

OpenHouse



Spring 2024



Acts of kindness

Celebrating our wonderful volunteers

Bringing cancer care closer to home

Go The Distance with Josh

Meet Adama Briffa

Our Radiation Oncology Specialist Nurse

Our team of volunteers

Cancer care, choose hope



Chris O'Brien
Lifeshouse



Message from our CEO

Transforming lives in the LivingRoom

I am delighted to welcome you to the Spring edition of OpenHouse.

As Chief Executive Officer of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, I see your generosity in action in our hospital every single day, underpinning the research and compassionate care that brings hope to people with cancer and their families.

This OpenHouse highlights just a few remarkable achievements your support has helped make possible in recent months - from the purchase of our brand-new Linear Accelerator to the groundbreaking work our research team is doing in treating prostate cancer.

You'll read inspiring stories of staff and supporters like you, who are helping contribute towards a common goal: transforming the lives and outcomes of people with cancer.

You'll also meet Josh, a young man from the Central Coast who drove all the way from Adelaide to Sydney to undergo treatment for sarcoma at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. You can bring life-changing cancer care closer to home for regional patients like Josh, by joining our Go The Distance challenge this September.

Thank you for your compassion and commitment to improving the lives of people with cancer. Our achievements are your achievements, and I'm so grateful for your support.

With heartfelt appreciation,

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



The LivingRoom team

Thanks to your generosity, our recent Tax Appeal has raised \$553,000 for the LivingRoom, the home of supportive cancer care and integrative medicine at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

The LivingRoom is a crucial part of our ethos; treating the whole person, not just their cancer. By keeping this unique service going, our donors are helping make a profound difference to the outcomes and experiences of our patients.

Because of supporters like you, patients now have easy access to crucial therapies like exercise physiology, lymphoedema management, and oncology massage. These therapies significantly improve patients' quality of life by managing and easing the symptoms and side effects of cancer treatment.

Thank you for helping improve quality of life for people with cancer. We look forward to sharing stories of the individuals whose lives have been positively impacted by your donations!



World Doctors Orchestra

A symphony of support

This November, the World Doctors Orchestra is coming to Sydney in support of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse! The orchestra brings together physicians from around the world who share a passion for music and a commitment to making a difference.

Four times a year these dedicated doctors travel from all over the globe to perform charity concerts. For one night, they lay down their white coats and pick up their instruments, to orchestrate soul-stirring symphonies for a good cause.

The participants cover their own travel expenses and organisation costs are kept as low as possible. The proceeds from each concert session go to a selected medical aid organisation. In doing so, World Doctor's Orchestra raises awareness around the importance of adequate healthcare as a basic human right.

This November, ticket sales for the Orchestra's event at the Sydney Opera House will support Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. We are extremely grateful for this

wonderful opportunity and international recognition.

Join us for an afternoon of harmonious melodies at the iconic Opera House on November 2nd at 2:00 PM. The program will feature Deborah Cheetham Fraillon AO's "Tarimi Nulay", Carl Vine's Symphony No. 1 "Microsymphony," and Gustav Mahler's Symphony No. 2 in C minor "Resurrection."

Scan the QR code below to book your tickets, contact the Opera House box office on 02 9250 7777 or visit sydneyoperahouse.com. We're excited to be a part of this initiative and hope you will join us in indulging in this unique experience.

Scan the QR code to buy tickets!



Back on the road to inclusive care

In the last issue of OpenHouse, we reached out with an urgent plea to help replace the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse vehicle, after it broke down unexpectedly. Thanks to your incredible generosity, we're thrilled to announce that we've raised around \$123,000 for a new car! Because of you, we can continue offering exceptional care to our regional patients.

This new hybrid vehicle is more than just a set of wheels. It also enables our rural and regional team to deliver essential education programs to rural GP networks and inform communities about the vital services Chris O'Brien Lifehouse provides. By strengthening referral pathways, we ensure people



On a mission to improve regional cancer care in NSW

with cancer in regional areas can receive timely and expert care. With the extra funds raised, we'll even be able to cover all running costs for the coming years.

Thank you for helping ensure that all people across NSW can receive the very best cancer care, no matter where they live.

Get involved

Our incredible fundraising community is changing the lives of people with cancer at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. If you're looking for new ways to make a difference, why not join in on the fun at one (or more) of these upcoming events:

Go The Distance

1-30 September 2024

Up for a fitness challenge? Walk, run, cycle or swim every day in September to support patients at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. Every km you go will help bring cancer care closer to home for those who live far from the city.

Bowral Classic

20 October 2024

Calling all cyclists! This October, the award-winning Bowral Classic returns to the stunning Southern Highlands of NSW. Choose from 85km, 120km or 150km events and ride to support people with cancer and their families.

SurFebruary

1-28 February 2025

Make a splash! Commit to surfing, swimming, or stand-up paddleboarding (SUP) every day in February. You can tackle the challenge solo or team up with friends and raise funds for the SurFebruary Cancer Research Fund at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Want to know what else you can do?



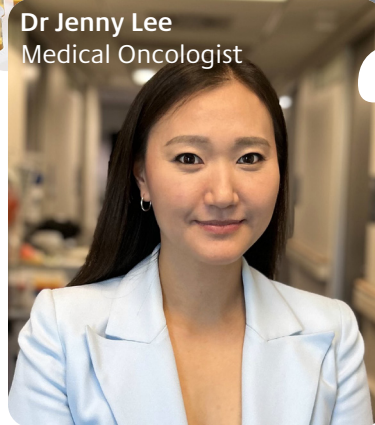
Scan the QR code to explore more events.

From lab to life

The Cancer Biomarker Centre



Dr Jenny Lee
Medical Oncologist



“The Biomarker Centre is a unique team of doctors and scientists dedicated to discovering completely personalised approaches to cancer treatment based on blood biomarkers.”

As a scientist and medical oncologist, Dr Jenny Lee has dedicated her career to lessening the burden of cancer by caring for patients and finding more effective treatments. Here, she discusses her latest role as Co-Director of the Cancer Biomarker Centre at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Biomarkers are like clues in the body that help us understand how a cancer might behave and how it might respond to treatment. By studying these clues, Jenny and her team can develop better and more personalised treatments for people with cancer.

“Our centre tests if biomarkers are reliable and accurate for use in treatments,” says Jenny. “This stage of research is often difficult to execute due to funding challenges, but it’s where our centre will make the biggest impact thanks to donor contributions.”

“One project I’m particularly excited about is focused on prostate cancer, led by my colleague, Professor Lisa Horvath. Her team discovered a biomarker called PCPro that helps identify patients whose cancer might resist treatment due to specific patterns in their blood.”

“We are now developing a clinical trial that uses a simple blood test to find patients with the PCPro biomarker and enhance their treatment with a new drug targeting these patterns. This research could lead to better treatment options for prostate cancer patients.”

As a supporter of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, you are helping fund the vital infrastructure and systems needed for our research and for translating our discoveries into real-world treatments. Your support is already making a difference in the lives of people with cancer and will continue to do so in the future – thank you so much!



Adama Briffa
Radiation Oncology Specialist Nurse

Meet Adama Briffa

Adama is our Radiation Oncology Specialist Nurse. With a Masters in Oncology and Haematology Nursing and over two decades of nursing experience, Adama has been a member of our Radiation Oncology team since 2013 and specialist nurse since 2022.

At Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, specialist nurses like Adama are the embodiment of patient-centred care. With advanced expertise and training in specific types

of cancer, they are a vital support for our patients, providing personalised, tailored care that brings the best chance of recovery and quality of life.

Adama provides highly specialised care and support for patients who receive radiation therapy. She supports patients from their very first day of treatment, helping manage side effects and complications and providing a continuity of care that is crucial to the physical and emotional wellbeing of patients and their families.

"I've always had a strong desire to help others and make a positive difference in their lives, and nursing allows me to do this," says Adama. "I've been fortunate to meet healthcare professionals whose compassion, knowledge and commitment have had a significant impact on my life, and I want to provide others the same."

Over the past decade, the generosity of our supporter community has been key to funding specialist nursing positions like Adama's across our hospital. Today, our specialist nurse program is funded entirely by supporters, and includes 20 specialist nurses across 10 cancer streams.

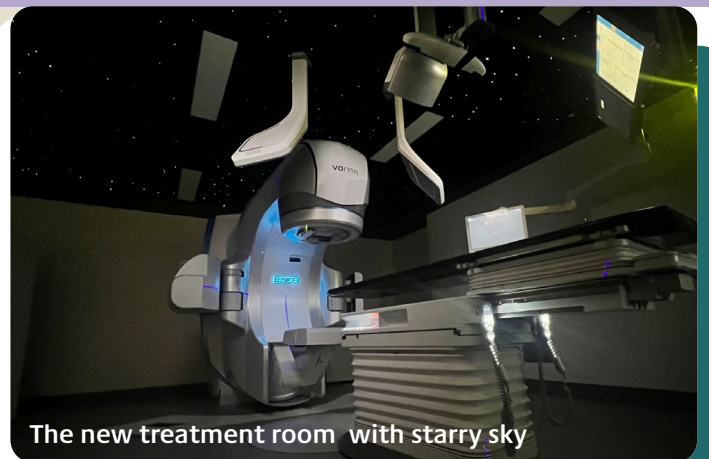
It is only with your continued support that specialist nurses like Adama can keep transforming the lives and outcomes of patients at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse.

Introducing our brand-new LINAC!

Talk about accelerating progress! We're proud to announce that during our first-ever Giving Day in November, our donors collectively raised an incredible \$4,55 million towards replacing one of our Linear Accelerators (LINAC). Thanks to the generosity of our donors, including an extraordinary gift from the Sargents Charitable Foundation, we surpassed our target by \$50,000.

The LINAC is an essential part of radiation therapy for cancer patients. The machine your generosity helped replace, offers 'zero margin targeting', meaning there is no margin of healthy tissue that the radiation touches. This is particularly important for treating cancers of the head, neck and brain.

With the additional funds raised, we were able to transform the treatment room by adding a starry sky projection on the ceiling, to offer patients a more comfortable treatment experience.



The new treatment room with starry sky

Thanks to you, our patients can receive the most precise and effective radiation therapy possible, and the best possible outcomes.



Check out our new LINAC by scanning the QR code.

Celebrating our wonderful volunteers

Anyone who has come through the doors of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse has likely encountered one of our volunteers. They are the ever-present, selfless individuals who dedicate their time to bringing acts of kindness to those who need it most.

And if you ask any of the volunteers, there is a lot to be gained by giving back!

From driving the patient bus to getting crafty with patients in our Arterie program, our volunteers share what they love about supporting patients at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse:

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I knit blankets and beanies to be distributed throughout the hospital. On special days like Christmas or Mother's Day, we create little gift packages with a blanket and other donations for those who spend this time in the hospital. It especially brings comfort to patients from regional areas who don't get many visitors.

Judi



Volunteer Krys with one of our nurses.

“

I drive a bus between Chris O'Brien Lifehouse and Central Station, picking up patients who struggle to find their way to the hospital. Sometimes they are quite anxious, especially when starting treatment. That's where I get to chat with them and help them feel at ease. Especially for those travelling from the country, I can be a big comfort.

Jane

Volunteer Bronwyn holding Remi, our therapy dog



“

During COVID, I started growing succulents in little pots and I deliver them to Radiation Oncology. Whenever a patient finishes treatment, they get to ring the bell and are gifted a plant and card to celebrate this milestone. It's a small gesture, but I hope it brings them joy after everything they've been through.

Bronwyn

We want to thank our volunteers for every smile, comforting word and thoughtful gesture. They truly embody the spirit of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse!

A legacy of love and knitting

As an avid knitter for most of her life, Fay Skuthorpe is never far from her knitting needles and a ball of wool. In fact, these trusty items were by her side on her very first day of breast cancer treatment at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, in 2014.

That same day, Fay discovered our in-house art program, Arterie. Always thinking of others, Fay was inspired to begin her next project - knitting beanies for fellow chemotherapy patients.

Although Fay is now cancer-free, her connection to Chris O'Brien Lifehouse sadly extends beyond her own experience. Her husband Jim was diagnosed with lymphoma and also received treatment at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse before passing away in 2021.

"Throughout our visits, both Jim and I found comfort in the warmth and support of the staff," Fay says. "Small acts of kindness, like receiving a warm knitted blanket on a cold day, the CEO's visits during treatment, access to specialist nurses, and engaging in projects with the Arterie girls, all meant so much to us. Lifehouse is a place no one wants to come to. But if you do, the treatment and support is amazing."

Volunteering and supporting charities has always been central to Fay and Jim's lives, and they wanted to create a legacy that continued their commitment to helping others. To ensure that the compassionate care she and her husband received stays available to all, Fay made the profound decision to leave a gift in her Will to Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. We are deeply grateful to Fay for her incredible support and generosity.



Fay Skuthorpe and Gail O'Brien AO

Fay's beautifully designed knitting pattern quickly became a cherished part of our community. Ten years later, her original pattern is still used by patients in our Arterie program.

If Fay's story has inspired you to think about your own legacy, we invite you to consider leaving a gift in your Will to help improve the lives of people with cancer.

Chris O'Brien Lifehouse has partnered with Safewill, Australia's leading online Will platform. From September 2-8, Safewill is inviting our supporters to write a legally-valid Will for free using their secure online platform. For more information, please contact Lynn Johnson at lynn.johnson@lh.org.au or 02 8514 0924.



Free Will Week
2-8 September 2024



The pharmacy has opened!

We are thrilled to announce that the new retail pharmacy at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse has opened. This new facility is a one-stop shop for everything patients, families and the general public need - from prescription and over-the-counter medications to body care products and a beautiful range of gifts.

Located on the ground floor, the new pharmacy is open from 8.30am - 5pm, Monday to Friday.





Josh catching up with friends while fishing

Bringing cancer care closer to home

20-year-old Josh Griffiths knows more than most what it means to go the distance for cancer treatment.

Josh was living in Adelaide, enjoying the first few months of his new career in the Army when he discovered a lump in his neck. After a PET scan, he received the news no one deserves to hear.

“I had expected the worst, but when they told me it was cancer, I just felt angry,” Josh recalls. *“I had gone through a full year of Army training, just to get cancer.”*

Josh had synovial sarcoma, a rare form of soft tissue cancer. As the highest volume treatment centre for sarcoma in NSW, Chris O’Brien Lifehouse was recommended to Josh as the best place for treatment. His parents Ian and Lisa helped Josh pack up his belongings into the back of his car, and together they made the 16-hour drive back to Sydney.

“Much of the trip we were without mobile coverage or WiFi, so we could process what we’d just learnt,” says Ian, Josh’s dad.

“Despite the circumstances, it was a special time. We reforged an even stronger closeness of father, mother and child cementing a camaraderie where we agreed that we ‘had this’, that we would ‘beat this’.”

Unfortunately, the long trips didn’t end there. The Griffiths family live in Gosford, so his mum and dad were grateful to stay at the Sony Foundation You Can Centre at Chris O’Brien Lifehouse while Josh received treatment. Being so close together was an immense comfort to the whole family.

“As a close-knit family, this meant the world to us,” recalls Ian. *“The support services at Chris O’Brien Lifehouse removed an element of the stress and uncertainty we were feeling. Knowing we had the refuge of the You Can Centre meant we didn’t need to think*

about finding accommodation and parking, not to mention traveling upwards of 3 hours each day. It was one less obstacle to navigate.”



Josh receiving chemotherapy

“

Support services helped make this time a little easier, by alleviating some of the worry and apprehension we were experiencing.

Receiving cancer treatment far from home is tough. Long trips to the city, the expense of accommodation and being separated from home and family can make the challenges of treatment so much harder.

At Chris O’Brien Lifehouse, the generosity of our donors helps provide a range of holistic support services that help ease the burden of distance for regional patients, so they can access world-class, comprehensive cancer care.

If you’d like to help ease the burden of distance for patients like Josh, why not make a journey of your own? Sign up to Go The Distance this September and every km you cover will help bring cancer care closer to home for regional Australians.

