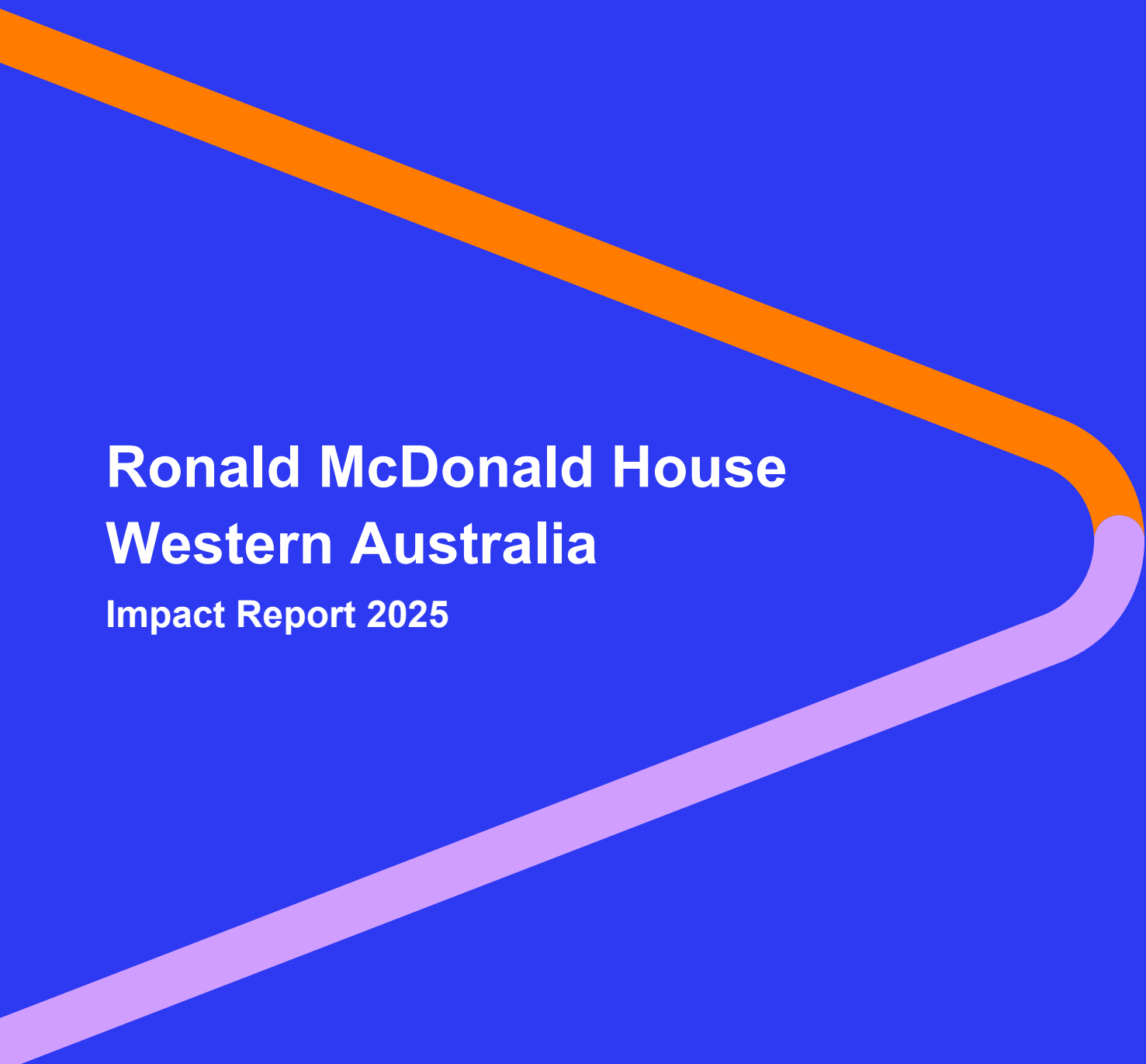




Ronald McDonald House Western Australia

Impact Report 2025



Acknowledgment of Country

Social Ventures Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past and present traditional custodians and elders of this country on which we work.

‘After the Rains’ by Richard Seden for Saltwater People 2024

Legal disclosure statement

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This report has been prepared by Social Ventures Australia (SVA) Consulting.

Social Ventures Australia (SVA) is a not-for-profit organisation that works with partners to alleviate disadvantage – towards an Australia where all people and communities thrive.

We influence systems to deliver better social outcomes for people by learning about what works in communities, helping organisations be more effective, sharing our perspectives and advocating for change.

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 15 years of working with not-for-profits, government and funders, we have developed a deep understanding of the sector and 'what works'.

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

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

Term	Description
Aboriginal	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
ACCOs	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations
Country	The traditional land and area of which Aboriginal people recognise and come from across Australia
Elders	Aboriginal people in community recognised as leaders
FLOs	Family Liaison Officers
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
NICU	Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
PATS	Patient Assisted Travel Scheme
PCH	Perth Children's Hospital
SVA	Social Ventures Australia
WA	Western Australia

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Executive summary

The mission of Ronald McDonald House Australia is to provide essential services that remove barriers, strengthen families, and promote healing when children need medical healthcare. The Ronald McDonald House Australia system comprises independent chapters around the world, providing essential services to families far from home, jobs, schools and loved ones. Established in 1990, Ronald McDonald House WA today supports an average of 2,000 new and returning patients and families from every region in Western Australia through supported family accommodation, continued education for young patients and siblings, in-hospital support, child and family experiences, and Ronald McDonald House Family Retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton.

Ronald McDonald House WA plays a critical role in supporting families with ill or injured children to stay together, close to care, during some of the most difficult periods of their lives. Through accommodation, practical support, family spaces, education programs, respite and wellbeing supports, Ronald McDonald House WA helps reduce the emotional, financial and logistical pressures that families experience when a child needs medical treatment away from home.

This 2025 Impact Report presents findings from data collected between January and December 2025. It builds on impact reporting undertaken since 2021 and continues to assess Ronald McDonald House WA's contribution to family wellbeing, sibling support and the wellbeing of children receiving treatment. The report is guided by Ronald McDonald House WA's Wellbeing Framework, which recognises that supporting the whole family is central to supporting the child. The framework focuses on four domains of family wellbeing: emotional wellbeing, financial wellbeing, cultural wellbeing and physical environment wellbeing.

In 2025, families continued to report that staying with Ronald McDonald House WA had a strong positive impact on their wellbeing. On average, family wellbeing increased from 3.2 out of 5 before arriving to 4.0 out of 5 during the stay. The counterfactual data shows that without Ronald McDonald House WA, families expected their wellbeing to be substantially worse, particularly in relation to emotional and financial wellbeing. Families reported that, without Ronald McDonald House WA, their emotional wellbeing would have averaged 2.1 out of 5 and their financial wellbeing would have averaged 2.0 out of 5.

The strongest impacts were seen in reduced stress and anxiety, improved financial stability, stronger family connection and the ability for siblings and children receiving treatment to feel safe, included and supported. Overall, 93.5% of families agreed or strongly agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped reduce their stress and/or anxiety. Families also reported that Ronald McDonald House WA helped them maintain a sense of normal life, stay close to one another, manage practical pressures and focus their energy on supporting their child.

Families particularly valued the proximity to hospital, the availability of accommodation, meals and family-friendly spaces, and the care provided by staff, volunteers and Family Liaison Officers (FLOs). For regional and remote families, Ronald McDonald House WA reduced the burden of travel, accommodation costs, hospital parking, food expenses and unfamiliar city logistics. For many families, this support meant they could remain together during treatment rather than being separated or placed under further financial and emotional pressure.

The findings also show that Ronald McDonald House WA supports siblings and children receiving treatment in ways that extend beyond accommodation. Among families who stayed with siblings, 94% agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their other child or children feel included and happy, and 94% agreed it helped them feel less stressed or anxious. For children receiving treatment, 94% of families agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their child feel calm, safe and supported.

While the findings are overwhelmingly positive, the report also identifies opportunities to strengthen Ronald McDonald House WA's impact. Families and staff highlighted the importance of culturally safe support, particularly for Aboriginal families and families travelling from regional and remote communities. They also identified the need for more support for families with accessibility needs, stronger referral pathways and partnerships, and continued investment in FLO capacity and wellbeing.

Based on the findings, this report identifies five recommendations for Ronald McDonald House WA:

1. Strengthen culturally safe support for Aboriginal families
2. Strengthen the family navigation role through partnerships and referral pathways
3. Ensure FLOs have the capacity, tools and wellbeing support to sustain their role
4. Improve support for families with accessibility and complex needs
5. Improve food, nutrition and self-catering options for families with complex needs

Together, the findings show that Ronald McDonald House WA provides more than a place to stay. It offers stability, relief, connection and care at a time when families are navigating significant uncertainty. By supporting families' wellbeing, Ronald McDonald House WA helps create the conditions for children receiving treatment to feel safer, more supported and more connected to family life.

2025 Impact Snapshot

Ronald McDonald House WA demonstrated for another year the positive impact families report on their emotional and financial wellbeing by staying at the Ronald McDonald Houses.

Table 1: Impact snapshot of 2025 for Ronald McDonald House WA

2,789	3,965	433	253
Families	Family stays	Volunteers	Impact surveys

In 2025, Ronald McDonald House WA continued to make a substantial difference to families' wellbeing when facing a medical crisis. Families reported that Ronald McDonald House WA helped protect them from emotional, financial and further strain, while enabling them to stay close to their child, maintain connection and access a safe and supportive environment. 2,789 families stayed at Ronald McDonald Houses in WA over 3,965 stays. Of those, 71% (1,986) of families were new, and 29% (803) has stayed before.

Family wellbeing improved during the stay

Average family wellbeing increased from 3.2 out of 5 before arriving to 4.0 out of 5 during the stay. This indicates that Ronald McDonald House WA helped families stabilise and improve their wellbeing during a period that would otherwise have placed significant pressure on the whole family.

Emotional wellbeing was protected

Families' emotional wellbeing improved from an average of 3.4 out of 5 before arriving to 4.1 out of 5 during the stay. Without Ronald McDonald House WA, families reported that their emotional wellbeing would have averaged only 2.1 out of 5. Ronald McDonald House WA not only improves emotional wellbeing during a stay but helps prevent a much sharper decline during a period of crisis.

Financial pressure was reduced

Without Ronald McDonald House WA, families reported that their financial wellbeing would have averaged only 2.0 out of 5. This reflects the significant value of free or low-cost accommodation, meals, proximity to hospital and reduced travel and parking costs.

Cultural wellbeing remained strong

Families reported strong cultural wellbeing before and during their stay, increasing slightly from 4.3 out of 5 before arriving to 4.4 out of 5 during the stay. Without Ronald McDonald House WA, families reported that their cultural

wellbeing would have averaged 3.3 out of 5. Families particularly valued culturally safe support, including the presence of Aboriginal staff and opportunities for cultural connection.

The physical environment provided safety and stability

Families rated Ronald McDonald House WA highly as a safe, healthy and enjoyable home-away-from-home, with an average score of 4.4 out of 5 during their stay. Families valued clean and comfortable rooms, communal kitchens, play spaces, proximity to hospital, meals, family rooms and practical amenities giving a space to rest.

Families felt less stressed and anxious

Overall, 93.5% of families agreed or strongly agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped reduce their stress and/or anxiety. Families described the relief of not having to worry about accommodation, food, travel, parking or being far from hospital while their child was receiving treatment.

Families stayed connected and supported

Families gave an average score of 4.4 out of 5 for Ronald McDonald House WA helping them maintain a sense of normal life and feel closer to each other. Overall, 89.6% of families agreed or strongly agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their family maintain normality and connection during their stay.

Siblings were included and supported

In 2025, of the families surveyed, 98 families stayed with siblings. Among these families, 94% agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their other child or children feel included and happy, and 94% agreed it helped them feel less stressed or anxious. This shows Ronald McDonald House WA plays an important role in supporting the whole family, not only the child receiving treatment.

Children receiving treatment felt calm, safe and supported

Families gave an average score of 4.5 out of 5 for Ronald McDonald House WA helping their child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported. Overall, 94% of families agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Families felt stronger in the longer term

Families gave an average score of 4.4 out of 5 for Ronald McDonald House WA helping them feel stronger and more resilient to cope with difficult circumstances. Overall, 89.3% of families agreed or strongly agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their family feel stronger and more resilient.

Recommendations

Based on interviews with families, challenges facing families before arriving and during their stays, there are five recommendations. They are further explored at the end of this report.

Table 2: Recommendations for Ronald McDonald WA Impact Report 2025

1	Strengthen culturally safe support for Aboriginal families
2	Strengthen the family navigation role through partnerships and referral pathways
3	Ensure FLOs have the capacity, tools and wellbeing support to sustain their role
4	Improve support for families with accessibility and complex needs
5	Improve food, nutrition and self-catering options for families with complex needs

About this report

Overview of Ronald McDonald House WA

Ronald McDonald House WA has been helping families in WA with ill or injured children stay together and supported since 1990. When a family is faced with their child's medical journey it can have a devastating effect on the whole family. 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.

Programs

Ronald McDonald House WA has a wide range of programs that help families stay together so they have the support of loved ones when they need it most. These programs include Ronald McDonald House, the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program, Ronald McDonald House Family Retreats and Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms. This impact report focuses on how families' wellbeing is supported during their stay, and how it would have otherwise deteriorated if not for Ronald McDonald House WA.



Ronald McDonald Houses

Ronald McDonald House at QEII, Ronald McDonald House on Park and Ronald McDonald House Parent Accommodation Facility in Perth Children's Hospital

The Houses provide essential accommodation, care and support for families 365 days a year, in close proximity to Perth Children's Hospital (PCH). Ronald McDonald House at QEII has 47 bedrooms and is located steps away from PCH. Within PCH, Ronald McDonald House WA manages the Parent Accommodation Facility which has 14 bedrooms and provides accommodation for parents and carers of children in intensive care. Ronald McDonald House on Park became fully operational in August 2024 and has 50 rooms. Families at Ronald McDonald House on Park enjoy studio-apartment-style accommodation, which includes a kitchenette. All Houses provide key essential services such as meals and domestic and recreational facilities. Additional programs, including the Bass Family Foundation Learning Centre, playgroups and wellbeing support sessions, are provided at Ronald McDonald House at QEII.

Families are supported across all Ronald McDonald House locations by our Family Liaison Officers (FLOs), along with 433 registered volunteers.

In addition to the provision of accommodation through Ronald McDonald House WA, the following programs are also provided for families to access. While these are not the primary focus of this yearly impact report, many families who participated in the evaluation have also accessed the following programs along with staying at Ronald McDonald House WA.



Ronald McDonald House Learning Program

The Ronald McDonald House Learning Program supports primary and secondary students to progress their education through illness by offering one-to-one tutoring by qualified education practitioners in person and online across the state. The Ronald McDonald House Learning Program also provides occupational and speech therapy to support students' needs in tutoring.



Ronald McDonald House Family Retreats

Ronald McDonald House WA Family Retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton give families with an ill or injured child, or those suffering from the death of a child, the necessary opportunity to take a break and spend time together in a relaxing environment. Ronald McDonald House Family Retreats offer families important time for respite, recovery, healing and reconnecting with each other.



Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms

The Ronald McDonald House Family Room located on the Ground Floor, Kulunga Moort Mia and the Ronald McDonald House Family Room Fun on Four at PCH, along with the Ronald McDonald House Family Room at Peel Health Campus, are all designed to support the physical, emotional and practical needs of families during their child's hospital stay. The rooms provide a relaxing haven within the hospital, giving families a break from the stress of many hours spent by their child's bedside. All family members, including the child undergoing treatment, as well as friends, can access the Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms.

Ronald McDonald House WA's Impact Journey

Ronald McDonald House WA initially engaged SVA in 2021 to undertake an evaluation of its accommodation and support services to better understand and report on Ronald McDonald House WA's impact on families (parents, carers and siblings) and children receiving treatment, and in turn, identify opportunities for improvement.

As a first step, SVA worked with Ronald McDonald House WA to develop an Outcomes Framework and Evaluation Plan to guide the evaluation process. This included developing a Theory of Change and identifying key outcomes Ronald McDonald House WA sought to achieve for families and children receiving treatment, as well as relevant indicators and output measures. The 2021 Impact Report was produced, providing key findings alongside recommendations for Ronald McDonald House WA to generate even greater impact for families in the future.

Following the 2021 Impact Report, the Outcomes Framework and data collection processes were simplified to enable the evaluation to sustainably occur each year without excessive burden on Ronald McDonald House WA staff and volunteers.

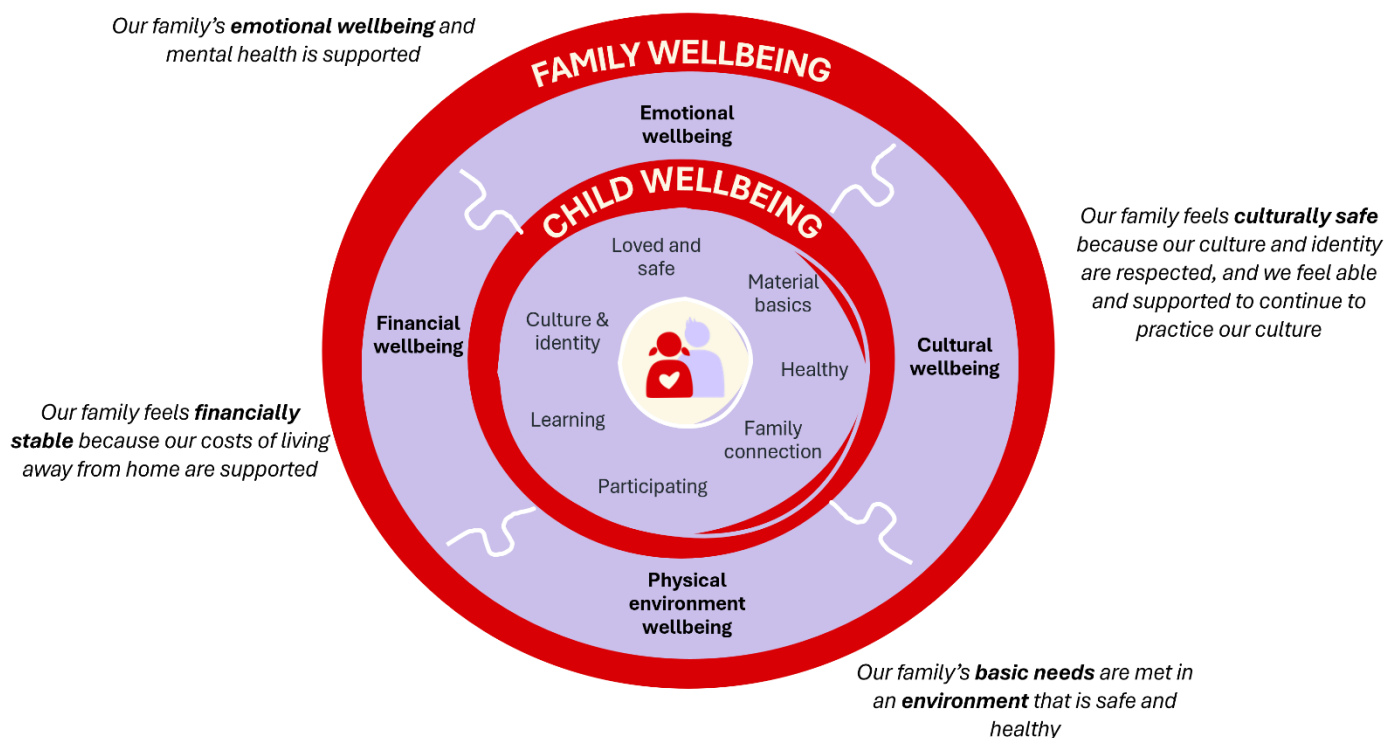
This 2025 Impact Report provides the key findings and recommendations from the data collected from January to December 2025. In 2026, all chapters of Ronald McDonald House Australia are undertaking a refreshed approach to outcomes measurement and management to align reporting.

In 2021, SVA worked with Ronald McDonald House WA to develop an Outcomes Framework, which comprises Ronald McDonald House WA's Wellbeing Framework and Logic Model. In 2024, further research on measuring wellbeing was undertaken by SVA. The research outlined that it aligns against other wellbeing frameworks across both Western Australia and Australia, validating the relevance and longevity of the Wellbeing Framework. Guided by the Outcomes Framework, an Evaluation Plan was developed which includes data collection methods, frequency and roles and responsibilities. These are available in the 2021 Impact Report. Following the 2021 Impact Report, the Outcomes Framework and Evaluation Plan were revised to reduce the administrative and reporting burden on Ronald McDonald House WA staff and volunteers, and to ensure Ronald McDonald House WA's focus on enhanced family wellbeing is central to the Outcomes Framework.

Ronald McDonald House WA's Wellbeing Framework

Ronald McDonald House WA's Wellbeing Framework is centred on the concept that enhanced family wellbeing results in greater child wellbeing. Ronald McDonald House WA's purpose is to 'play a unique role in enabling, facilitating and supporting family-centred care within the Western Australian maternity, child and adolescent health systems. The Outcomes Framework is built around Ronald McDonald House WA's Wellbeing Framework, which focuses on the emotional, financial, cultural, and physical environment wellbeing of families. By focusing on the wellbeing of the family, the wellbeing of the child is improved.

Figure 1: Ronald McDonald House WA Wellbeing Framework



Outcomes Framework

The Outcomes Framework outlines the key outcomes Ronald McDonald House WA seeks to achieve for families and children's wellbeing. For each outcome domain, a set of priority outcomes and indicators have been developed.

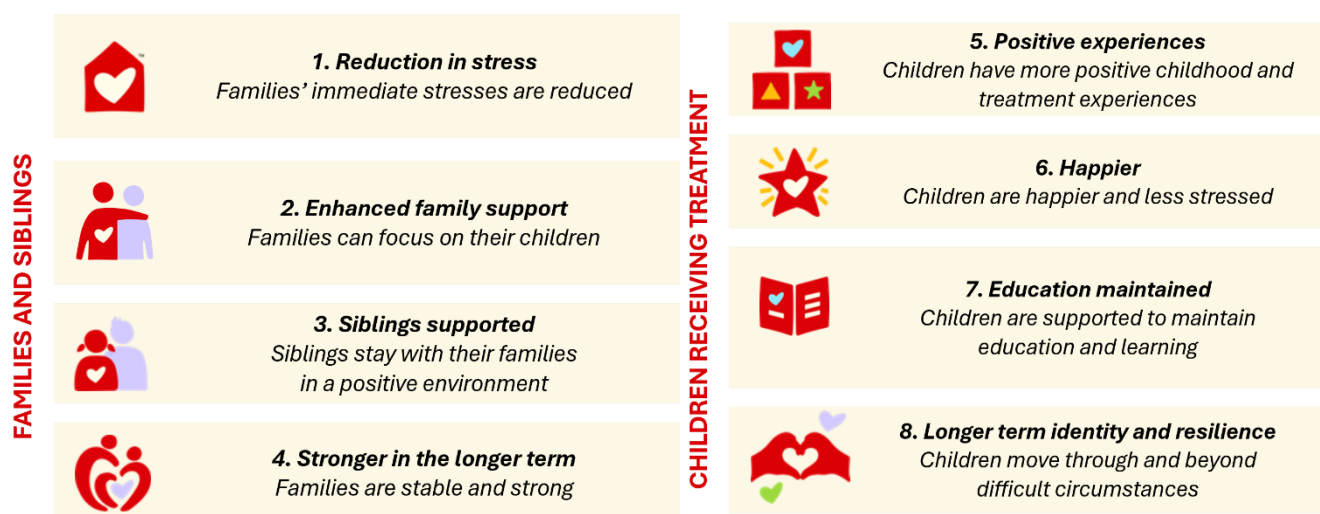
Acknowledging the holistic nature of outcomes, the Outcomes Framework includes:

1. Overarching family wellbeing domains (emotional, financial, physical environment, and cultural)
2. Outcome domains for families (parents/carers and siblings)
3. Outcome domains for children receiving treatment.

In 2026, Ronald McDonald House Australia is undertaking a national project to align outcomes across all chapters. Changes may be made to Ronald McDonald House WA's Outcomes Framework and Wellbeing Framework, and therefore to the survey questions and how data is collected and reported in the future.

Table 3: Description of outcome domains in Ronald McDonald WA Wellbeing Framework

Descriptions of outcome domains for families and children



Data collection tools

To understand the impact created by Ronald McDonald House WA, data was collected through the family survey, and by conducting in-person and telephone interviews with families and Ronald McDonald House WA staff.

The family survey is always open and is sent to families after staying at Ronald McDonald House WA Houses, regardless of how many times they have stayed or the duration of their stay. The questions seek to understand how the stay has impacted them. While the survey is distributed by Ronald McDonald House WA, the raw data is provided to SVA at various points throughout the year for analysis.

Interviews are conducted at Ronald McDonald House at QEII and Ronald McDonald House on Park twice throughout the year during dinner time by SVA consultants. Flyers and promotional materials are handed out and placed around the Ronald McDonald Houses in WA to inform families. In the family survey, respondents are also asked to leave their contact information if they would like the opportunity to provide more feedback about their experience. Interviewees are then randomly selected by Ronald McDonald House WA staff or SVA consultants and contacted. During the interviews, SVA consultants seek to understand the outcomes Ronald McDonald House WA hopes to achieve in further detail. This also provides an opportunity to understand families' context and the challenges they face before arriving and after leaving.

Data analysis

Data regarding family outcomes is collected through quantitative surveys where carers rate their wellbeing across four core domains: emotional, financial, cultural, and physical environment. Families score their experiences on a 1 to 5 scale (e.g., ranging from 'very poor' to 'very good', or 'stressful' to 'easy to manage'). To accurately measure the program's impact, the surveys ask families to rate these domains across three distinct timeframes: 'Just before arriving', 'During the stay', and 'If not for Ronald McDonald House WA' (measuring the counterfactual). Furthermore, comprehensive qualitative data is collected via one-on-one interviews that ask carers to describe their overall experience, how their wellbeing was impacted, and how they felt upon arriving and leaving Ronald McDonald WA Houses.

In 2025, there were 253 survey responses. Of those, 27% of respondents (or a family member staying at Ronald McDonald House WA) identified as Aboriginal. The majority (43%) of respondents were staying for 5–14 days. Almost three quarters (72%) were staying for the first time. More than half (52%) stayed at Ronald McDonald House on Park at some point during 2025. Distances from Perth were most commonly 100–300 km (25%), 300–500 km (24%), and 1,100 km+ (24%).

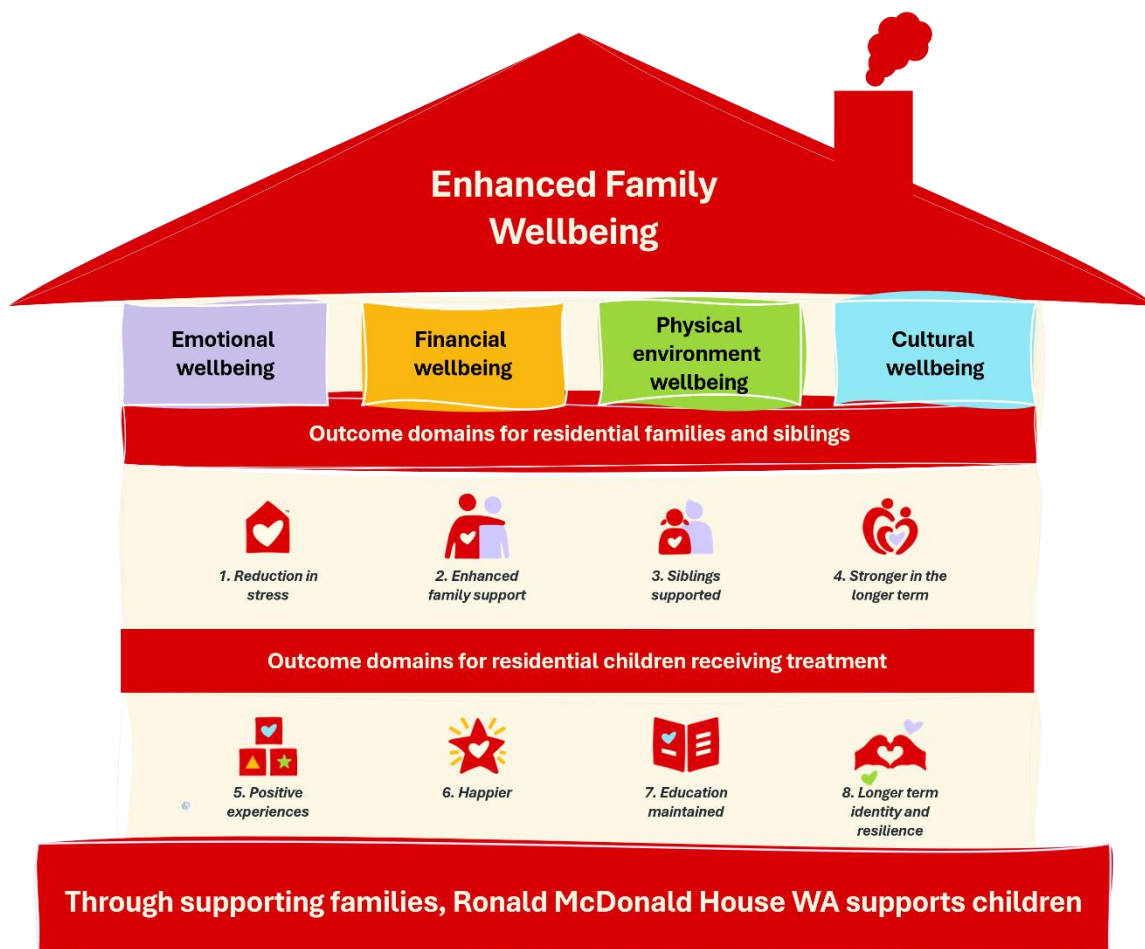
Enhanced family wellbeing

The Family Wellbeing Framework is designed to help Ronald McDonald House WA measure its impact on a family's overall wellbeing during a medical crisis. It is built on the understanding that when a child is diagnosed with a serious illness or injury, it affects the whole family's wellbeing. By supporting the family's holistic needs, the framework ensures caregivers can maintain their own wellbeing and focus their energy on supporting the child receiving treatment.

The framework defines family wellbeing across several core domains:

- **Emotional wellbeing:** Ensuring the family feels emotionally well by having their mental health and emotional needs actively looked after and supported.
- **Physical environment wellbeing:** Ensuring the family feels physically safe because their basic needs, such as food and shelter, are provided for, and the physical environment itself is safe, pleasant, and stimulating.
- **Financial wellbeing:** Helping the family remain financially stable so they can meet current commitments, manage the costs of living away from home, and build financial resilience for the future.
- **Cultural wellbeing:** Ensuring the family feels culturally safe, meaning their culture and identity are deeply respected, and they are actively supported to continue practicing their culture during their stay.

Figure 2: Ronald McDonald WA Family Wellbeing Framework



Through these wellbeing domains, there are four primary priority outcomes for families and siblings:

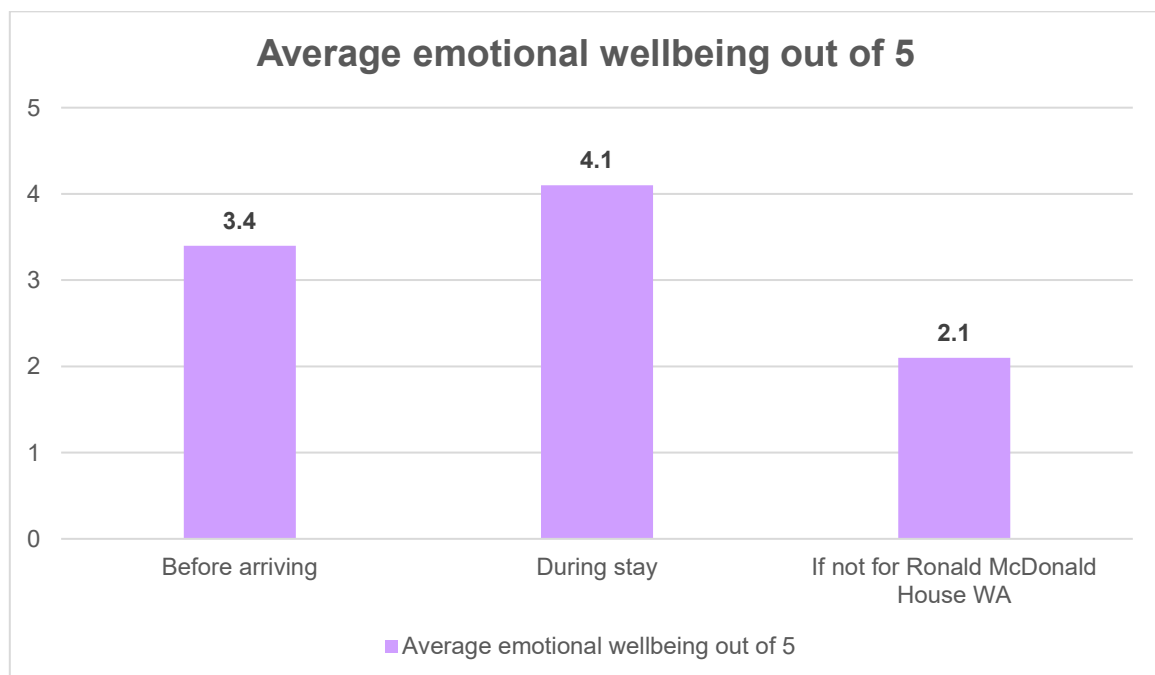
- 1. Reduction in stress:** Families' immediate basic and emotional stresses are reduced.
- 2. Enhanced family support:** Families are able to rest, stay close to their children, maintain their family dynamic, and develop a supportive community network.
- 3. Siblings supported:** Healthy siblings are kept close to their families in a positive environment with access to play and learning spaces.
- 4. Stronger in the longer term:** Families are kept together and remain stable, meaning the disruption caused by the child's illness has a reduced long-term impact on their jobs, relationships, and future resilience.

Overall, survey results show that the average family wellbeing score increased significantly from 3.2 out of 5 before arriving to 4.0 out of 5 during the stay.

Emotional wellbeing

Staying at Ronald McDonald House WA profoundly impacted the emotional wellbeing of family members by offering crucial stability, reducing anxiety, and fostering a supportive community, though families still had to navigate the inherent emotional challenges of displacement. Just before arriving, families' emotional wellbeing was mixed, with 18.8% rating their emotional wellbeing as poor or very poor, 32.4% rating it as moderate, and 48.8% rating it as good or very good. During their stay, emotional wellbeing improved substantially, with 81.6% of families rating their emotional wellbeing as good or very good, while only 2.4% remained in the poor or very poor categories. If families had not been able to stay, 70% said their emotional wellbeing would have been poor or very poor, and only 12% said it would have been good or very good. This presents an average of 2.1 out of 5 in the counterfactual scenario.

Graph 1: Average emotional wellbeing scores by Impact Survey respondents in 2025



The primary emotional wellbeing impacts included:

- **Drastic reduction in stress and anxiety:** Families noted that having this safety net significantly alleviated their overarching stress, with one parent explicitly describing the experience as an *“emotional relief”* and another noting it *“helped everyone’s mental health drastically”*. The immediate proximity to the hospital was also a critical factor, as carers noted they would have felt extremely anxious if they were not close by.

A father travelled from regional WA while his son underwent serious treatment, facing uncertainty around accommodation and logistics. Removing these pressures created immediate emotional relief and allowed him to be fully present.

“Our journey began while we were on holiday up north, though we live down south. It was a complete surprise emergency, and the support and care we received was amazing. We are so thankful and appreciative of everyone involved in this service. It immediately relieved so much of the stress and anxiety of our sudden family emergency when we were so far from home.”

- **Building mental strength and stability:** For families enduring a traumatic medical crisis, the House served as a vital stabilising force, described by one caregiver as the *“one stable thing in their lives”*. The consistent, reliable care offered immense relief, which one father stated was the *“most humbling positive thing”* about their journey and directly made them *“mentally strong enough to get through this”*.
- **Combating isolation through camaraderie:** The emotional toll of a severe paediatric illness can be incredibly isolating, making it *“hard to exist in the outside world when others don’t see your world is crumbling”*. Ronald McDonald House WA actively combated this loneliness by fostering a *“sense of camaraderie”* among the guests. Caregivers found it immensely comforting to *“talk to people who truly understood what [they were] going through”*, which allowed them to be an empathetic ear for others while feeling deeply heard themselves. Simply interacting with other families in similar situations provided a crucial sense of connection.

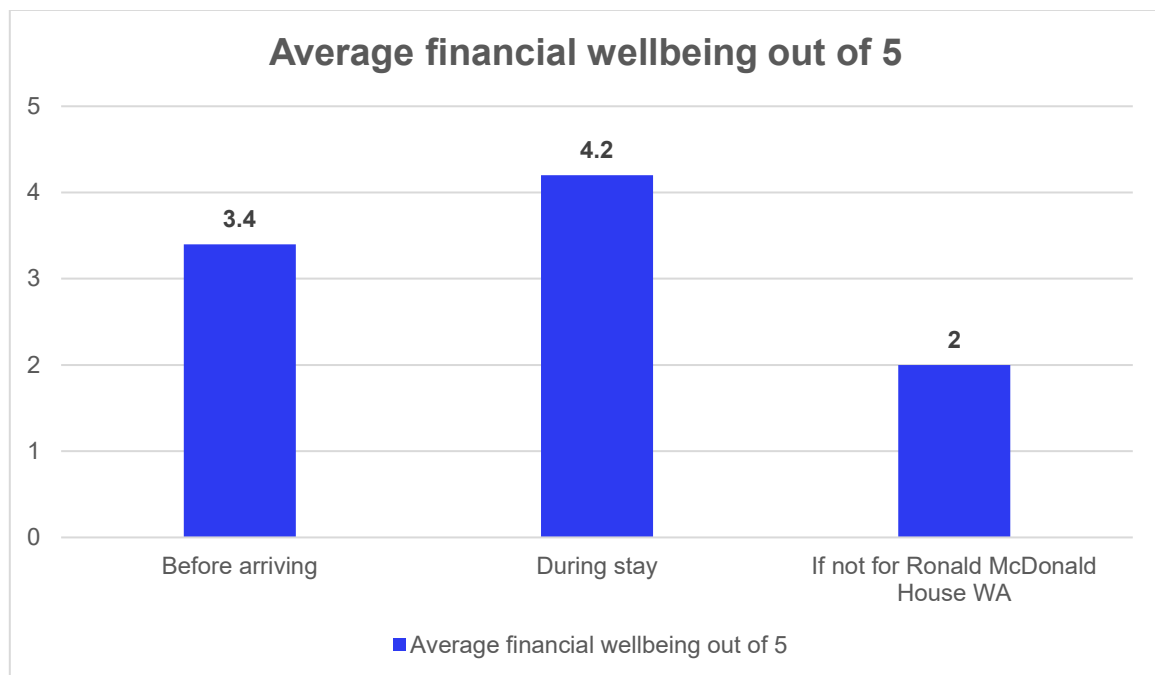
“Yeah, it took away the worry... not having to get back to Tom Price, flights, buses. I didn’t have to worry about anything. Imagine that your kid is in hospital and you’re trying to find where to stay and the stress of it — it’s not something you should have to worry about on top of everything else.”

- **Facilitating spousal connection and routine:** The environment allowed carers to establish a functional day routine, giving them the ability to tag in and out of demanding hospital duties. Furthermore, the ability to stay together in a home-like environment gave couples much-needed time to *“debrief and connect for the first time in so long”* away from the clinical hospital wards.

Financial wellbeing

Staying at the Ronald McDonald House WA provided families with profound financial relief, primarily by eliminating exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses and mitigating the massive financial shock of having a child requiring medical care. Prior to arriving, families’ financial wellbeing was mixed, with 15.5% reporting that their financial situation was stressful or difficult to manage, 29.8% reporting it was just manageable, and 54.7% reporting it was manageable or easy to manage. During their stay, financial wellbeing improved substantially, with 86.1% of families reporting that their financial situation was manageable or easy to manage, while only 3.3% reported it was stressful or difficult to manage. If families had not been able to stay, 65.7% said their financial situation would have been stressful or difficult to manage, and only 15.9% said it would have been manageable or easy to manage. This presents an average of 2.0 out of 5 in the counterfactual scenario.

Graph 2: Average financial wellbeing scores by Impact Survey respondents in 2025



The key financial impacts included:

- **Eliminating exorbitant accommodation costs:** Families noted that without Ronald McDonald House WA, finding alternative lodging near the hospital would have been incredibly expensive. Providing free accommodation prevented the “*near impossible*” financial burden of families trying to fund a second living space while maintaining their primary residence.
- **Drastic savings on food:** Relying on hospital food courts is notoriously expensive, with one mother noting that lunch at the hospital café could easily add up to \$70. By providing complimentary meals and fully equipped kitchens, Ronald McDonald House WA saved families from the daily struggle of buying their own food.

A regional family faced lost income and high living costs while in Perth for care. Accommodation and meals reduced financial pressure and prevented further hardship.

“My husband had to miss work, and that’s hard. But it’s so good because meals were provided. We would have been in a worse state if not for Ronald McDonald House WA. Before, we had to buy our own food, and it was a bit of a struggle.”

- **Reducing travel and commuting expenses:** Being located directly on or near the hospital grounds saved families from high daily fuel costs and the recurring expense of hospital parking. This was especially crucial for regional families because government travel subsidies, such as the Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATs), often only provide \$100, leaving families to cover the remaining costly travel differences out of their own pockets.

“I was flown 650km away from home with no finance. Staying with Ronald McDonald House WA helped me big time. Even when my grandson was discharged, I was allowed to stay here with him until my family picked me up. This is an awesome support, especially for people staying in Perth from regional and remote areas.”

- **Mitigating the shock of lost income:** Having a critically ill child forced many carers to miss work or transition to an often-struggling single-income household so one carer could act as a full-time caregiver. The financial relief of Ronald McDonald House WA allowed these carers to navigate regular living expenses, such as *“paying the mortgage and feeding [their] other children”*, without the added burden of medical accommodation costs. Furthermore, the spaces allowed some carers to work remotely, helping them maintain a vital level of income while still actively caring for their child or children.

“With no family here in Perth, accommodation really helped us. Having food provided meant one less worry, especially with my husband working as a casual. All of a sudden, we had no work and no pay. Staying at Ronald McDonald House WA was a big help to our financial situation.”

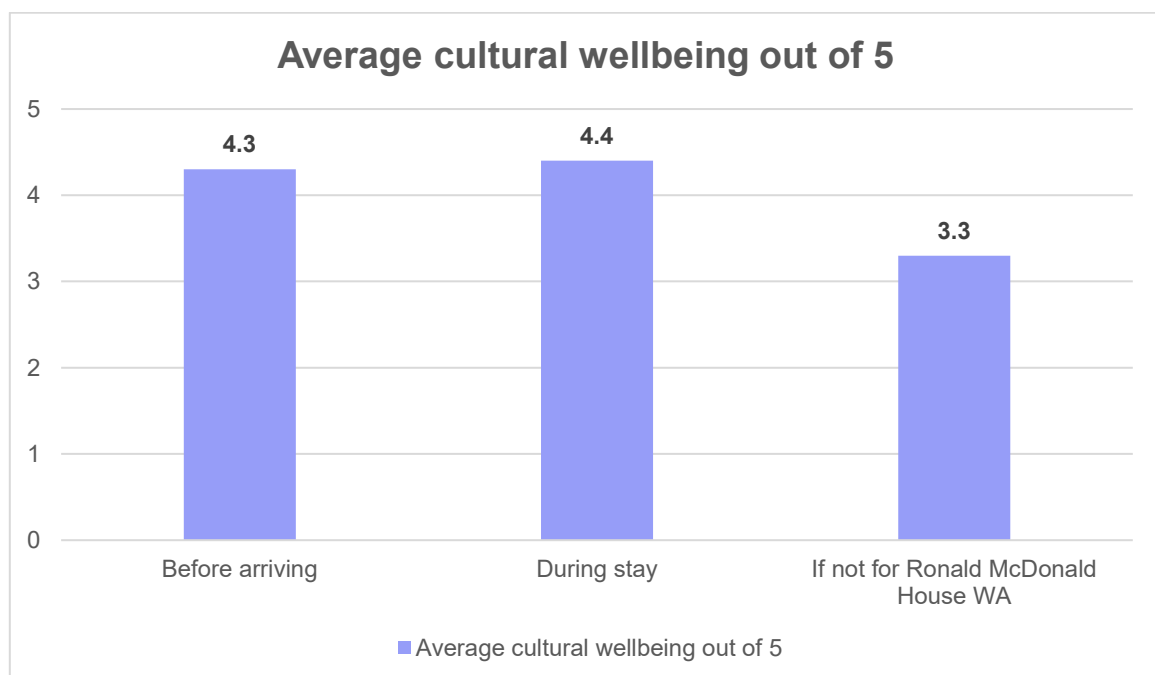
- **Alleviating financial worry:** Ultimately, Ronald McDonald House WA almost completely removed the overarching stress of financial logistics. As one interview highlighted, money is *“not something you should have to worry about”* on top of having a child requiring medical care and attention, and Ronald McDonald House WA allowed them to *“stay together as a family unit without having to constantly dread the financial impact”*.

“I knew Ronald McDonald House WA existed but not for people like us. We could have afforded to stay at a hotel but the closest hotel that we could have afforded was half an hour away. Still, I didn’t think I was eligible. The staff made me feel comfortable and that I was welcome.”

Cultural wellbeing

Before arriving, families’ cultural wellbeing was already strong, with 1.2% rating their cultural wellbeing as low or very low, 11.7% rating it as moderate, and 87.0% rating it as good or very good. During their stay, cultural wellbeing improved slightly, with 92.6% of families rating their cultural wellbeing as good or very good, while only 1.2% rated it as low or very low. If families had not been able to stay, 24.5% said their cultural wellbeing would have been low or very low, and 45.6% said it would have been good or very good. This presents an average of 3.3 out of 5 in the counterfactual scenario.

Graph 3: Average cultural wellbeing scores by Impact Survey respondents in 2025



- **Culturally specific activities:** These statistical improvements were supported by inclusive initiatives, such as Ronald McDonald House at QEII hosting an Aboriginal week led by an Aboriginal Noongar staff member, the sharing of Noongar language names, and cultural items. *“The presence of dedicated Aboriginal support workers also helped build a secure, trusting environment”* for families.
- **The Aboriginal support worker plays a crucial role in ensuring that families feel culturally safe and that their identity and culture are respected:** For Aboriginal families, this worker helps build a vital foundation of security and trust. This role directly contributes to Ronald McDonald House WA's Cultural Wellbeing Framework, which ensures families are supported in practicing their culture.

An Aboriginal mother travelling for care described the importance of trust and safety in an unfamiliar environment. Culturally appropriate support and a welcoming environment enabled comfort, connection and trust.

“I don't trust anyone usually... but here I'm happy to let my son walk around. The staff are really friendly, very caring, and the Aboriginal worker is very good. It feels safe and comfortable.”

- **Alternative cultural activities:** Family members expressed a desire to engage in activities such as yoga and music, and the desire to lead these activities as well, with the joint goal of creating connection among families. Some carers also mentioned they were eager to lead activities as a way to keep themselves occupied, with many carers mentioning the need for more opportunities to be engaged and kept busy.

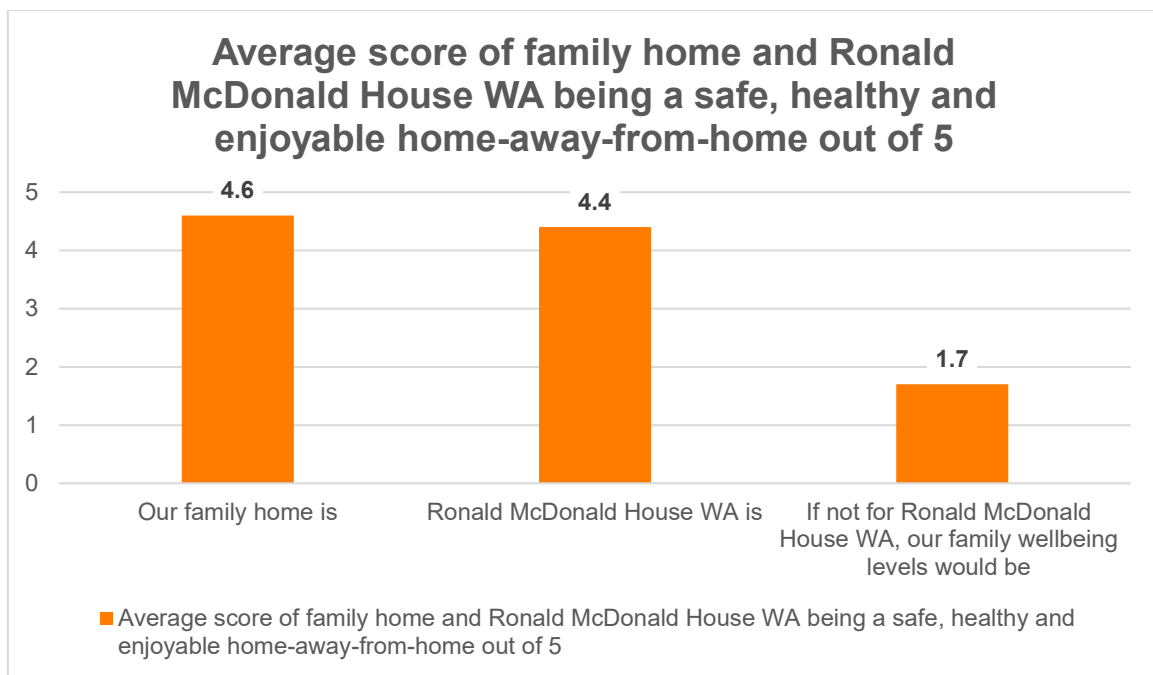
“As an active community member where I live, maybe there could be a program for carers, big kids, patients or little ones to volunteer for one or two hours if they have free time — not compulsory, just for them to feel like they are one family and useful, not just doing nothing.”

- **While these improvements are substantial, families suggested that cultural wellbeing could be further enhanced:** Suggestions included more opportunities to engage in different cultures, prayer rooms, storytelling time, more Noongar led activities, and an increased awareness of sensitivities existing in cultures.

Physical environment wellbeing

The physical environment of the Ronald McDonald House WA facilities played a crucial role in creating a ‘home away from home’ feeling for families, providing a stark contrast to isolated hotel rooms. However, the open-text responses from the family survey also identified several areas where the physical spaces could be improved that would help to increase their physical environment wellbeing. Just before arriving, families’ physical environment wellbeing was very strong, with 2.0% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing that their family home was a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment, 2.4% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 95.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing. During their stay, families continued to report very strong physical environment wellbeing, with 93.1% agreeing or strongly agreeing that Ronald McDonald House WA felt like a safe, healthy and enjoyable home-away-from-home, while only 2.0% disagreed or strongly disagreed. If families had not been able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy and enjoyable environment provided by Ronald McDonald House WA, 86.2% agreed or strongly agreed this would have caused stress to their family wellbeing, while only 2.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This presents an average agreement score of 4.3 out of 5, indicating that most families expected the absence of this environment would have caused stress.

Graph 4: Average physical environment wellbeing scores by Impact Survey respondents in 2025



How the physical environment helped families feel at home:

- Spacious and well-equipped rooms:** The rooms, such as those at Ronald McDonald House at QEII, were praised for being *“clean, modern, and a generous size that could easily accommodate bulky items like prams and luggage”*. Families staying at Ronald McDonald House on Park noted that having a *“fully contained kitchenette with a fridge and kettle in the room made the space feel much more like a home”*, giving carers the flexibility to safely store food and prepare specific, nourishing diets for their children.

“It doesn’t feel like I’m living in a hotel room. It’s a place that is basically home for us, where we can relax, cook and play.”

- Comforting amenities:** Families highly valued physical comforts like *“high-pressure showers”*, which provided *“immense relief after traumatic days in the ICU or a long journey”*. This environment allowed families to feel like they were living in a *“miniature home”* rather than an isolated hotel room.

Parents supporting a newborn in hospital were previously managing sleep, hygiene and meals in clinical environments. Having access to showers, food and space enabled recovery from exhaustion and improved daily functioning.

“Being closer, having the space to do essentials... otherwise you’re sleeping in a recliner chair while breastfeeding. Having somewhere to shower, eat properly makes a huge difference.”

- Engaging recreational spaces:** The Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms within PCH provided a much-needed non-clinical escape that *“changed children’s engagement levels”*. It offered positive experiences through arts and crafts, library storytelling, and quiet play areas. For carers, the Ronald McDonald House Family Room Fun on Four and the Parent Accommodation Facility on Level 5 featured *“desks that allowed [them] to work remotely while indirectly monitoring [their] children”*.

“Staff were lovely and friendly. Anna loved interacting with everyone. It made it feel like a home away from home. Security even opened the playroom at 3am when she wouldn’t sleep.”*

*Not real name

- **Communal kitchens and decks:** For many families, the main communal kitchens were fantastic spaces to have domestic meals and *“naturally mingle and connect with others”*.

“First, we were in ICU. There were no windows, we couldn’t bring any fresh air in. The water pressure in the showers weren’t doing much. We got moved to Level 5 for 17 days and that made a huge difference for us, being able to access the family room and the deck. Then we got to Ronald McDonald House WA, and we stayed at both houses. Both were such a relief, from having the deck, the games room, a contained kitchen, or the proximity to the hospital. It was like, or more than, a miniature home for us. It helped our daughter with her recovery immensely. More needs to go into Ronald McDonald House WA, seriously it should be in the paper, everyone needs to talk about it more!”

Where the physical environment could be improved:

- **Upgrading furniture and maintenance:** Some physical fixtures needed attention. One respondent noted that the *“fold-out beds were not very comfortable especially for longer stays”*, prompting her son to move his mattress to the floor. Another family experienced a maintenance hazard when a shower rod fell and hit a father in the head.
- **Providing separate fridges, meal preparation space or alternative options:** Due to the complex health concerns many children were facing, the numerous appointments carers needed to attend, or concerns about cross-contamination, some carers highlighted the need for separate or additional fridges to prepare and store meals. While all were grateful for the meals provided, some families felt *“the meals weren’t providing the nutrition needed, [they] missed out on meal times, or as there was no kitchenette [they] were unable to store food safely”*.
- **Improving laundry access:** One carer suggested that the washing machines needed to be updated or supported by a volunteer laundry service, as there were *“too many hands”* trying to use the existing machines resulting in other people touching and moving laundry. However, offering a volunteer service may be out-of-scope, given the strain faced by FLOs and the decrease in volunteer numbers.
- **Managing outdoor smoke:** A mother with a newborn expressed frustration over *“people smoking outside near the construction areas”*, as the smell of cigarette smoke drifted into family spaces. This was highlighted as a concern for children’s health, given the main reason for being at a Ronald McDonald House WA was cancer treatment.
- **Dedicated gathering spaces for large families:** For families with many relatives, navigating communal spaces was tricky. Respondents suggested creating optional or additional *“separate eating areas”* and a specific *“indoor gathering space for large, extended families to meet, like a living room”*. This would prevent them from having to *“go outside to spend time together, which is particularly important when a sick child is unwell and just wants to stay in bed”*.
- **Available parking:** Many families staying at Ronald McDonald House WA come from regional and remote WA. While they may initially be transported via emergency services, they may later arrive (or be joined by other family members) with a car. Several families commented on the difficulty of *“find[ing] and secur[ing] parking long enough to attend hospital appointments”*, which was made *“harder in the stressful situation and not being familiar with the city area with so many different parking signs”*.

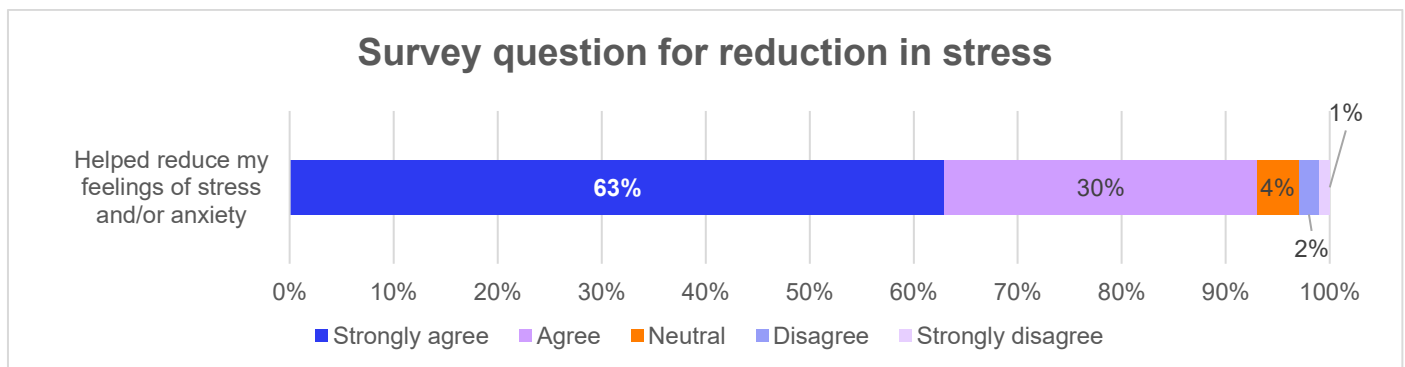
Outcomes for families and siblings

Staying at Ronald McDonald House WA impacts families across four key areas, utilising comprehensive support to navigate medical trauma.

Reduction in stress

Parents, carers, and siblings experience a profound reduction in stress during their stays, with survey data rating reduction in stress as a very high impact outcome (4.4 out of 5). Ronald McDonald House WA achieve this by actively removing massive external burdens so families can focus entirely on their child requiring treatment. Ronald McDonald House WA helped survey respondents reduce their own feelings of stress and anxiety, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5. Overall, 93.5% agreed or strongly agreed that staying at Ronald McDonald House WA helped reduce their stress and/or anxiety.

Graph 5: Impact Survey responses in 2025 to, 'Helped reduce my feelings of stress and/or anxiety'



This reduction in stress is experienced in several interconnected ways:

- Preventing severe wellbeing drops:** If families had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House WA, they rated their projected emotional wellbeing at a mere 1.8 out of 5 (poor) and financial wellbeing at 1.9 (difficult to manage). Furthermore, 44% strongly agreed that lacking access to Ronald McDonald House WA would have caused their family stress.

"We are truly grateful for what Ronald McDonald House WA has done for our family. We never felt unsafe and were always reassured that help was just a door knock away."

- Alleviating logistical and financial burdens:** Ronald McDonald House WA removes the immense worry of navigating flights, long-distance travel, expensive accommodations (such as \$450/night hotels or Airbnb's), and paying for hospital parking. Carers also noted that practical reliefs, such as *"not having to deal with hospital parking, made the whole situation substantially easier to manage"*.

"Not having to travel, the cost of fuel, the meals — it helped out a lot financially. We didn't realise how long we would have to be there, and not having to think about those things... it just gives you the mental capacity to deal with everything else that's going on."

- Helping to navigate the unknown:** Ronald McDonald House WA staff, especially FLOs and volunteers in Ronald McDonald House WA and Ronald McDonald House Parent Accommodation Facility in PCH, were mentioned as providing crucial support in reducing stress for caregivers and children by providing guidance on how to navigate the hospital system and information about different diagnoses. It was repeatedly heard that *"FLOs provided support when [they] didn't know where else to turn to or get*

answers from". Carers often sought assistance from FLOs to deal with complex issues ranging from security concerns to mental health challenges and more.

"The care and support from Ronald McDonald House WA has been outstanding. I have only the highest praise and compliments for an incredible organisation that, prior to my son's catastrophic head injuries, I knew nothing about. I have no doubt that Ronald McDonald House WA has been a key support for myself and my children over the past two and a half years."

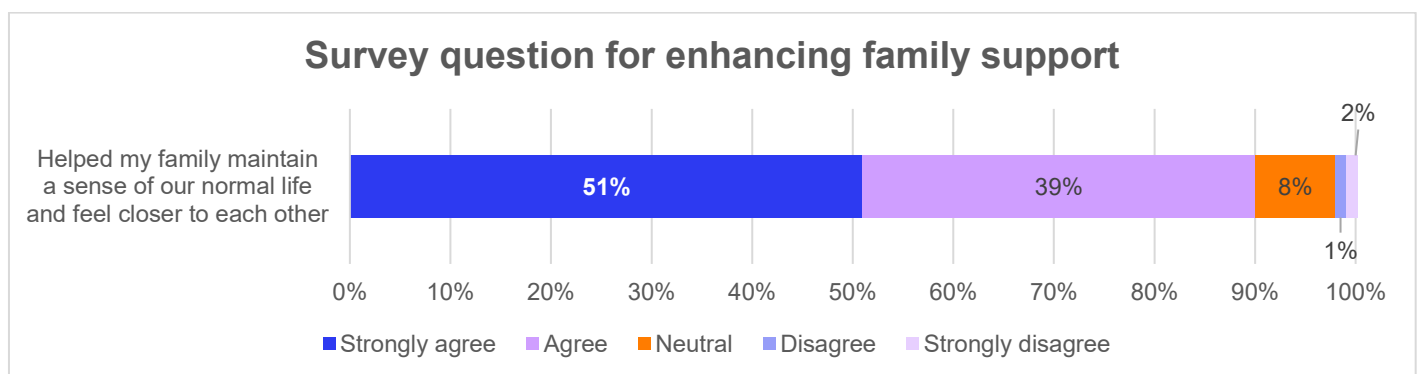
- **Proximity and the ability to 'tag in and out':** Being located directly on or near the hospital grounds drastically reduces anxiety, as many respondents in the family survey noted they would have *"felt extremely anxious if [they] were forced to stay further away"*. This proximity allowed caregivers to *"establish a functional day routine where [they] could easily tag in and out of demanding hospital caregiving duties"*, ensuring when there were two caregivers, both could get adequate rest.

"We are so appreciative and thankful to be able to stay close together and try to maintain as much normalcy as possible, given the circumstances. Our daughter has had to stay on the ward and has been unable to leave her room, and staying here has allowed my husband and I to take turns between the hospital and staying here with our three-year-old son."

Enhanced family support

Through accommodation and support services, Ronald McDonald House WA supports families to remain together during periods of significant challenge, fostering stability, connection and essential familial support. The 2025 framework highlights enhanced family support as a core outcome. Ronald McDonald House WA helped families maintain a sense of normal life and feel closer to each other during their stay. Families gave this an average score of 4.4 out of 5, with 89.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Graph 6: Impact Survey responses in 2025 to, 'Helped my family maintain a sense of our normal life and feel closer to each other'



- **Stabilising the family unit:** For families whose *"lives have been turned upside down, the House acts as the one stable thing in [their] lives"*. Being able to stay together as a whole family unit, rather than being separated, was cited as a *"massive mental health boost that gave [them] the strength to get through the ordeal"*.

"Without the service and your help, our family would not have been able to cope or stay connected. We cannot thank you enough for everything you and your staff have done."

- **Fostering camaraderie and support:** The emotional stress of isolation is mitigated by an incredibly supportive environment. Empathetic staff proactively handle needs before carers even have to ask, and

shared communal spaces allow carers to naturally “connect with other families who truly understand what everyone at the Ronald McDonald House WA is going through, taking a massive strain off [their] shoulders”.

“Over time I have figured out who the long-term families are. We catch each other on the fly; sometimes we catch up for an hour, and the kids share toys with each other. Surprisingly, through it all, we have made some dear friends.”

- Unique care and value from FLOs:** This support is perfectly summarised by a survey quote from a parent: “Knowing that we’re not just a number, we’re cared for and so are all the families.” Support is enhanced by the staff making the administrative transition from the hospital to Ronald McDonald House WA effortless and seamless, taking care of all logistics so carers can focus on supporting the child requiring medical care and treatment. Many families commented on the ease in which FLOs would book, rebook and take care of them when needing to stay or change their booking especially with short or no notice.

Families navigating hospital systems often feel isolated and unsupported. However, in interviews, it was heard that staff, volunteers and other families created a strong support network.

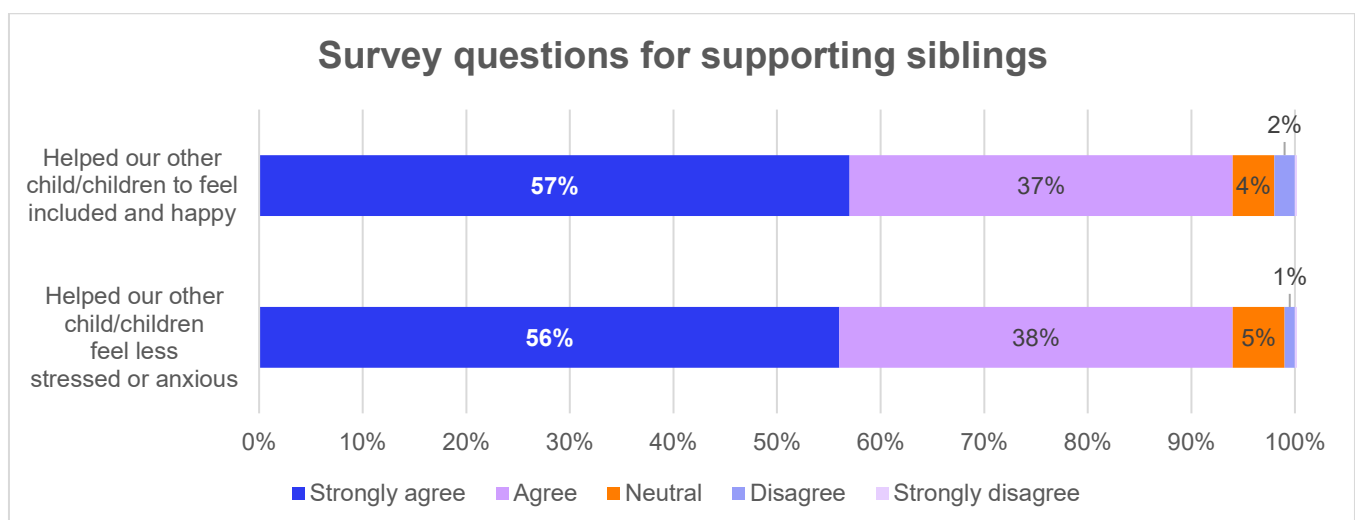
“The FLOs and volunteers were always there to help... vouchers, food, checking in. You see other kids in the same situation, and it gives you confidence. You feel supported the whole time.”

Siblings supported

To assess how siblings are supported by Ronald McDonald House WA, data is primarily gathered through targeted questions in the surveys and carer interviews. This captures qualitative evidence of siblings using spaces like the Ronald McDonald House Family Room at Fun on Four and the Bass Family Foundation Learning Centre at Ronald McDonald House at QEII, and records suggestions on how to provide more targeted support.

In 2025, of the families surveyed, 98 families stayed with siblings, with 94% of those families agreeing that staying with Ronald McDonald House WA helped their other child or children feel included and happy, and 94% agreeing that staying with Ronald McDonald House WA helped their other child or children feel less stressed or anxious.

Graph 7: Impact Survey responses in 2025 to, 'Helped our other child/children to feel included and happy' and 'Helped our other child/children feel less stressed or anxious'



- **Supporting siblings' needs:** The stress of managing healthy siblings is reduced through dedicated spaces like the Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms, which keep siblings engaged. Furthermore, the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program helps alleviate worry about children falling behind in school by facilitating links to tutors and helping with external school activities directly.
- **Maintaining family bonds:** By allowing siblings to stay at Ronald McDonald House WA, they can easily maintain their connection with their brother or sister, rather than being separated for months. Families noted how important this was for the child receiving treatment and their recovery, providing them with hope, and a sense of normalcy.

"We are just so grateful for Ronald McDonald House WA letting us stay this time. It has alleviated a lot of anxiety for me and my eldest daughter. I had actually suffered a nervous breakdown due to the stress of managing a child with complex needs and providing for the family a week before the stay. It really was so helpful."

- **Positive recreational experiences:** Siblings are provided spaces to *"just be kids"* away from the hospital wards. Areas like the Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms offer engaging activities such as arts and crafts, library storytelling, and quiet play. Even older siblings or those just visiting for a night benefited from the flexible, welcoming environment, enjoying dinners or short stays to see what Ronald McDonald House WA was about.

Siblings often experience disruption and emotional distress during hospital stays. Having access to programs and shared spaces helped maintain connection and normality.

"She was still able to go to Fun on Four, still able to play and be with her brother. It helped her stay connected and feel like things were still normal."

- **Educational continuity:** Through the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program and, for some, the hospital school (PCH 2A), siblings receive face-to-face meetings to assess their needs, assistance with school activities, and facilitated links to tutors. This helps bridge the educational gap, so they do not fall behind their peers. For siblings who could not attend formal schooling, *"FLOs helped with printing materials and working with them to complete their activities"*.
- **Tailored support for high-needs siblings:** The qualitative feedback highlighted instances where staff provided exceptional, intuitive care for neurodivergent siblings. For example, for a sibling with ADHD and mild autism, staff were able to recognise when the child was becoming overwhelmed and proactively helped to settle them.

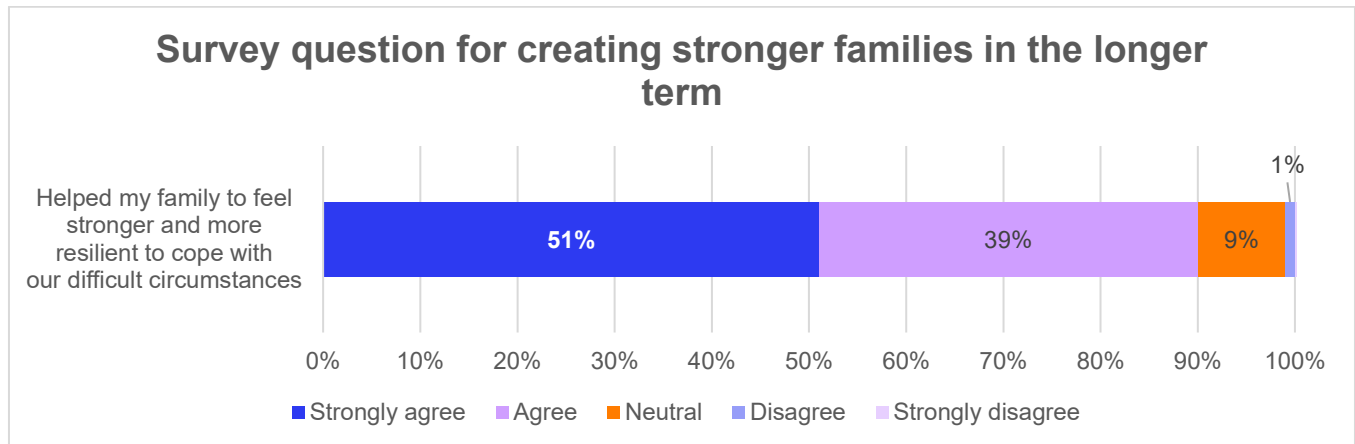
"Our other child is non-verbal, and on the spectrum (both children have ADHD and mild autism). It can be especially difficult when both children have an episode at the same time. The staff are fantastic, and could see it happening before even we do, and would come over to help settle them. Usually, we live with my mum and aunty which helps us at home, so having this support at Ronald McDonald House WA really mimics this set up."

Stronger in the longer term

By providing immediate stability, Ronald McDonald House WA sets families up to better handle the future. 89% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Ronald McDonald House WA helped their family feel stronger and more resilient to cope with difficult circumstances. Ronald McDonald House WA helped families feel stronger

and more resilient in coping with difficult circumstances. Families gave this an average score of 4.4 out of 5, with 89.3% agreeing or strongly agreeing.

Graph 8: Impact Survey responses in 2025 to, 'Helped my family to feel stronger and more resilient to cope with our difficult circumstances'



- **Building mental strength:** Surviving a traumatic medical ordeal with a comprehensive safety net provides immense relief, which one father noted directly made his family *“mentally strong enough to get through this”*.
- **Confidence to reintegrate:** The educational support breaks down learning into achievable goals, ensuring children have the confidence to return to their regular schools knowing they can do everything their classmates can without having fallen behind.

In an interview, a family spoke about their experience of a prolonged hospitalisation during a critical illness. The stability and support of Ronald McDonald House WA strengthened their ability to endure and recover from the experience.

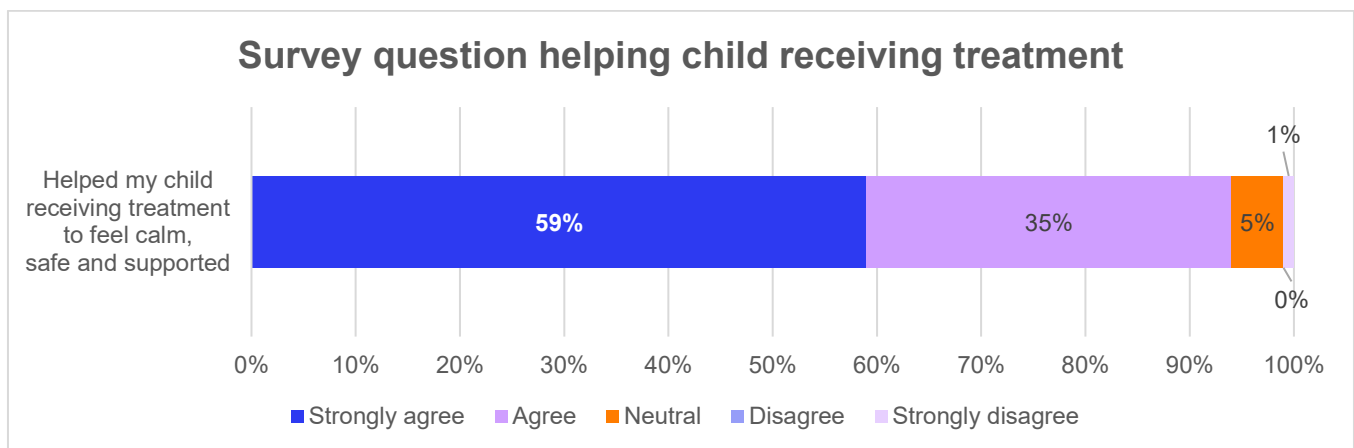
“Having that support, having somewhere to stay, being together as a family — that’s what made us strong enough to get through it. Without it, I don’t know how we would have managed. If this wasn’t in place, how many people couldn’t be by their children’s side?”

- **Motivating recovery:** Keeping the family together long-term can actively spur the patient’s recovery. One carer noted that having siblings present made the child receiving treatment want to *“recover faster just to keep up with their siblings and prove they could get out of the hospital”*.

Outcomes for children receiving treatment

The outcomes for children receiving treatment at Ronald McDonald House WA are closely monitored through specific child wellbeing domains, with strong positive results reported across four areas of interest. Information is collected via proxy reporting during surveys and interviews, in which carers are directly asked about how the child experienced Ronald McDonald House WA, what changes they observed in the child, whether the child was noticeably happier and less anxious, and what long-term impacts the stay might have on them. Survey data showed that 94% of respondents agreed Ronald McDonald House WA helped their child receiving treatment feel calm, safe and supported, with an average score of 4.5 out of 5.

Graph 9: Impact Survey responses in 2025 to, 'Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported'



The framework specifies four primary outcomes for the child receiving treatment:

- 1. Positive experiences:** Children are able to have fun, relax in a non-hospital environment, and maintain a sense of normalcy.
- 2. Happier:** Children feel safe, supported, less anxious, and more confident.
- 3. Education maintained:** Children are supported to continue their learning and are less anxious about eventually returning to school.
- 4. Longer term identity and resilience:** Children feel less stigma about being a 'sick kid', develop adaptability, and build resilience to move beyond their difficult circumstances.

Positive experiences

Positive experiences are a formalised outcome domain for children, and Ronald McDonald House WA provides crucial opportunities for children to just be kids despite their medical situations:

- Children undergoing treatment are often confined to clinical environments. Ronald McDonald House WA enables access to play, social interaction and everyday activities. Children are able to utilise dedicated recreational spaces like the Starlight area and the Ronald McDonald House Family Rooms.

As a carer pointed out during an interview:

"Not being stuck in hospital and being able to get out, go for drives, see people made a big difference. He was happier because of that."

- They engage in normal, joyful activities, such as mingling with other children, making friends, and utilising the games room or watching YouTube.
- Even for children recovering from severe trauma, like a coma, day visits to the family's room at Ronald McDonald House WA provided a massive mental boost, eliciting a “wow” reaction as they could see where their family was staying and experience an escape from the hospital walls.

Happier and less anxious

Happier and less anxious is another core metric measured by the Ronald McDonald House WA framework. Carers supporting children overwhelmingly noted that the Ronald McDonald Houses in WA made children happier and less anxious in several ways:

- The supportive, non-clinical environment helped children “*gradually get over their fear of going to the hospital*”. In an interview, a carer recounted “*how FLOs would check in with us after appointments and cheer us on when hearing that each time it was progressively easier*”.

“This has been the hardest three weeks of our lives with John, and being here has honestly been the calm we have needed, knowing PCH is just a street away.”*

*Not real name

- Having a comforting place to go after gruelling appointments made children noticeably “*more compliant and less anxious*”.
- For children recovering from surgery, the House provided vital space away from everything clinical, which caregivers noted dramatically changed their child's engagement levels for the better.
- Hospital visits were stressful, particularly for regional families without local support. One carer specifically pointed out that having a safe, consistent place to return to reduced anxiety.

“Our kid was much less anxious knowing we were staying at Ronald McDonald House at QEII. You can do all the appointments and then have somewhere to go after. It takes a lot of strain off you.”

Education maintained

As well as providing the Bass Family Foundation Learning Centre at Ronald McDonald House at QEII and the Ronald McDonald House Learning Program for siblings, Ronald McDonald House WA provides educational support for children receiving treatment while at the Ronald McDonald House WA and afterwards by providing scholarships and encouraging children to achieve academic success.

- Children receive one-on-one tutoring and learning support that breaks their schooling down into small, achievable goals.
- This directly builds the children's confidence, ensuring they know they can do everything their classmates can do when they are ready to return to school.

A parent who observed the impact of their child receiving one-on-one support said:

“It helped him catch up so he wasn’t behind and breaking it down into small achievable goals made a big difference. Having that one-on-one support built his confidence that he could do everything his classmates could.”

- For children able to participate in hospital schooling, staff even called the child's home school to get their specific curriculum, giving the child structure and allowing them to start *“kicking goals”* in their recovery.
- If children could not attend formal in-house school, staff assisted by printing materials and sitting with them to complete their activities.

Longer term identity and resilience

Ronald McDonald House WA actively supports longer term identity and resilience by providing a deeply secure foundation during a chaotic time:

- Children experiencing long-term treatment often face disruption to identity, routine and sense of normality. During an interview with a parent, it was heard how a stable, home-like environment supported emotional development and resilience over a 6-month period.

“Ronald McDonald House WA has been the one stable thing in their lives in the past six months. It’s a home away from home — she actually calls it ‘my other home’. I’m not sure how anyone could navigate something like this without Ronald McDonald House WA as a family unit.”

- Having their family and siblings stay close by actively motivated patients to be more resilient; one father noted his sick daughter *“wanted to recover faster just to keep up with her siblings and prove she could get out of the hospital”*.
- Ronald McDonald House WA reframes the medical journey so that children look back on positive memories, frequently asking carers, *“can I go to Fun on Four?”*

Recommendations

1. Strengthen culturally safe support for Aboriginal families

Ronald McDonald House WA should continue strengthening culturally safe support for Aboriginal families, including through Aboriginal workforce pathways, stronger relationships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Elders and community networks, and cultural capability development for all staff. This is particularly important for families travelling from regional and remote communities who may be navigating medical stress, separation from Country, financial pressure and unfamiliar hospital systems.

Practical actions could include developing an Aboriginal workforce and cultural safety plan, creating identified recruitment or traineeship pathways, increasing opportunities for Noongar-led activities and cultural connection, and ensuring Aboriginal staff have clear role boundaries, culturally safe supervision and appropriate recognition. This would help Ronald McDonald House WA build trust with Aboriginal families while ensuring cultural safety is embedded across the organisation, not carried by Aboriginal staff alone.

2. Strengthen the family navigation role through partnerships and referral pathways

Ronald McDonald House WA should strengthen its role as a trusted family navigator by developing clearer referral pathways and partnerships with specialist services. Families staying at Ronald McDonald House WA often need support beyond accommodation, including help with financial pressure, mental health, transport, disability, cultural connection, sibling needs, education, food relief and navigating unfamiliar services in Perth.

Ronald McDonald House WA does not need to provide all of this support directly. Instead, it can play a stronger connector role by helping families access the right support at the right time. Practical actions could include mapping common unmet family needs, developing a preferred partner network, creating simple referral processes, and providing staff with clear guidance on when and how to connect families to external services. This would help families receive more holistic support while reducing the pressure on FLOs and other frontline staff to respond to every need internally.

3. Ensure FLOs have the capacity, tools and wellbeing support to sustain their role

Ronald McDonald House WA should review the Family Liaison Officer role to ensure FLOs have the time, tools, role clarity and wellbeing support needed to continue providing high-quality assistance to families. FLOs appear to be central to the family experience, often acting as trusted relationships, practical problem-solvers, emotional supports and key points of connection during highly stressful periods.

As family needs become more complex, FLOs may be supporting families through distress, trauma, financial pressure, hospital navigation, cultural needs, grief, disability-related needs and practical crises. Practical actions could include clarifying role boundaries, developing escalation and referral pathways, providing regular supervision and debriefing, offering trauma-informed and cultural capability training, and improving administrative systems to reduce manual workload. This would help sustain the quality of family support while reducing the risk of staff burnout.

4. Improve support for families with accessibility and complex needs

Ronald McDonald House WA should strengthen support for families with accessibility and complex needs so that all families can fully access and benefit from Ronald McDonald House WA services. Accessibility should be understood broadly, including physical access, disability, neurodiversity, sensory needs, language and communication needs, health-related limitations, transport barriers and the needs of siblings or carers with disability.

Practical actions could include introducing a simple accessibility and support needs check-in during intake or arrival, improving plain English and visual information, providing sensory-friendly resources, reviewing accessible room allocation processes and strengthening links with disability, advocacy and health navigation services. This should be framed positively and practically, giving families an opportunity to identify what would

make their stay easier, safer and more comfortable. Improving accessibility would help reduce additional stress for families already managing complex circumstances.

5. Improve food, nutrition and self-catering options for families with complex needs

Ronald McDonald House WA should review food, nutrition and self-catering options to better support families with complex dietary, medical, cultural and timing needs. Meals are a major strength of Ronald McDonald House WA's support and were highly valued by families for reducing financial pressure and removing one more thing to manage. However, some families may need more flexibility due to appointments, treatment schedules, dietary requirements, food safety concerns, sensory needs or longer stays.

Practical actions could include reviewing access to fridge and freezer space, safe food storage, after-hours food options, pantry staples, grab-and-go meals, culturally appropriate food options and clearer information about meal availability. Ronald McDonald House WA could also explore partnerships with food relief organisations, nutrition services or donors to provide more flexible support without increasing pressure on frontline staff. This would build on the existing strengths of the meal model while better supporting families whose needs are not fully met by standard meal provision.



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