



Media Release

May 18, 2013

A paediatric plea for Palliative Care Week

The medical spotlight turns to palliative care this week and the estimated 5300 children requiring paediatric palliative care across Australia each year.

Bear Cottage is the only children's hospice in NSW and one of only two in Australia. It is the world's only children's hospice linked to a paediatric hospital and provides respite care and medical support to families with terminally ill children.

An initiative of The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Bear Cottage is open to all children in NSW (and nationally on a case-by-case basis) regardless of where they receive their primary care. Families do not pay for any Bear Cottage services and all operating expenses are raised entirely through donated funds.

Located on Sydney's Northern Beaches, Bear Cottage allows families to take a break from the ongoing routine of caring for a sick child which can extend over many years.

Bear Cottage's facilities include 6 patient rooms, 4 family suites, a spa, multi-sensory room, a games room and wheelchair swing. Staff include chefs, play, art and music therapists, specialised paediatric palliative care nursing staff, social workers and even a resident dog called Frankie for that home touch.

Catering for the unique needs of terminally ill children and their families, Bear Cottage highlights the importance of a facility that meets the ongoing needs of children with life limiting illnesses.

"While we often associate palliative care with the final few months of adult life, for children it can be very different," says Narelle Martin, Nursing Unit Manager of Bear Cottage.

"The period of terminal care is often longer, the number of people affected by the patient's illness can be larger and respite care for the whole family is incredibly important. Here at Bear Cottage we care for the whole family to ensure the time remaining for the patients and their families is as relaxing and rewarding as possible – it's about adding life to years, not years to life,"

Bear Cottage

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Simon Cohen, paediatrician and pain specialist at Bear Cottage knows how vital the service is to the children and families who come here.

"Palliative care is about improving the quality of lives of children with a life limiting condition and their families. At Bear Cottage, we can offer valuable respite in a home-like environment. The medical needs of the child can be managed by experienced nurses and attention paid to symptom and pain care. Play, art and music therapists can interact with the children and their siblings. Even children with severe disabilities can get an opportunity to enjoy the spa or access the multisensory room which stimulates sight, sound and touch.

The parents of the children are not forgotten with the availability of psychological and bereavement support not to mention a chef to cook meals!

In the case of dying children who need terminal care, Bear Cottage is able to provide the pain and symptom management together with the environment to allow this to happen as close as possible to how the family would want. We cannot take away from the sadness of an event like this but we can try to improve the quality of that precious time."

Since opening in March 2001, Bear Cottage has made a significant difference to the lives of over 600 families, be it a much needed break for the entire family, end of life care or ongoing bereavement support.

Bear Cottage is a purpose built facility which the whole family can visit with their child - be it once or a number of times over the period of their child's illness.

Palliative Care Week runs from Sunday 19 May until Saturday 25 May. To make a donation to Bear Cottage please visit www.bearcottage.chw.edu.au or call (02) 9976 8300.

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**To arrange an interview or for further information please contact
Bronwen Simmons, Community Relations Officer on 02 9976 8304 or 0425 292 491.**



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