



**Chris O'Brien  
Lifehouse**

## **The impact of your support**

Discovery Partner Report  
July 2024



# *Thank you*

As a clinician, a researcher, and now Chief Executive Officer of Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, I see the generosity of our Discovery Partners at work every day – driving innovative research and underpinning the compassionate care that brings hope to people with cancer and their families.

This year's report highlights just some of the most recent examples of how your support is changing lives. You'll find out how your donations are funding our specialist nurse program and the exciting research of our Director of Gynaecological Oncology, Professor Rhonda Farrell. You'll read about our new Cancer Biomarker Centre, which is promising to advance precision cancer treatment, and we'll share some highlights of philanthropy-funded programs that we've established over the last decade.

As a Discovery Partner, your donations play a crucial role in this work. Our achievements are your achievements, and I'm proud to share them with you in our latest annual impact report. Thank you once again for your generosity, and for bringing hope to the lives of people with cancer.

**Professor Michael Boyer AM**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Specialist nurses - The heart of patient-centred care

Over the past 10 years, the support of Discovery Partners like you has helped fund specialist nurse positions across the hospital.

Specialist nurses have advanced skills and training in specific types of cancer and provide personalised care, tailored to each patient's unique needs. They are a source of comfort for patients, always ready to answer questions and help with concerns about treatment and side effects.

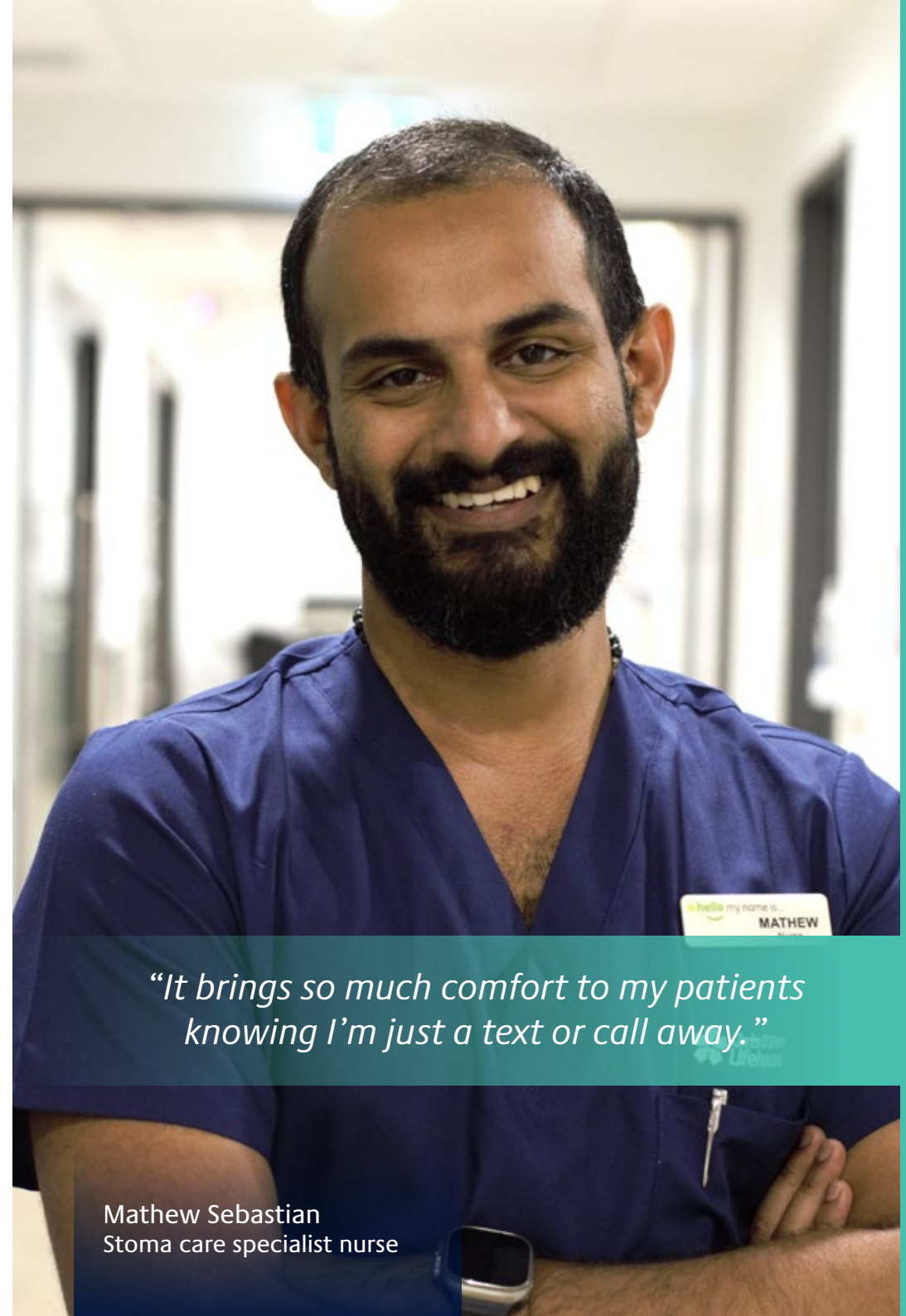
Today our specialist nurse program supports 20 specialist nurses in 10 cancer streams and departments. With your help, we are working towards having specialist nurses for every cancer type.

## We'd like to introduce you to Mathew

Mathew is our new Stoma Clinical Nurse Specialist in the inpatient surgical ward. Recognising the growing need for specialised stoma care, we created this role last year and appointed Mathew, who has been with Chris O'Brien Lifehouse since 2015.

Some surgeries require removing part of the colon or bladder, leading to the creation of a stoma. This is a small opening in the abdomen connected to the digestive or urinary system, allowing bodily waste to collect in a bag. Whether temporary or permanent, living with a stoma can be a confronting change.

With his specialised training in stomal care, Mathew has greatly improved patient support. His expertise helps patients avoid complications, improve their quality of life, and confidently adjust to their 'new normal.'



*"It brings so much comfort to my patients knowing I'm just a text or call away."*

Mathew Sebastian  
Stoma care specialist nurse

# *A new era in cancer biomarker research*

With the help of our kind donor community, Chris O'Brien Lifehouse has opened the Cancer Biomarker Centre, dedicated to researching and testing cancer biomarkers.

Biomarkers are the key to precision medicine in cancer treatment. They are proteins, genes, or molecules found in tumours that provide important insights into a person's cancer type, progression and how they are likely to respond to or resist treatment. For instance, new treatments like immunotherapies have revolutionised cancer care but they don't work for everyone. We can now test the effectiveness of a particular treatment on a patient by looking at biomarkers.

The Cancer Biomarker Centre is led by Professor Lisa Horvath and Dr Jenny Lee, and supported by a team including a biobank officer and clinical trial

coordinator. This team focuses on validating biomarkers, ensuring they are accurate and reliable. This long and complex stage of research is often challenging due to funding issues. But thanks to your support, this is the stage in which our Cancer Biomarker Centre is set to make the most significant impact.

**Chris O'Brien Lifehouse is already a world leader in biomarker research for prostate, lung, and brain cancers. With your support, the new Cancer Biomarker Centre will unify and expand these programs, speeding up the development of biomarkers for various cancers to ensure they can get into clinical trials faster.**

*"We aim to make biomarker research better, easier and faster for improved treatment and patient outcomes."*

Dr Jenny Lee  
Medical Oncologist and Co-Director  
of the Cancer Biomarker Centre

# *Innovating ovarian cancer treatment*

Associate Professor Rhonda Farrell is the Director of Gynaecological Oncology at Chris O'Brien Lifehouse. With the support of Discovery Partners like you, Rhonda is leading a world-first clinical trial called HYNova, focusing on a new treatment for ovarian cancer called Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemotherapy, or HIPEC. HIPEC uses heated chemotherapy applied directly to the abdominal organs during surgery. While it is proven effective for other cancers, its role in treating ovarian cancer hasn't been researched yet.

Thanks to your support and a grant from the Australian Government's Medical Research Future Fund, Rhonda's trial is now gathering vital evidence while offering Australian patients access to this pioneering therapy.

Rhonda is also working with the team in the Arto Hardy Family

Biomedical Innovation Hub on a groundbreaking new project combining two cutting-edge technologies – polymer-coated nanoparticles and tissue engineering – to treat ovarian cancer.

Polymer-coated nanoparticles are tiny, engineered particles that improve the penetration of chemotherapy into tumours. Tissue engineering uses technology to 'print' a patient's tissue and cancer with living cells. This allows scientists to safely test these nanoparticles and see what effect they might have, without risk to a patient.

**Thanks to your support, this promising research could lead to more effective treatments, improving survival and quality of life for women with ovarian cancer.**



*“The generosity of our supporters will directly impact the lives of many women faced with late-stage ovarian cancer.”*

Associate Professor Rhonda Farrell  
Director of Gynaecological Oncology



# Program updates

We're pleased to share the progress of four major programs we have established over the last few years, thanks to the incredible generosity of donors like you.

## Interventional Oncology Suite

In 2022, we opened our new Interventional Oncology Suite which offers advanced imaging and minimally invasive treatments to our patients. The suite is now operating five days a week, treating over 100 patients monthly with procedures like portacath insertions and image-guided biopsy.

## The Arto Hardy Family Biomedical Innovation Hub

The Arto Hardy Family Biomedical Innovation Hub, established in 2021, has developed LIFEPRINT4D™, a 3D-printed tool that improves radiation therapy accuracy. Made from tissue-like material, it's now recognised as a safe medical device in clinical trials, promising better treatment outcomes for patients.

## Integrated Prosthetics & Reconstruction Lab

In April 2024, we opened the Integrated Prosthetics & Reconstruction Lab, led by Professor Jonathan Clark AM. We're now the only facility in Australia offering both reconstructive surgery and prosthetic rehabilitation for head and neck cancer patients. The lab designs and manufactures prostheses onsite.

## Palliative Care Service

Established in 2021, our palliative care service has grown significantly and now supports over 500 patients. Led by Dr Kasia Chmiel, the team has expanded to include new consultants, nurses, and a social worker. With your support, the Palliative Care Outcomes Collaboration program ensures the highest standard of care for our patients, their families and loved ones.



# *Your support drives our mission to transform cancer care. Thank you!*

Dive into more stories on our exclusive Discovery Centre, available only to our Discovery Partners. Simply scan the QR code below to visit.



Front Cover Photo: Palliative Care Specialist Nurses,  
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*Cancer care, choose hope*