

# OpenHouse



Autumn 2025



## Remembrance Day

Welcoming a newly-stitched  
Poppy Field Artwork

## Prostate cancer biomarker trial

A world first project

## Meet Kelly Follers

Our caring nurse Unit  
Manager on Ward 9 South

*Cancer care, choose hope*



**Chris O'Brien**  
Lifehouse



## Message from our CEO

## A field of poppies, stitched with love

Remembrance Day 2024 was a particularly special day for Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the Autumn edition of OpenHouse.

This newsletter is created for you, to celebrate the impact your donations make at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. Your support is integral to driving innovative research and helping provide world-class, all-encompassing care that brings our patients the best possible outcomes.

This edition of OpenHouse highlights just a few of the incredible achievements your support has helped make possible in recent months. You'll read about the remarkable results our donor community helped achieve on Giving Day, and learn how donations are helping uncover new precision cancer treatments for patients with advanced prostate cancer.

You'll also meet Charity Superstar DJ Sam, who took on City2Surf with his DJ decks in support of patients with cancer at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. If you're looking to set yourself a new fitness challenge, you might consider joining our Charity Superstar team in this year's City2Surf.

I am incredibly grateful for your continued support. Your generosity is helping us continue to redefine cancer care and improve the lives of our patients and their loved ones. Thank you so much.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Professor Michael Boyer AM  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Chris O'Brien Lifehouse



The Hon. Margaret Beazley AC KC, Gail O'Brien AO, Prof Michael Boyer AM and Patricia (5th from left) with other members of the stitching team.

We were honoured to welcome our Patrons, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC and Mr Dennis Wilson to a meaningful ceremony where they accepted the beautiful, brand-new Poppy Field Artwork on our behalf.

This artwork is a stunning replacement for our original 'poppy blanket' that went missing from the foyer of the hospital on Anzac Day last year.

Following its disappearance, members of our wonderful supporter community joined forces (and knitting needles) to stitch a replacement. The project was kicked off in August by the Holy Name of Mary Parish Knitting Group, or the 'Twiddle Muff team', named after the hand-knitted sensory items the group made for people experiencing dementia.

In September, the Twiddle Muff team came together at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse for a day of knitting and crocheting. By late October, the dedicated group of knitters had expanded



Hon. Margaret Beazley AC KC

to include an additional ten mums from Trinity Grammar School.

“What started as a problem became a joyous challenge that brought friends and strangers together,” says Patricia Curtin from the Twiddle Muff knitting group. “It was many hands with one heart that created this blanket.”

With the support of patient advocate and board member Gail O'Brien AO, the poppies were then carefully stitched onto the fabric over three weeks to complete the Poppy Field Artwork – just in time for Remembrance Day.

We want to thank the Hon. Margaret Beazley AC KC and Mr Dennis Wilson for attending the ceremony, and to all the wonderful members of our supporter community who stitched and sewed tirelessly. Your efforts ensured that the spirit of our community can continue to play an important role in our hospital's tradition of remembrance.

# Get involved

Our incredible community of supporters are helping redefine cancer care at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. If you're looking for new ways to make a difference, why not join one of our upcoming events:

## City2Surf

10 August 2025

Join our Charity Superstar team for City2Surf 2025. Commit to raise \$1,000 or more and you'll receive a host of perks including free entry to the event and a free singlet. Entries open in May.

## Free Will Week

21-27 July 2025

Chris O'Brien Lifehouse supporters have the chance to write a legally-valid, online Will for free, thanks to our partnership with SafeWill. For more information on how to create a free Will, visit [safewill.com/col](https://safewill.com/col).

## Tokyo Marathon

1 March 2026

Sushi, stamina, and supporting cancer research- applications for Tokyo Marathon 2026 open soon. If you're up for a physical and fundraising challenge in an exciting city, contact our team captain at [Sara.Walker@lh.org.au](mailto:Sara.Walker@lh.org.au).



Scan the QR code to explore more events.



## Charity Superstar Spotlight

In 2023, civil engineer, dad and fun-loving DJ Sam joined our City2Surf Charity Superstar team. Combining his love for music with his desire to give back, Sam took on the challenging 14km course wearing his DJ decks, playing tunes as he ran, and raising an incredible \$4,558 for Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Here, Sam shares his experience and why Chris O'Brien Lifehouse holds a special place in his heart:

As my life has evolved, so has my love of DJing. What began as a passion for music heightened by like-minded mates, grew into a rewarding journey of personal escapism and decompression - particularly following a thyroid & lymph cancer diagnosis in 2022.

After my diagnosis, I was referred to Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. What could have been a particularly dark experience was pleasantly manageable considering the circumstances. I decided I

wanted to help other patients, and their loved ones, experience the same tremendous level of comfort and support as I did. What better way to spread some awareness and inspirational fun than a sweaty bloke running and pumping out cheesy dance music from a mobile DJ concoction?!

The day of City2Surf itself was surreal and filled with hilarious and memorable interactions - from the live TV appearances, ongoing support from Chris O'Brien Lifehouse's fundraising crew, the overwhelming response to my fundraising page, to attempting to mix 'Eye of the Tiger' into Missy Elliot's 'Work it' on Heartbreak Hill's challenging ascent.

For anyone thinking of running City2Surf for Chris O'Brien Lifehouse - I can hardly run a bath without sweating, so go at your own pace and you'll have a cracking day whilst helping a place which means so much to so many.'

35 spots available



## Become a Charity Superstar

Join our City2Surf Charity Superstar team for 2025, and challenge yourself while raising funds to help transform cancer care. By committing to raise \$1,000 or more for Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, you'll receive:

- **Free entry** to the City2Surf
- **A free Chris O'Brien Lifehouse singlet** to wear on the day
- Priority start in the exclusive **charity wave**
- **A charity superstar medal**

- **A personalised superstar bib** (Need to be registered as a Charity Superstar by 23 June to receive this benefit)
- **Endless kudos, free snacks and refreshments** at our charity marquee, located at the finish line

Scan to register your interest.



# Thank you for your support on Giving Day.

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to each one of our kind supporters who made last November's Giving Day 2024 a big success. Thanks to the generosity of our wonderful donor community, we raised an astounding total of \$867,000 to support our team of 20 specialist nurses across 10 different cancer streams in the next year.

Over 24 hours, our supporters helped raise \$346,000, with every donation on the day matched by a generous group of donors. After Giving Day was over, donations continued to pour in, helping raise an incredible amount to fund the vital work of our specialist nurses.

Our specialist nurses are at the heart of patient care at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, guiding patients through every step of their cancer experience. Their roles are funded entirely by donations, which makes your support on Giving Day truly life changing.

From all of us at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse—thank you to all those who showed up, gave generously, and made this Giving Day one to remember.

Because of you, our patients will always have a specialist nurse to turn to.

**\$867,000**

in support of our specialist nurses





Kelly Follers, Nurse Unit Manager

## Meet Kelly Follers

Kelly is the Nurse Unit Manager of ward 9 South – a ward at Chris O’Brien Lifehouse that supports patients receiving treatment for breast and gynaecological cancers. With around 20 years’ experience as a cancer nurse, Kelly has been a member of our nursing team since 2016.

“I love cancer nursing because of the relationships I get to build with patients and their families,” says Kelly. “Sometimes you get to know a patient over years. During such a challenging time in their life, you can really help lessen a person’s load.”

As a Nurse Unit Manager, Kelly is responsible for managing the patients’ entire experience, ensuring they receive specialist support and care from admission to discharge and beyond. This includes making sure patients have the right support in place – such as a social worker,

psychologist or a specialist nurse – before their treatment starts. It could also mean empowering them with the information they need before they return home, or alleviating anxiety about diagnosis or treatment.

“Supporting someone through the unknown can be hard because you can’t just give them answers, as much as you want to try, and that’s OK,” explains Kelly. “But it’s just as important to give them the support they need in that moment, until they get the answers.”

On the ward, Kelly sees donor support in action every day, funding items such as commodes and bladder scanners that help support the ward.

“Donations are so important because they not only support the ward, they increase the comfort of our patients. Our donors are making such a big difference in helping our patients feel better, and this brings them hope.



To me, hope isn’t about fixing everything. Hope is about helping our patients to feel well enough to go to a birthday party, or a family member’s wedding.

You might feel a particular way now, but we can help you get better so you can get the most out of life while you’re going through cancer treatment.”



If you would like to help elevate the care of our patients, please donate here.

## Introducing our new patient car

When our previous car unexpectedly broke down, we launched an urgent appeal in OpenHouse—and thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, we were able to replace it quickly. This new vehicle ensures that patients continue receiving essential care and support beyond the hospital doors. Thank you!





## World-first prostate cancer biomarker trial launches

**We're excited to announce that a clinical trial has been launched as a result of our world-first research into a biomarker for prostate cancer. This project has been supported by a number of generous donors.**

This project, led by Professor Lisa Horvath, developed a cancer biomarker called PCPro that tests the fats in a patient's blood to help identify whether their cancer might be resistant to treatment.

This biomarker will be used to improve treatments for patients with advanced metastatic prostate cancer.

Cancer biomarkers are like clues that help us understand how a cancer might behave or respond to treatment. By studying biomarkers, researchers at Chris O'Brien Lifecare can develop better and more personalised treatments for people with cancer.

Chief investigator and medical oncologist, Dr Tahlia Scheinberg, has played a key role in developing and patenting the PCPro biomarker.

Tahlia explains, "We've identified that men who have particular changes in the fats in their blood, have a poorer survival than those without those changes.

"The long-term goal for this research is to be able to target this profile, by giving people additional therapy to treat the altered fats in their blood. We hope that this will help them live longer with advanced cancer."

With the support of donors, the team have developed a simple blood test to find patients with the PCPro biomarker. The team will now test whether they can improve outcomes for people with this PCPro biomarker by using a new drug.

If the trial is successful, the team hope that the PCPro test could be made available to patients anywhere in the world, to identify the most effective course of treatment. This could transform outcomes and bring hope for thousands of men with advanced prostate cancer all over the world.

"For a group of men who we know have a poorer survival, who might not do as well with standard treatments, we are really hoping to be able to improve their outcomes in a meaningful way with this new discovery," says Tahlia, who



Dr Tahlia Scheinberg

recently won the highly competitive Young Investigator Award from the US Prostate Cancer Foundation.

“It’s been a really long journey, taking something I’ve developed from the lab and moving it into a clinical trial to try to see if we can make a difference to patients’ treatment responses and outcomes. It’s exciting to see the full spectrum of how we can translate that research.”

“What excites me about research is the opportunities it gives patients. As a researcher, you can see the impact research can have on people’s lives; to watch something that started as an idea to actually make a difference for people is amazing.”

This incredible discovery is a testament to the transformational power your donations can have on helping discover new and more effective treatments for cancer. We wish to thank our generous donors who helped make this research possible.



## Research at the heart of patient care

**“Without patients, research is just knowledge,” says Professor Lisa Horvath, our Chief Clinical Officer and Director of Research.**

That’s why, on February 14th, we proudly launched the Chris O’Brien Lifehouse Research Institute. With this initiative, we are taking another step toward ensuring groundbreaking discoveries turn into real-world therapies for people with cancer.

At Chris O’Brien Lifehouse, research has always been at the core of our mission. Our new Research Institute brings together a diverse team of specialists, uniting early-career, mid-career, and senior researchers across multiple disciplines. They are all working towards one goal: discovering better cancer treatments. By creating a space where doctors, scientists, and healthcare professionals can collaborate closely, we’re ensuring that new findings don’t just stay in the lab—they reach patients faster.

Traditionally, medical research happens in isolated centres and can take years to benefit patients. However, at Chris O’Brien Lifehouse, research and patient care happen side by side. This is one of the ways we can speed up the process of translating research into real-world benefits for patients.

None of this would be possible without your support. Your generosity funds cutting-edge equipment, dedicated researchers and state-of-the-art labs where innovation takes shape—bringing hope and breakthroughs to countless patients.

