-old, the only possible treatment to save his life after he was diagnosed with a rare and serious heart condition.

Corey’s tough start to life has been a difficult journey for his whole family, but as his health begins to improve, they are starting to feel a sense of hope for their future.

“The Hospital has given us more than hope - we have been given another chance at life for our family,” Corey’s Mum, Joann, said.

“We could write the words ‘thank you’ a million times over and that still wouldn’t come close to showing our appreciation. No words can describe the emotions felt by our family or the gratitude we feel for everything that has been done to save our little boy.”
Record number of lifesaving transplants

A record number of kidney transplants were performed at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead over the past year, giving 15 children the ultimate gift – the gift of life.

The transplant recipients range from a two-year-old boy who had a kidney donated from his father, to a 17-year-old girl who received her transplant thanks to a deceased donor. Amazingly, she completed her HSC a week after her transplant.

All the children and young people are doing well and are enjoying healthier and happier lives.

Transplant surgeons at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead have performed 130 kidney transplants since the Hospital moved from Camperdown to Westmead in 1995.

A team of health professionals at the Hospital care for the child and family throughout the process of receiving an organ transplant. As well as surgeons and doctors, patients are cared for by specialist nursing staff, social workers and therapists.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead also invests significant resources into researching improved treatment options for children with kidney disease. At the Centre for Kidney Research at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, 30 researchers utilise donated funds to investigate the latest scientific evidence to enhance services, improve care and promote kidney health.

Chronic kidney disease is the seventh most common cause of death in Australia, with one in three Australians at an increased risk of kidney disease. New discoveries and better treatments need a long-term commitment and The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is at the forefront of this challenging battle.

Dr Stephen Alexander, Head of the Centre for Kidney Research

Twin sisters, Jana and Jenine Allam – Jana had a kidney transplant in 2011

Some of the 2011 kidney transplant patients with their families
For most children born in Australia, simple things like going to school, playing sport and enjoying the great outdoors are taken for granted. But, as Alanna Maycock knows too well, children from some other countries aren’t always so lucky.

Alanna is the Refugee Health Coordinator at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, assessing and treating the health and wellbeing of refugee and asylum seeker families. The families who attend the clinic have fled from their homes overseas where they were subject to horrific living conditions, such as violence, infectious diseases and lack of clean water and healthy food.

“Some of the families who we treat have never seen a doctor or dentist in their lives. They often feel traumatised, isolated and vulnerable,” Alanna said.

The Refugee Clinic addresses some important health issues, such as screening for infectious diseases, malnutrition, wounds from torture or violence, mental health issues, and immunisation. It also plays an important role in bringing the refugee community together.

“Two mothers who had previously spent time in a detention centre together met each other again for the first time in eight months at our clinic. Both women were unsure if the other had settled in Australia, or indeed if they were alive. It was emotional moment witnessing them in tears together and served as a reminder that our clinic is an important place where families can get medical care as well as make friends in a world that can feel very lonely and so different to where they are from,” Alanna said.

In the past 60 years, Australia has offered permanent residency to around 700,000 refugees and others in need of humanitarian protection. At least seven per cent of Australians have been through the experience of being a refugee or have a parent or grandparent who has.

The Refugee Clinic has seen increasing numbers of refugee families since it started in 2005, tripling the number of refugee children who had health screening from January to June 2012.

“Children are vulnerable little people and a lot of the children I see at the Refugee Clinic have seen and experienced more in their short lives than we can ever begin to imagine. With our help, they can begin their lives here in Australia with hope,” Alanna said.
New cancer research to save lives

An Australian first clinical trial recently commenced at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, which aims to protect children’s bone marrow during chemotherapy to treat brain tumours.

After 14 years of research, gene therapy will now be used in childhood cancer to allow for the protection of bone marrow while using higher doses of chemotherapy to fight brain tumours.

This innovative research, funded by a $3 million donation, will allow for better treatment for children fighting some of the most serious and life-threatening tumours.

Brain tumours in children have been historically very difficult to treat because temozolomide, the chemotherapy drug that is used, has very toxic side effects and can destroy healthy bone marrow cells, leaving the child susceptible to dangerous infections.

Higher doses could be more effective in treating these lethal tumours, but the drugs have previously been too toxic for young patients, making it difficult to eradicate tumours.

Under the gene therapy to be used in this clinical trial, the aim will be to increase the level of Methylguanine Methyltransferase (MGMT) contained in bone marrow by inserting a specific gene into the patient’s cells. MGMT is a natural occurring substance which protects cells from the chemotherapy drugs. This will mean doctors can then safely administer a higher chemotherapy dose, dramatically increasing the chances of successfully eradicating the cancer cells.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is the only facility in Australia capable of conducting this trial by developing the vector and treating the cells.

This research brings together expertise across a number of clinical and research areas of The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. There has been long-term collaboration between the Oncology Department, the Children’s Cancer Research Unit and the Gene Therapy Unit.

Researchers hope to use this trial to establish the long-term feasibility of the gene therapy and its potential benefits for other paediatric conditions.
When Samuel went on the swings at the local park for the very first time, his squeals of delight brought overwhelming joy to his family.

Born with Down Syndrome and diagnosed with leukaemia when he was just 18 months old, some of the simple pleasures of childhood had passed Samuel by as he spent long periods of time at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead.

“Because Samuel had been hospitalised so much over his first few years of life, I suddenly realised that we had not taken him on a swing at a park! We quickly made arrangements to take him to the park and he absolutely loved it. We really soaked up his squeals of delight and it was a great reminder to appreciate the simple things in life,” said Natalie, Samuel’s Mum.

Children born with Down Syndrome have a higher risk of developing leukaemia, but it still came as a huge shock to Samuel’s family when he was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia.

“It felt like our whole world was turned upside down. But as a parent you somehow find the strength to keep going and not fall in a heap. In some ways this has brought us closer as a family,” Natalie said.

Samuel has earned a new nickname, ‘Super Sam’, because he is a hero in every sense of the world. With his sweet nature and infectious smile, it’s hard to believe that he’s been through so much.

“We are just so very grateful for the care Samuel has received at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. Thanks to them, we now have hope that Samuel can grow, learn and experience the world just like any other child,” Natalie said.
Equipped for the best health care

Donors purchased a range of medical equipment this year that is vital to providing world-class, life-saving care, including open care cribs for the Grace Centre for Newborn Care.

Caring for the sickest children in NSW does come at a cost. New techniques and technologies in health care developed internationally can only be used on sick patients if doctors have the right equipment on hand.

Open care cribs are vital pieces of equipment when treating critically ill newborn babies. These cribs, worth $25,000 each, allow staff in the Grace Centre for Newborn Care to monitor the sickest babies closely and access them quickly for urgent care. They are also mobile, so staff can easily move the babies from intensive care to the operating theatres and for tests in other departments.

The Grace Centre for Newborn Care at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is a very special place of care, treating around 600 of the sickest newborn babies from across NSW each year, many of whom are born with serious medical conditions or require complex surgery.

Without the right equipment on hand, like open care cribs, it would be virtually impossible for doctors to save the lives of over 97 per cent of these seriously ill newborn babies.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead provides significant extra services aided by the generosity of individual and corporate donors. Our donors, especially those who help with the purchase of specialist medical equipment, partner with the Hospital to provide the very best world-class care for the benefit of children and families from NSW and beyond.
While most staff at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead work on a ward, in an office or at a desk, Bridget McGinley spends her working hours in rural communities and on the road as she travels long distances to visit cancer patients and their families all over NSW. For the past seven years, Bridget has been the Oncology Outreach Nurse for the Mark Taylor Outreach Program. This vital role provides care and support for young cancer patients in their own homes, schools and communities.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead treats around 130 children each year for cancer, with up to 40 of them coming from rural communities. While much of the diagnosis and treatment has to happen in hospital, Bridget does her best to settle families back into their communities as quickly and as often as possible, establishing local care options and support services and empowering patients and families with knowledge and understanding during their cancer journey.

It’s not surprising to learn that Bridget encounters many emotional situations and forges meaningful connections with families and communities.

“Recently I worked with a young cancer patient and his family from rural NSW. The boy’s condition had sadly deteriorated rapidly and his prognosis was poor. The boy was desperate to return home to celebrate his 16th birthday with his family and friends,” Bridget said.

“I coordinated education of local medical teams to manage his care and had special medical equipment delivered to his home. Enabling his return home has had a significant impact on his family – his tears of joy to be reunited with his sisters and his precious last days spent with his family are memories that are forever etched in their minds.”

Bridget’s role is funded by donations and this important aspect of outreach care simply would not be possible without community support.

“Donors empower us to help families to reconnect with their family and friends, giving them the strength and focus needed to endure the pain of cancer and the discomfort of treatment. Donors give these families hope for the future,” Bridget said.
The Kids Research Institute recently celebrated the opening of the Correlative Light and Electron Microscopy (CLEM) Suite.

The CLEM Suite is giving scientists a better understanding of childhood illnesses by enabling them to analyse molecular and cellular structure in greater detail. The $1 million research suite was funded by grants and donations given to the Kids Research Institute and the Westmead Millennium Institute by private and government-funded bodies.

This technology means more scientists will be able to better understand the diseases they are studying, creating more possibilities for finding cures.

Over 800 scientists across the Westmead Research Hub will be able to access the CLEM Suite, allowing them to find new and better treatments for patients.

The introduction of the new equipment has been effective in speeding up the cell biology process and keeping the Kids Research Institute at the forefront of disease research.

The CLEM suite now allows scientists to intricately study changes to diseased cells through the use of fluorescence and by snap freezing samples in a high pressure freezer. New fast scanning technology has also enabled cells to be rapidly imaged into different optical sections and later viewed in 3D.

Before this technology, tissue had to be treated, embedded into a solid medium and then physically sliced to see the different sections, meaning scientists needed to look at hundreds of different slides. The process has now been dramatically simplified through the introduction of the CLEM Suite.

Scientists can now also take living cells and freeze them, process them for electron microscopy and view the same cells in one thousand times more detail than previously possible.
Georgina's fight for life began before she was even born, after she was diagnosed with exomphalos major during the 12 week pregnancy scan. With her liver, intestines and stomach growing on the outside of her body, doctors gave her just a 25 per cent chance of survival.

But Georgina's fighting spirit has shone through. She has not only defied the odds for survival, but she was discharged home from The Children's Hospital at Westmead at just two-months-old, when doctors predicted she could spend up to a year in the Grace Centre for Newborn Care.

Georgina's connection to The Children's Hospital at Westmead will last a lifetime for more reasons than one. "Georgina absolutely loves classical music and is mesmerised by anyone playing the violin. We believe that this is because a violinist came to play soft classical music to her and the other newborn babies when she was in hospital," her Mum, Rebecca, said.

Georgina is now a happy, bubbly toddler who is loving life and exploring the world around her. Soon she will undergo further surgery to complete the muscle closure over her stomach, as a special collagen material is now acting as her abdominal wall.

"We are so lucky to have Georgina in our lives after she was given such a slim chance of survival. Without hope we wouldn't have our beautiful little girl with us today and the fun, love and laughter that each day brings," Rebecca said.
Double the care for epilepsy patients

The newly-opened Epilepsy Monitoring Unit at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead will dramatically improve the lives of children who suffer from debilitating epileptic seizures.

The $1.1 million Epilepsy Monitoring Unit monitors children during epileptic seizures to pinpoint the location within the brain where their epilepsy originates. This technology will improve the success rate of delicate brain surgery to treat epilepsy, ultimately leading to a seizure-free life.

This innovative monitoring will double the number of children undergoing epilepsy surgery each year. Specialised neurosurgery has the potential to greatly lessen the impact of this disease or, in some cases, eradicate it altogether.

If left untreated, epilepsy can result in irreversible brain damage or death. There are many new treatments available for epilepsy and early diagnosis is important to allow the child to achieve their full developmental potential.

There are more people with epilepsy in Australia than there are with autism, Cerebral Palsy, Multiple Sclerosis and Parkinson’s disease combined. Approximately 14,000 children have epilepsy in NSW and, for almost 30 per cent, medication poorly controls their disease.

Historically in NSW, access to specialists and appropriate tests for children with this severe brain disease has been very limited.

The new Epilepsy Monitoring Unit, with four state-of-the-art beds and a laboratory was opened at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead by the Member for Parramatta, Dr Geoff Lee.

The unit was funded by the State and Federal Governments and through donations.
When 14-year-old Dean decided to have a quick swim at the local creek, little did he know that his life would be changed forever. Diving into the creek, Dean hit a submerged rock and suffered a serious spinal injury. He has since been diagnosed as a quadriplegic.

Dean has been a patient at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead since his accident in early 2012. He is now undergoing intense physiotherapy to hopefully regain some movement in his arms and legs and his family are trying to find a new home in their local community that will cater to Dean’s needs.

“Our lives have been turned upside down by this tragic accident. When we leave hospital we have to learn new routines and ways of living, but we are just thankful for Dean’s survival and the care we have received,” Dean’s Mum, Margaret, said.

Dean hasn’t lost his great sense of humour and his positive shine on life and is using all his emotional and spiritual strength to get through these dark days. Despite all they have gone through, Dean and his family have hope.

“Dean’s positive attitude gives us hope that he might walk again one day. In the time we have spent at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead we have seen the sickest children go from strength to strength. That gives us hope for tomorrow,” Margaret said.
Music and play – the Bear Cottage way

Bear Cottage, The Children’s Hospital at Westmead’s hospice, is using innovative child life therapy and music therapy programs to enrich the lives of children with life-limiting illnesses.

Donations have been used to employ specialist Child Life Therapists and Music Therapists to work directly with children to help them deal with emotions, create positive memories, communicate and, importantly, have fun.

Child Life Therapy is based around play, which is extremely important for all children, especially those who are seriously ill. Play is the language that children use to make sense of their world and is a powerful tool for helping children to cope with their illness and to ease anxiety when facing difficult or painful medical procedures.

Likewise, Music Therapy is highly motivating and has a calming and relaxing effect that helps children to manage pain and anxiety. It encourages socialisation, self-expression, communication and motor development – all vitally important to children, especially those with a life-limiting illness.

For the children cared for at Bear Cottage, there is unfortunately no miracle cure or happy ending awaiting them. Staff at Bear Cottage focus on creating a special, home-like environment for families, with advanced around-the-clock medical and nursing care on-hand.

Child Life Therapy and Music Therapy, along with a more recent addition, Art Therapy, have had a powerfully positive impact on Bear Cottage, uplifting and enriching the mood of the house. The understanding that any child, irrespective of their abilities or emotional state, can be drawn into the magical fun of play, music and art has ensured that all children have benefited in some way.

An important role of Bear Cottage is to not only care for sick patients, but also to provide care and support to their families, especially siblings who often suffer greatly during their brother or sister’s illness. Therapists are able to connect with siblings through play and music, which has a dramatic impact on their emotional wellbeing.
Kristy Rose has dedicated her career not just to working with children with muscle and nerve disorders, but also to finding improved treatments or cures for their debilitating conditions.

Kristy is a Postdoctoral Research Physiotherapist at the Institute for Neuroscience and Muscle Research at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. Kristy started her career as a physiotherapist 11 years ago and followed her interest in treating patients with muscle and nerve disorders, eventually leading to her completing postdoctoral research in this field in 2010.

The Institute for Neuroscience and Muscle Research, which is strongly supported by donations, has 48 staff who treat over 1000 patients with muscle and nerve disorders each year.

“Our staff are empathetic, caring, supportive, overwhelmingly hard-working and committed to providing an excellent standard of care for patients and families,” Kristy said.

One of the conditions that Kristy spends considerable time researching is Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a life-limiting, genetic condition affecting boys that results in severe muscle degeneration.

“Ten years ago, most boys with this condition would be in a wheelchair by eight years old. Now, thanks to research and improved treatments, most hit double figures and are still walking. One of my patients has just turned 14 and is still walking, running and jumping. To me this is truly incredible,” Kristy said.

Kristy is involved in clinical trials on an international scale, working with therapists in countries such as Taiwan, Japan and South America. One of the main focuses of her research has been to establish that children as young as two years old can be involved in clinical trials. This is a monumental change in treatment as children of this young age have the potential to benefit most from therapies that aim to slow muscle disease progression or cure it completely.

Kristy is constantly inspired by the families she cares for, most of whom she says are like ‘a second family’ to her.

“I really enjoy working with my patients and their families. With no known cure yet for any childhood neuromuscular disorder, they live with the complications of their disorder each and every day. Their tenacity and hope for the future is both humbling and motivating,” Kristy said.
As Taylor’s parents looked forward to her much-awaited birth, little did they know the tough journey that lay ahead.

Taylor was rushed to The Children’s Hospital at Westmead straight after she was born and endured heart surgery when she was barely 24 hours old. She was soon diagnosed with Velocardiofacial Syndrome, a genetic condition that affects the heart and facial appearance.

Taylor spent the first two months of her life in Hospital and her parents, Chris and Amanda, were thrilled to finally take their baby girl home to treasure. Two years down the track, Taylor is now a happy, healthy and fun-loving girl who loves swimming lessons and feeding the ducks at the local lake.

Taylor is undergoing intensive speech therapy in preparation for reconstructive throat surgery in around two years’ time. Her cardiac condition is reviewed every year and she is doing well.

“The Children’s Hospital at Westmead saved our daughter’s life. If it wasn’t for their doctors and facilities, we wouldn’t have her here today. It’s as simple as that,” Taylor’s Mum, Amanda, said.

“It was such a hard time for us to learn that Taylor had major health concerns. There have been many ups and downs over the past two years, but Taylor’s attitude is always so positive that we try and stay focussed and full of hope.”
Our Volunteers
– many ways to care

Volunteers make an incredible contribution to The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. This is not only through their tireless fundraising efforts, but also through their regular assistance with the day-to-day running of the Hospital – helping out on wards, caring for sick children and their siblings, escorting guests around the Hospital and assisting with administrative work.

In the past year, the Volunteers raised $342,000 that will be used to benefit and improve patient care and expand support services for families.

The Volunteers Service was awarded one of the Hospital’s most prestigious honours in 2011 – status as a Hospital Founder. All volunteers were presented with a replica of the Founder’s Award as a token of the Hospital’s appreciation of their commitment, enthusiasm and compassion.

The contribution made by volunteers stretches way back when the Hospital first opened in Glebe in the late 1800s. The long tradition of volunteer support has carried throughout the years, with many new initiatives and programs only able to be launched because of their support.

The Children’s Hospital at Westmead would not be the world-class institution that it is today without ongoing support and assistance from Volunteers. Their selfless dedication to the Hospital is greatly appreciated by staff and by the children and families who are touched by their work every day.
Having a child with a movement disorder, like cerebral palsy, can affect every aspect of a family’s day-to-day life. Lucky for these families, Bianca Botha is there to help every step of the way. Bianca is the Social Worker for the Cerebral Palsy and Movement Disorder Service at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. It is her role to support families, keeping them informed about resources to add to their quality of life and advocating for more local support for these families in need.

“I’m humbled to know that I can make a difference to these families, even through the smallest act. Sometimes just making one phone call on behalf of a distressed mother can make the world of difference,” Bianca said.

Another important part of her role is counselling patients with movement disorders, their parents and siblings. Validating how families feel and helping them to deal with feelings of grief and loss is vital to their ongoing emotional health.

Bianca works within the Kids Rehab Department of The Children’s Hospital at Westmead, that cares for over 3000 children with conditions such as brain injuries, limb deficiencies, spinal cord injuries and movement disorders.

Bianca’s role can be emotionally challenging at times, but she draws strength from the families in her care.

“I stand in admiration for the courage and perseverance I see in families. Some families have more than one child with a disability and they are still able to be hopeful, positive and smiling. I return home to my own family each night inspired by them,” Bianca said.

Bianca’s work is supported by donations. It’s incredible to think that without community support, families would not be able to rely on Bianca and the very helpful, gentle and caring support she offers.

“Building trust and rapport with families over the years and witnessing young patients grow into adulthood is a great joy. Every day I see first-hand the wonderful power of hope, courage and resilience,” Bianca said.
To the vast majority of our community, child abuse is unthinkable. But when the unthinkable happens, Glenys Griffiths is there to help. Glenys is a doctor in The Children’s Hospital at Westmead’s Child Protection Unit, where physically, emotionally and sexually abused children and those at risk of harm are cared for.

“We see children and non-offending family members at a time when they are usually experiencing crisis. As well as providing treatment and support to help children and families recover from the abuse they have experienced, we also ensure we minimise future trauma and reduce stigma while keeping the child’s safety and wellbeing as the central focus,” Glenys said.

Child Protection Unit staff are available to see children, from newborns to teens, and their families 24 hours a day. Sadly, many children have suffered neglect, physical, sexual or emotional abuse or domestic violence, with some experiencing more than one kind of abuse in their lives.

Child abuse is unfortunately not rare. The Child Protection Unit at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is the busiest service of its kind in NSW and over 1000 children who may have been abused or neglected are assessed each year.

Glenys has completed her training as a resident doctor at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead and her position as Fellow now allows her to undertake medical specialty training in the child protection field. She is gaining significant experience caring for children who have been abused and will eventually be able to transfer these valuable skills to other paediatric health care settings.

Working in the Child Protection Unit is nearly always challenging and difficult for Glenys, but she also describes her work as incredibly rewarding.

“One young patient was transferred to our care after experiencing many types of chronic and severe child abuse. Over time, I have watched her transform from an extremely traumatised frightened child with significant mental health difficulties to a confident girl who is thriving in her foster placement and is now showing her playful sense of humour,” Glenys said.

“Hope for a better future is the greatest gift we can give her.”
Watching Taj run around the playground with his little brother Fynn, he looks just like any other six-year-old boy. He loves trains and going to the beach, and he is not so fond of bananas.

But the difference between Taj and most other six-year-old boys is that he is alive only thanks to the donor liver that was transplanted into him when he was just a baby.

When Taj was born he suffered jaundice, a fairly common condition for newborn babies. When Taj’s jaundice became worse and he started losing weight, his parents and doctors became concerned. When he was just eight weeks old, Taj’s parents, Paul and Kylie, learnt the heart-breaking news that their son had a serious liver condition.

“It was a challenging time for us because Taj was so young. But looking back, perhaps it was best he was so young as he was relatively unaware of the blood tests, stays in hospital and the operation,” Taj’s Mum, Kylie, said.

Since his transplant, Taj’s health has gone from strength to strength and he has only had a few short stays in hospital. He has a health check every three months to make sure his liver function is normal and his parents make sure he has a healthy diet, lots of exercise and good rest to keep him feeling on top of the world.

“We hope that Taj stays well and doesn’t ever need another transplant and we hope that other families experience the gift of life just as we have. Hope means so much to my family,” Kylie said.
When Siva Subramaniam and the team of Burns Anaesthetists at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead assist with a burns procedure, they know their contribution is more than skin deep.

Children with acute burns require dressing changes every few days. Despite advances in burns treatment, dressing changes are very painful and can cause great anxiety to children and their families. Knowing that they have to endure this procedure over and over can be a terrible burden for families.

“Our role is to alleviate the pain and stress involved with burns dressing changes and procedures by providing anaesthesia and pain relief. We help make repeated procedures more tolerable to children and less stressful for families,” Siva said.

As many burns patients are just young toddlers, it’s easy to understand that making procedures as calm and pain-free as possible is important to their ongoing care.

The range of specialist staff in the Burns Unit who provide care to children and families include surgeons, pain specialists, nurses, physiotherapists, play and music therapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, social workers, psychologists, chaplains and educators. The treatment given to patients caters to their physical and emotional needs in the short and long term.

Since anaesthetists became part of the expert team at the Burns Unit in 2007, their contribution has dramatically improved the way burns patients are cared for and has eased some of the psychological burden of treatment. Much of the work undertaken by the Burns Unit at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead is funded by community donations, including the Burns Anaesthetists positions. This not only ensures that clinical care is world-class, it also provides important support services for families.

Siva enjoys working as part of the Burns Treatment Team and knows how important it is to help children back on their feet.

“Children are the hope and the future of our nation. By getting them back into the community, we are ensuring minimal disruption to their growth and potential,” he said.
With her cheeky smile and a sparkle in her eye, it’s easy to see that Zoe has a remarkable spirit and a zest for life.

Zoe’s life started out just like any other baby and she developed normally until her first birthday when her parents started noticing that her development had not just stopped, it was regressing. After months of testing, Zoe was eventually diagnosed with Rett Syndrome, a serious neurological disorder.

“From the moment that Zoe was born I had a nagging sense of unease. When she was finally diagnosed, even though we were completely devastated by what it meant for our daughter, we were relieved to finally have a diagnosis,” Zoe’s Mum, Nellie, said.

Zoe has since gradually lost the ability to speak and has difficulties walking. Despite her disability, she is a happy and bright girl who enjoys spending time with her sisters, Ella and Phoebe, and gathering around the table at home eating her Dad’s French toast.

“We love Zoe just as we love our other daughters. She is our happy, gentle, cuddly and sparkly little girl. Her packaging is slightly different but we are all different to one degree or another,” Nellie said.

“Zoe has taught us so much about what really matters and has made us better people. For us, hope is about doing what we can for Zoe today but always looking positively towards tomorrow.”
‘Hope Grows With You’ is such a fitting theme for this year’s Annual Review and has application to many aspects of our work here at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead. The Hospital is a place of hope for thousands of sick children and their families as they turn to us for our world-class paediatric health care, ranging from burns treatment to epilepsy, heart surgery, organ transplants and cancer treatment.

The stories of Corey, Dean, Georgina, Samuel, Taj, Taylor and Zoe are nothing short of inspirational and are a true reflection of the courage and hope seen at The Children’s Hospital at Westmead each and every day. They represent the many thousands of families who come through our doors each year – 51,623 presentations to our Emergency Department, 29,416 admissions and 940,514 appointments through our clinics.

Our researchers are driven by hope - to find cures for childhood diseases or discover new and better ways of treating young patients. Some of our recent research achievements in the areas of translational cancer research and neuromuscular research are outstanding and place us at the international forefront of shaping future treatment of serious childhood diseases.

It is important to recognise that our achievements are not solely due to the contribution and efforts of our staff. Our success is also achieved through the generosity of the community and major donors. At the heart of this support is the hope that our Hospital – through care, research, education and advocacy - can provide the very best health care to children across the state and beyond.

I am so proud of the involvement of donors in almost every one of our achievements. It’s a true testament to how much we rely on your support and a clear indication that we simply could not provide our world-class, life-saving services without you.

The staff profiled in this Annual Review have substantially benefited from the donations from our generous supporters to undertake their vital work. Reading their stories, it’s incredible to think that without your help, their work would not be making such a significant impact and sick children would not benefit from their talent, passion and dedication to building brighter futures for families.

Thank you very much for your continued support and for partnering with us to fulfil our important mission of improving the health and wellbeing of children through clinical care, research, education and advocacy. Hope will continue to grow through our partnership with you.

Elizabeth Koff
Chief Executive
Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network
Your generous support of The Children's Hospital at Westmead is greatly appreciated by our patients, families and staff. Our ground-breaking work would be greatly diminished without your support. Every dollar counts in our quest to save precious young lives.

Thank you for your valued support.

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Fundiraising Department

The Children's Hospital at Westmead

Locked Bag 4001

Westmead NSW 2145

Phone: (02) 9845 3367

Fax: (02) 9845 3457

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