

# Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia

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IMPACT REPORT 2022

March 2023



**Ronald McDonald  
House Charities®**  
Western Australia

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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.

## **Acknowledgement**

SVA acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, past, present, and emerging.

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## List of acronyms and abbreviations

<b>Term</b>	<b>Description</b>
Aboriginal	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
COVID-19	COVID-19 Pandemic
FLOs	Family Liaison Officers
ICU	Intensive Care Unit
PCH	Perth Children's Hospital
RMHC WA	Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia
SVA	Social Ventures Australia
WA	Western Australia

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# Executive Summary

Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) is an independent, not-for profit organisation dedicated to providing essential programs to support the wellbeing of families with seriously ill children, operating in 62 countries across the world.

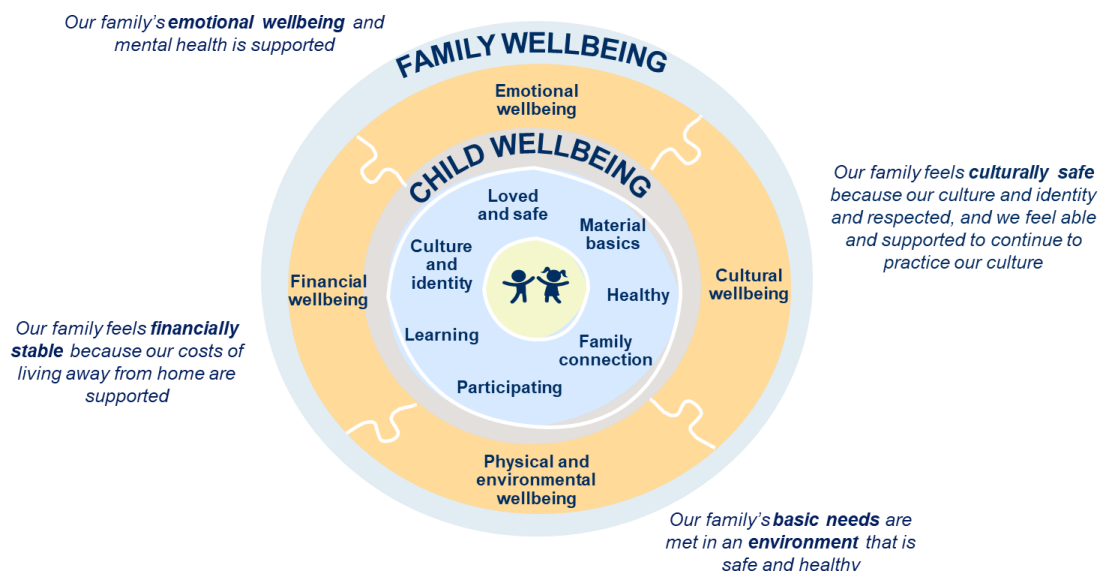
RMHC chapters integrate family-centred care services and infrastructure in partnership with public hospitals supporting maternity, infant, child and adolescent patients and their families.

Established in 1990, Ronald McDonald House Charities Western Australia (RMHC WA) today supports an average of 2000 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, family respite retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury, Busselton.

RMHC WA engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA) in 2021 to undertake an evaluation of its accommodation and support services to better understand and report on RMHC WA's impact on families (parents, caregivers and siblings) and children receiving treatment, and in turn, identify opportunities for improvement.

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 RMHC WA staff and volunteers. This report provides the key findings and recommendations from the data collected during 2022, within the updated framework.

The RMHC WA Wellbeing Framework is centred on the concept that enhanced family wellbeing results in greater child wellbeing. The Outcomes Framework is built around RMHC WA's Wellbeing Framework, which focuses on the emotional, financial, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of families.



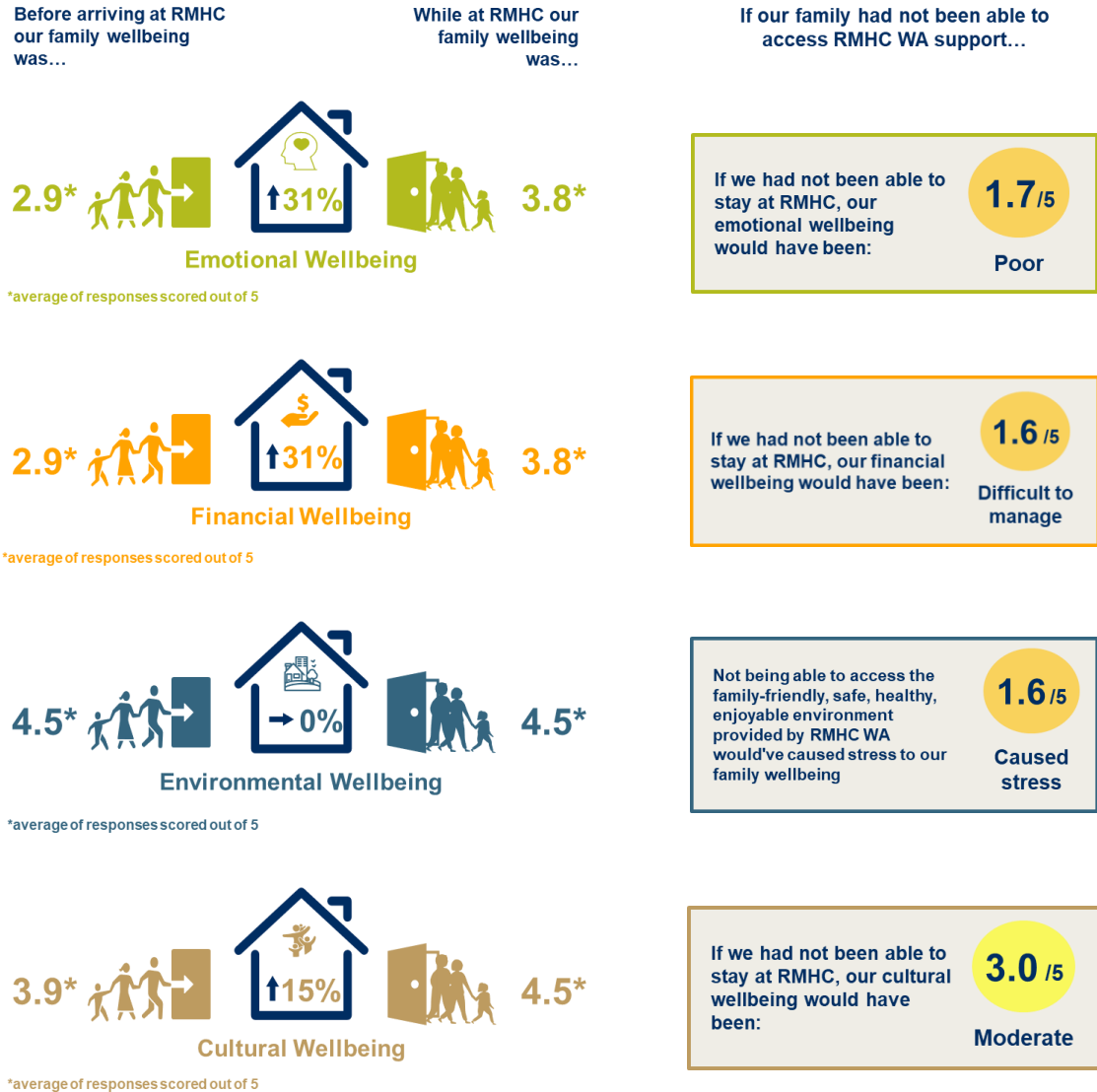
## 2022 Impact Snapshot

In 2022, RMHC WA had a very high impact on the emotional and financial wellbeing of families staying at the house and a high impact on the cultural wellbeing of families, with a 31% increase in the average emotional and financial wellbeing ratings from entry to exit, and a 15% increase in cultural wellbeing.

In 2022, the overall wellbeing scores of families prior to RMHC WA support were 10% lower than in 2021; likely due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and rising cost of living that Western Australians experienced during 2022. Families also stated that had they not been able to access RMHC WA support in 2022, they likely would have experienced wellbeing that was 40% lower compared to 2021.

While at RMHC WA, the overall wellbeing scores of families in 2022 increased by 26% due to RMHC WA support, compared to an increase of 17% in 2021.

### Enhanced Family Wellbeing Domains



## Outcome domains for residential families and siblings



1. Reduction in stress

Impact Rating

4.5

Very High



2. Enhanced family support

*"You could focus on looking after your child, as RMHC was looking after the parent"*



3. Siblings supported

Impact Rating

4.4

Very High



4. Stronger in the longer term

Impact Rating

4.5

Very High

## Outcome domains for residential children receiving treatment



5. Positive experiences

*"Loves the playground and playing with other kids after sitting so long [at PCH]"*



6. Happier

Impact Rating

4.2

Very High



7. Education maintained

*"School program helped him for two years"*



8. Longer term identity and resilience

*"[He] made friends that he's still in contact with and good friends with now."*

## Recommendations

- 1 Continue increasing the number of families that can be accommodated
- 2 Build partnerships and relationships to support families and provide follow up care once they leave RMHC WA
- 3 Invest in additional outdoor spaces and areas for families
- 4 Provide extra support for families with siblings, particularly single parent / carer families
- 5 Explore parent support groups to provide extra social support for families
- 6 Explore measuring the level of support parents / carers receive from partners or other family members.

# About this report

## Overview of RMHC WA

RMHC WA has been helping Australian families with seriously ill children stay together and supported since 1990. When a child is diagnosed with a serious illness, it can have a devastating effect on families. 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

RMHC WA has a wide range of programs which help families to stay together so they have the support of loved ones when they need it most.



#### **Ronald McDonald House®**

##### **Nedlands, Perth Children's Hospital and St Catherine's**

The houses provide essential accommodation, care and support for families 24/7, 365 days a year in close proximity to Perth Children's Hospital (PCH). The Nedlands House has 47 bedrooms and is located steps away from PCH. Within PCH, RMHC WA provides accommodation for parents and guardians of children in intensive care, which has 14 bedrooms. Both houses provide key essential services such as meals and domestic and recreational facilities. Families are supported by RMHC WA's Family Liaison Officers, along with over 380 volunteers.

Demand for RMHC WA support at its Houses is beyond current capacity. In 2022, an average of 38 families per month registered on its waitlist with 458 families unable to access support at the Nedlands and PCH Houses. To address demand in the short-term, RMHC WA extended its supported accommodation at St Catherine's on Park for an additional 15 families a day.



#### **Ronald McDonald® Learning Program**

The 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 Learning Program also provides occupational and speech therapy to support students' needs in tutoring.



#### **Ronald McDonald Family Retreat®**

RMHC WA family retreats in Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton give families with a seriously ill 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.



## RMHC WA's Impact Journey

RMHC WA engaged Social Ventures Australia (SVA) in 2021 to undertake an evaluation of its accommodation and support services to better understand and report on RMHC WA's impact on families (parents, caregivers and siblings) and children receiving treatment, and in turn, identify opportunities for improvement.

As a first step, SVA worked with RMHC 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 RMHC 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 RMHC 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 RMHC WA staff and volunteers. This report provides the key findings and recommendations from the data collected during 2022, within the updated framework.

## 2022 WA Snapshot

Understanding the context of services provided by RMHC WA is important for understanding the impact they have had for families in 2022. In particular, 2022 saw WA families experience the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and borders reopening, along with inflation and increases in the cost of living.

### Western Australia 2022 Context Snapshot



**616,000 children and young people live in WA**



**17% of children and young people are living below the poverty line in WA**



**152,000 children and young people in WA live in regional and remote areas**



**40,000 Aboriginal children and young people under 18 years live in WA**



**385,482 households with one or more children are in WA**



**9.3% increase in living costs for WA families during 2022**



**23.2% decrease in elective surgery in WA hospitals in 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions**



**44% of Western Australians felt isolated from family and friends due to COVID-19**

1

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2022, Profile of Children and Young People in WA – 2022, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth; <https://www.abs.gov.au/media-centre/media-releases/employee-households-living-costs-highest-two-decades>; <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/myhospitals/sectors/elective-surgery>

## Ronald McDonald House Nedlands

-  487 new families
-  375 returning families
-  1218 visits (stays)
-  12,347 nights of accommodation provided
-  10.1 nights average length of stay



## Ronald McDonald House Perth Children's Hospital

-  467 new families
-  55 returning families
-  590 visits (stays)
-  4,059 nights of accommodation provided
-  6.9 nights average length of stay



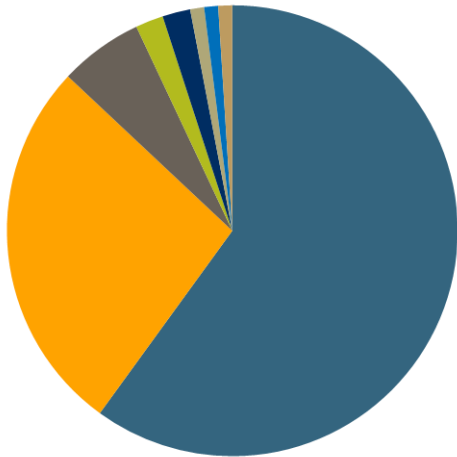
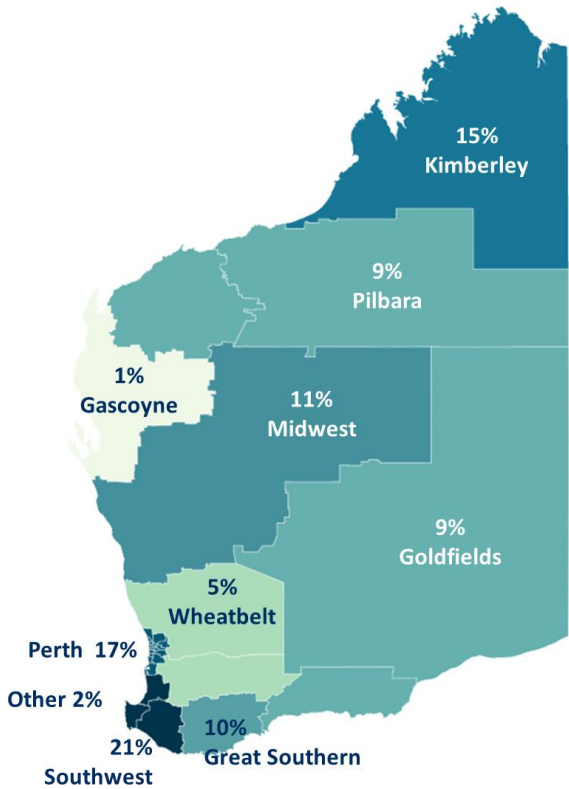
## Alternative Accommodation: St Catherine's

-  190 new families
-  130 returning families
-  372 visits (stays)
-  2,566 nights of accommodation provided
-  6.9 nights average length of stay



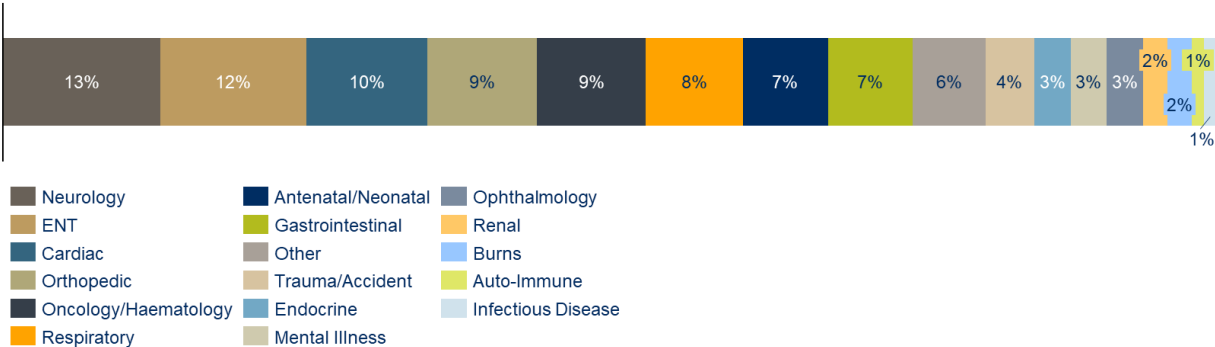
**Families come from all over Western Australia, with the majority coming from regional and rural areas.**

**RMHC WA support children and families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds**



- Caucasian (60%)
- ATSI (27%)
- Other/Undefined (6%)
- Asian (2%)
- East Indian (2%)
- Maori (1%)
- African Descent (1%)
- Arabic/Middle Eastern (1%)

**Children staying at RMHC WA have a vast range of medical conditions, with the majority requiring treatment for neurological and ENT conditions, followed by cardiac, orthopaedic and oncology treatment.**



## COVID-19 Impacts

In 2022 Western Australia was dealing with the fallout of COVID-19, having opened up to the rest of the country and bringing in restrictions as a result. Elective surgeries were cancelled, hospital visitor numbers and visiting hours were restricted, and many programs and spaces in the hospital were closed. Ronald McDonald Family Rooms in PCH were closed for over 7 months.

Throughout 2022, RMHC WA Houses remained open to patients and their families, adhering to WA Health measures and RMHC global health and safety regulations for immune-compromised patients. During this time, RMHC WA delivered a range of online and in-room activities to children and families while maintaining social isolation. The Learning Program continued with the launch of online tutoring.

The impacts led to a reduction in the number of families at RMHC WA in 2022, with the Nedlands House having 21% less families stay in 2022 compared to 2021, and PCH House with 22% less families in 2022 compared to 2021. Visit numbers also reduced by 30% at the Nedlands House and 20% at PCH. Families were staying for longer, however, with length of stay increasing by 30% at the Nedlands House, and by 17% at PCH in 2022.

*“With [COVID-19] impacting so much elective surgery we saw the most long term families in the house than we have ever had.”*

**FLO**

All programs and facilities reopened in October 2022, and interviews and survey responses near the end of 2022 conveyed the difference families could see when revisiting the house following COVID-19 restrictions easing.

*“Completely new vibe in the house now that restrictions have eased – more volunteers. More activities happening at the house.”*

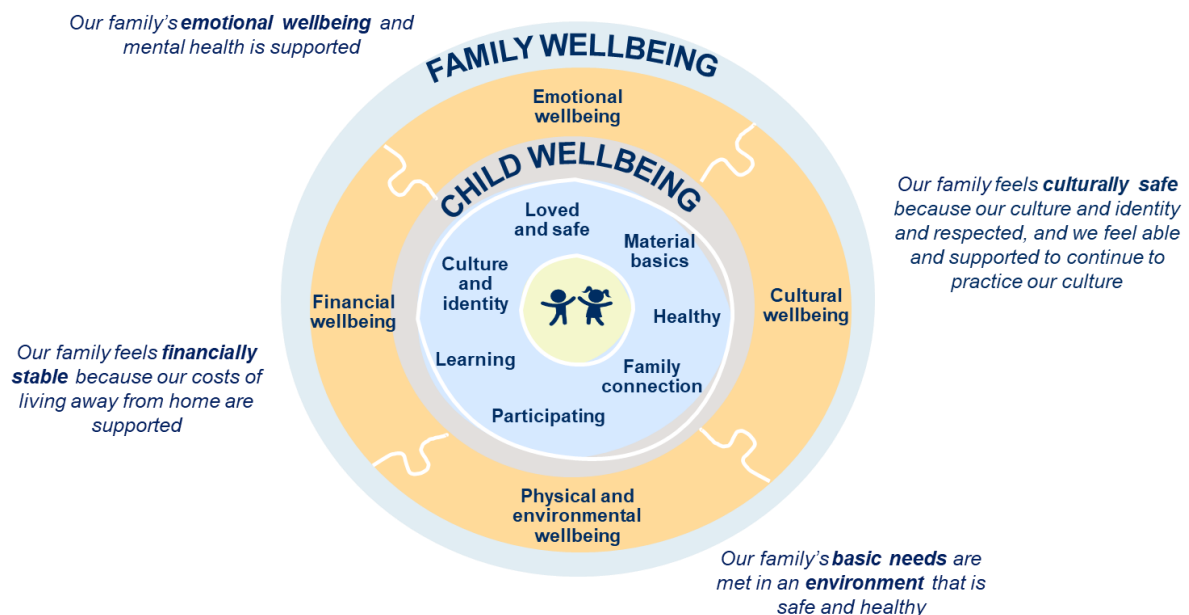
**Parent**

# Wellbeing Framework

In 2021, SVA worked with RMHC WA to develop an Outcomes Framework, which comprises of RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework and Logic Model. Guided by the Outcomes Framework, an Evaluation Plan was developed which includes data collection methods, frequency and roles and responsibilities. These are both provided in the 2021 Impact Report. Following the 2021 Impact Report, the Outcomes Framework and evaluation plan was revised to reduce the burden on RMHC WA staff and volunteers, and to ensure RMHC WA’s focus on enhanced family wellbeing is central to the framework.

## RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework

RMHC WA Wellbeing Framework is centred on the concept that enhanced family wellbeing results in greater child wellbeing. RMHC 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 RMHC WA’s Wellbeing Framework, which focuses on the emotional, financial, cultural, and environmental wellbeing of families. By focusing on the wellbeing of the family, the wellbeing of the child is improved.



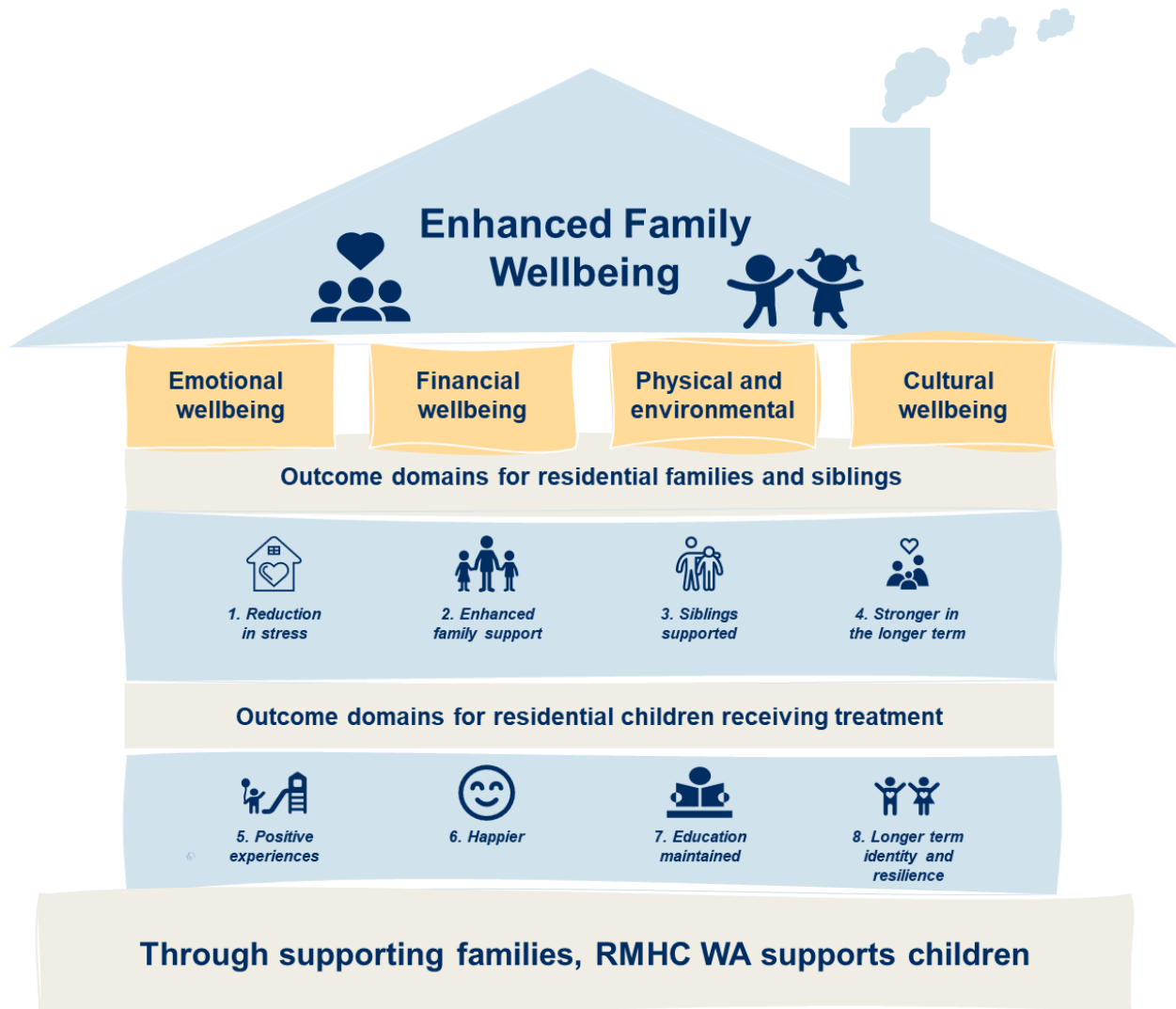
## Outcomes Framework

The Framework outlines the key outcomes RMHC WA seeks to achieve for families and children’s wellbeing. For each outcome domain, a set of priority outcomes and indicators were developed.

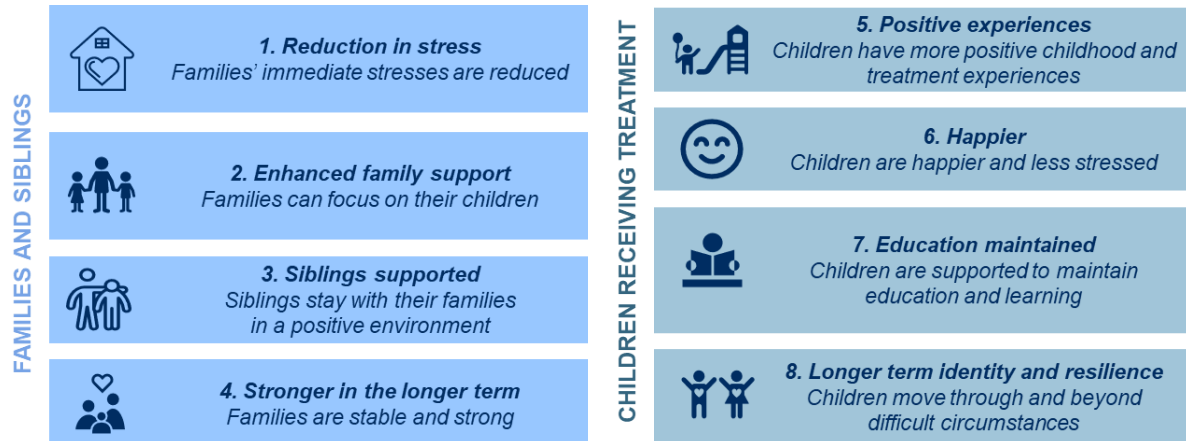


Acknowledging the holistic nature of outcomes, the Framework includes:

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



## Descriptions of outcome domains for Families and children



## Data Collection tools and analysis










A variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection tools were used to acquire a deeper understanding of RMHC WA's impact, including through drawing upon different perspectives from parents and caregivers, as well as FLOs who work closely with families and children receiving treatment.

### Tool 1: Exit survey for parents and caregivers

The survey included 22 questions (with several sub-questions) to assess the changes in family wellbeing, and outcomes for families, siblings and children receiving treatment as a result of staying at the RMHC WA Nedlands and PCH houses.

Surveys were provided to RMHC WA families in hard copy format for completion. Data collection was facilitated by the FLOs.

### Total of 77 x survey responses

-  20 x First Nations
-  34 x PCH; 37 x Nedlands; 3 x St Catherines
-  50 x short term stays (<14 days)
-  16 x medium term (14 days – 1 month)
-  9 x long term (1 month +)
-  10 x Metro (less than 100 km)
-  22 x Regional (100-300 km)
-  22 x Rural (300-900km)
-  23 x Remote (900 km +)

## Tool 2: Interviews with parents/caregivers

SVA interviewed parents who stayed at the RMHC WA Nedlands House, PCH House and St Catherine’s during 2022 to understand what had changed for their family as a result of staying at the houses. A total of 14 interviews were conducted, with a mix of short/medium/long term stays; metro/regional/rural; PCH and Nedlands stays; and some First Nations families.

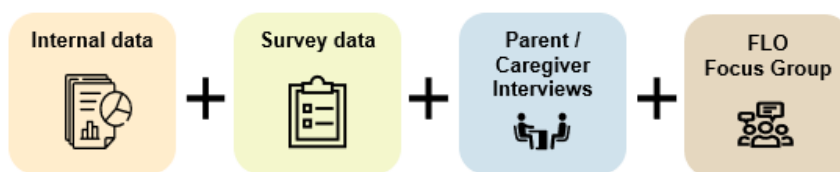
Two interviews were also undertaken with hospital staff to help provide context and additional insights from the perspective of the hospitals RMHC WA is partnered with.

## Tool 3: RMHC WA staff Focus Group

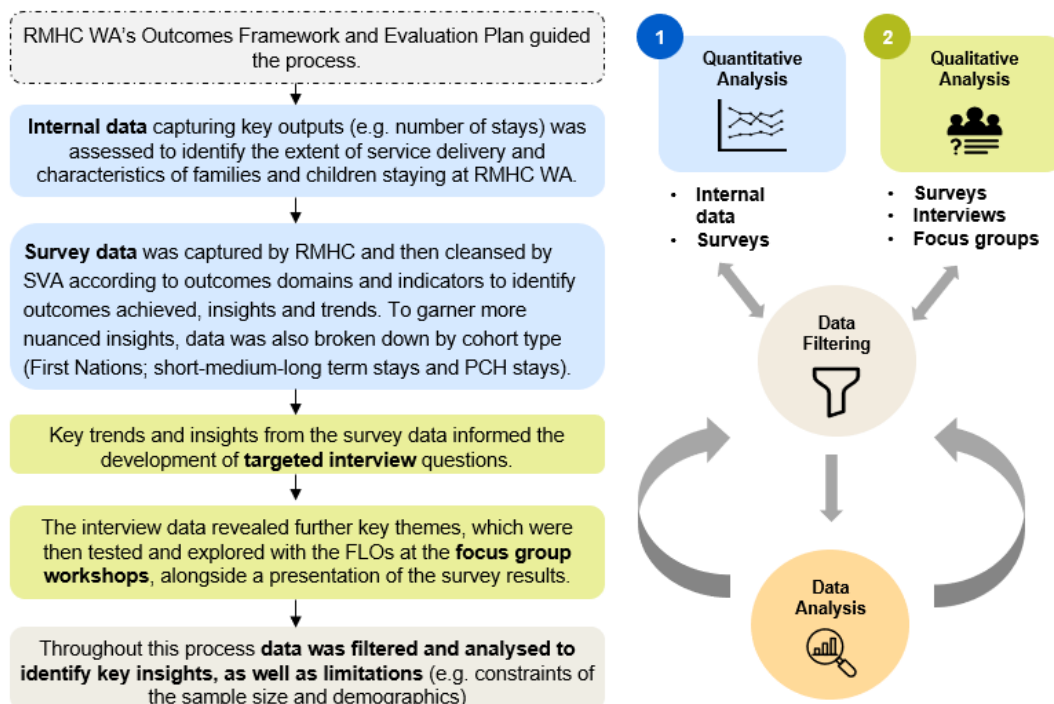
SVA led a focus group with RMHC WA’s FLOs. The purpose of this focus group was to present and test the survey results with staff to develop further insights, and garner broader feedback about families’ experiences at the house and the challenges and impacts of COVID-19 on the RMHC WA house environments, programs and family experiences.

## Data Analysis

This evaluation triangulated four key quantitative and qualitative data sources to better understand the impact of RMHC WA.



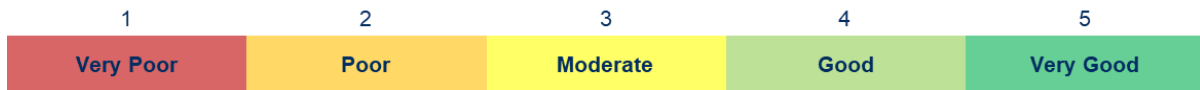
## Process





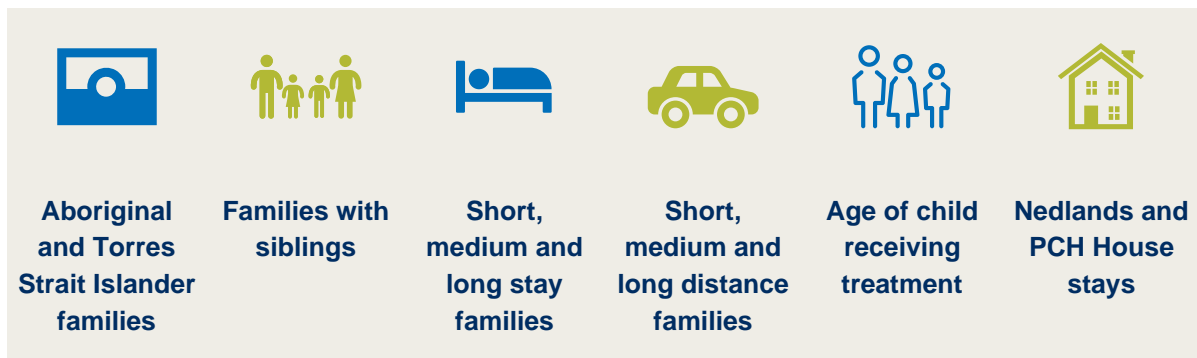
## Wellbeing Ratings

All survey questions requested a response along a five-point scale, enabling question averages to be calculated as a score out of 5. These averages are called ‘wellbeing ratings’ throughout the report.



## Cohort insights

In addition to overarching trends and insights, survey data was analysed for the following cohorts. Where this analysis revealed additional cohort specific insights, they are discussed by domain below. Where responses were consistent across cohorts, no cohort insights are provided. As St Catherine’s families consisted of just 4% of survey respondents, they were not analysed as a cohort for 2022.



## Limitations

The key findings have been informed by a limited number of parent/caregiver survey responses (77) and interviews (14). This sample size represents a very small proportion of the approximately 1,704 families that stayed at RMHC WA in 2022 across Nedlands, PCH and St Catherine’s. The majority of families interviewed had an infant or very young children, and so insights for children receiving treatment in 2022 were minimal.

# Enhanced Family Wellbeing



*“Really felt like you’d fallen down with the diagnosis and then there was this safety net”*  
*Parent*



## Emotional Wellbeing

In 2022, RMHC WA had a very high impact on the emotional wellbeing of families staying at the house, with a 31% increase in the average emotional wellbeing rating from entry to exit. The number of families who stated their wellbeing was good or very good increased from 29% of all respondents on entry, to 67% of all respondents on exit. In particular, 83% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their emotional wellbeing would have been poor or very poor.

**Before arriving at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing was:**

**2.9**



**While staying at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing was:**

**3.8**



\*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

**Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...**



**At RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...**



Very Poor Poor Moderate Good Very Good

**If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our emotional wellbeing would have been:**

**1.7 /5**  
**Poor**

**If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...**



Very Poor Poor Moderate Good Very Good

*“The compassion that I was shown by the staff members got me through”*  
**Parent**

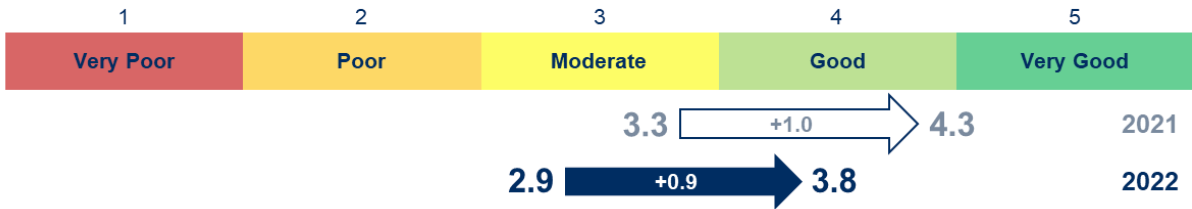
*“Felt really relaxed considering what was going on”*  
**Parent**

**2021** **2022**

**RMHC WA had a similar positive impact on emotional wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021, however overall wellbeing ratings were much lower**

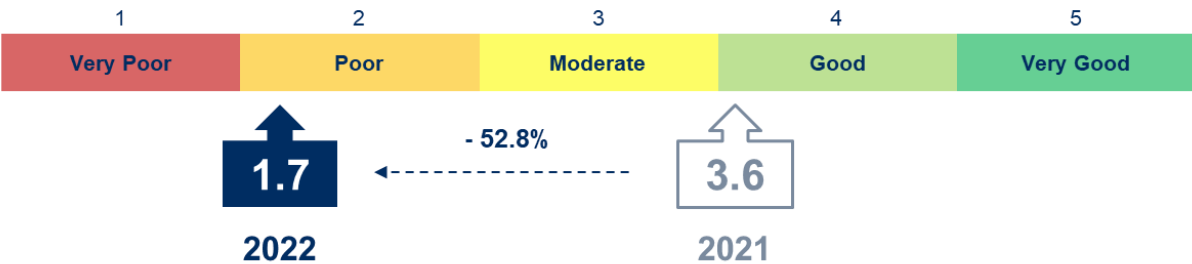
In 2022, the average impact RMHC WA had from entry to exit for families was very similar to 2021, with an increase of 0.9 in 2022, compared to an increase of 1.0 in 2021. While RMHC WA had a similar positive impact on families emotional wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021, families generally experienced 12% lower emotional wellbeing in 2022.

**Just before arriving ➔ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...**



In particular, the wellbeing of families if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA was significantly lower in 2022 than in 2021. As Western Australia was experiencing the impacts of COVID-19 in 2022, after a year of being isolated from the rest of the world, it is likely that the cumulative impacts of this would have negatively affected the emotional wellbeing of families. The reduction in non-essential procedures at WA hospitals in 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions also resulted in a higher proportion of long term families in the RMHC WA houses, and a higher proportion of severe illness, which is also likely to have influenced these survey results.

**If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...**



*“Emotionally – didn’t want to come home at the start. Without RMHC WA wouldn’t have been able to be in Perth 90% of the time that we were.”*  
**Parent**

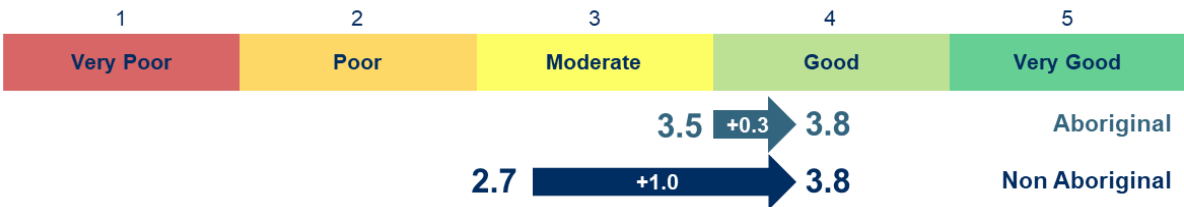
*“Made a bad situation a lot more bearable, lots of things we didn’t have to worry about”*  
**Parent**



**Families who identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) had higher emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC WA**

Aboriginal families reported higher levels of emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC compared to non-Aboriginal families. Both cohorts reported the same level of emotional wellbeing while at the house. This meant that RMHC WA had a much greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of non-Aboriginal families (average increase of 1.0), compared to Aboriginal families (average increase of 0.3).

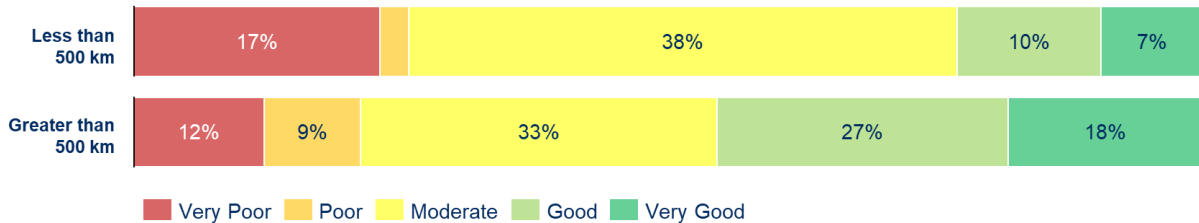
Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



**Long distance families had greater emotional wellbeing than families within 500 km of Perth**

Interestingly, families who had travelled further for treatment (greater than 500 km away from Perth), reported a higher emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC WA than families from within 500 km. Upon exiting RMHC WA, the two cohorts reported similar emotional wellbeing. When asked what their emotional wellbeing would have been if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, families from a greater distance again rated slightly higher wellbeing with an average of 2.0, compared to an average of 1.5 for families closer to Perth.

Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



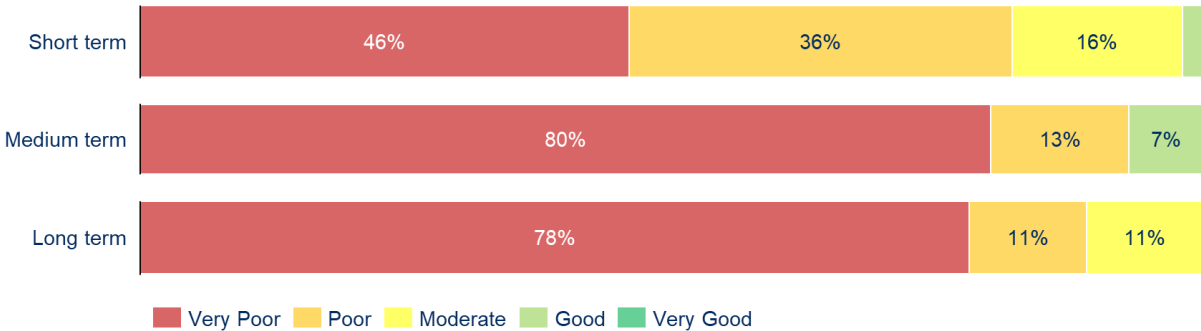
The higher wellbeing reported by regional families may be due to COVID-19 having a smaller impact on daily life in regional WA, compared to in metro Perth. The strong communities many regional families come from may also influence higher emotional wellbeing.

Both Aboriginal families and regional and remote families reported higher emotional wellbeing. As 50% of long-distance families surveyed are Aboriginal, and 85% of Aboriginal families surveyed are long distance, it is likely that there are common reasons for higher emotional wellbeing across the two cohorts.

 **RMHC WA had a greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of medium and long term families**

As a family’s length of stay increases from short to medium term, the impact of RMHC WA on emotional wellbeing increases. Interestingly, there is minimal difference between the impact of RMHC WA on medium length and long term stays, with both having similar responses.

**If we had not been able to stay at RMHC our family’s emotional wellbeing would have been...**



*“Short term can sometimes mean very traumatic... there is not enough time to build relationships. Long term families build relationships with staff and other families in the house - becomes a community and house becomes their norm. They become more settled and support they get from other families going through a similar journey is priceless.”*

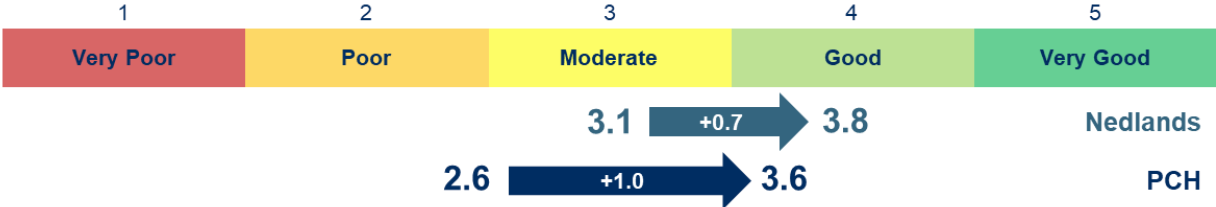
**FLO**

 **RMHC WA had a greater impact on the emotional wellbeing of families staying at PCH, while the wellbeing of families at Nedlands was higher**

As PCH house provides accommodation for parents whose child is in ICU and so likely suffering from an immediately life-threatening condition, it is not surprising that families at PCH reported lower average emotional wellbeing when arriving at RMHC WA compared to families at Nedlands. Likely due to the lower initial wellbeing, families at PCH house reported greater increase in emotional wellbeing while at the house (increase of 1.0), however families

at the Nedlands House reported higher average wellbeing at exit of 3.8, compared to 3.6 for families at PCH house.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family’s emotional wellbeing was...



**Families interviewed highlighted the importance of the social aspect of RMHC WA in improving emotional wellbeing**

A common theme throughout interviews was the importance of the social connections made by families while at RMHC WA. Being surrounded by others in similar situations helped improve the emotional wellbeing of families.

*“We still keep in contact with families we met at the hospital and RMHC WA. No one understands, so meeting people who were going through the same thing really helps you cope better”*  
**Parent**

*“Interacted with other families – have made some lifelong friends”*  
**Parent**

*“Still in contact with some families that met there... mutual understanding that the world stops when your kid gets sick”*  
**Parent**



## Financial Wellbeing

*“It is a brilliant service for everybody. There is no bias or prejudice. Doesn’t matter if you have money or not. Service is amazing, gives you space to worry about everything else, not money or life things”*

**Parent**

In 2022, RMHC WA had a very high impact on the financial wellbeing of families staying at the house, with a 31% increase in the average financial wellbeing rating from entry to exit. The number of families who stated their wellbeing was good or very good increased from 41% of all respondents on entry, to 71% of all respondents on exit. In particular, 80% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their financial wellbeing would have been poor or very poor.

**Before arriving at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing was:**

**2.9**



**While staying at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing was:**

**3.8**

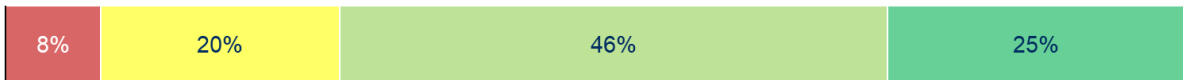


\*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

**Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family’s financial wellbeing was...**



**While staying at RMHC WA my family’s financial wellbeing was...**



Stressful    Difficult to manage    Just manageable    Manageable    Easy to manage

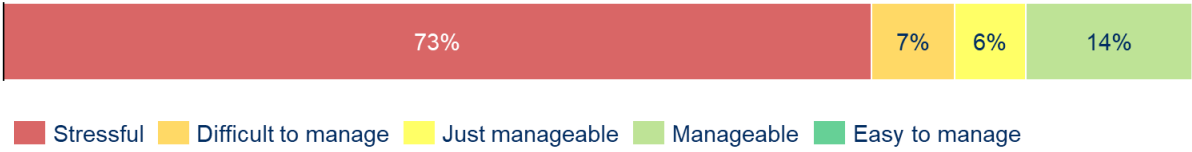


**If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our financial wellbeing would have been:**

**1.6 /5**

**Difficult to manage**

**If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s financial wellbeing would have been...**



*“Financially it would have been very difficult if we couldn’t stay at RMHC WA... I don’t like to think about it”*

**Parent**

*“Don’t know what we would have done if we couldn’t stay at RMHC WA. Would have been completely mentally and financially ruined.”*

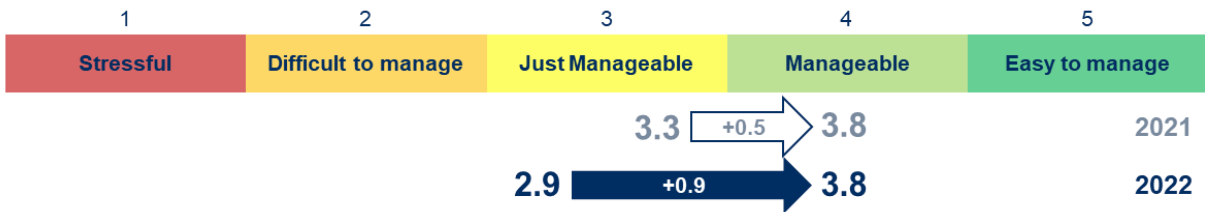
**Parent**

**RMHC WA had a greater impact on financial wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021, with families experiencing lower financial wellbeing before arriving at the house in 2022**

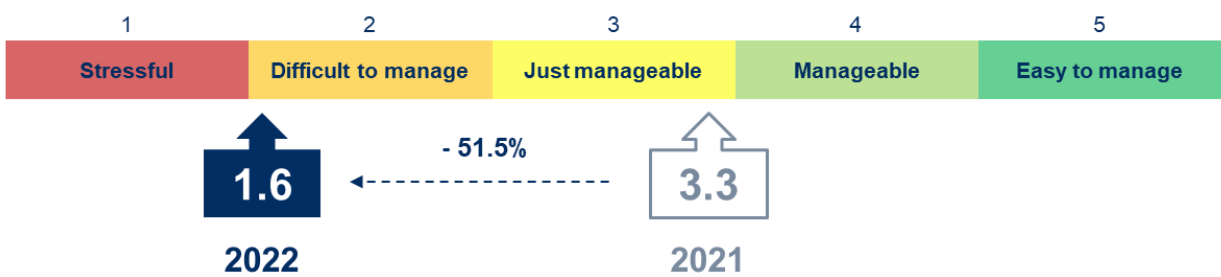
While in 2021 emotional wellbeing was a greater struggle for families than financial wellbeing, in 2022 financial wellbeing was elevated to be an equal, if not greater struggle for families. Families entered the house with a much lower financial wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021. Many families also specifically mentioned how the meals provided by RMHC WA were a key help financially, potentially linked to the increase in cost of living and growing inflation that occurred during 2022. Due to COVID-19, RMHC WA also had a higher number of long term families staying in the house than normal, so the financial benefit would have been greater for these families.

It is important to note that the wording of survey questions was changed from 2021 to 2022 (from very poor; poor; moderate; good and very good). As the connotations of ‘very poor’ compared to ‘stressful, this could have also influenced the difference between the two years.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...



If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family's financial wellbeing would have been...



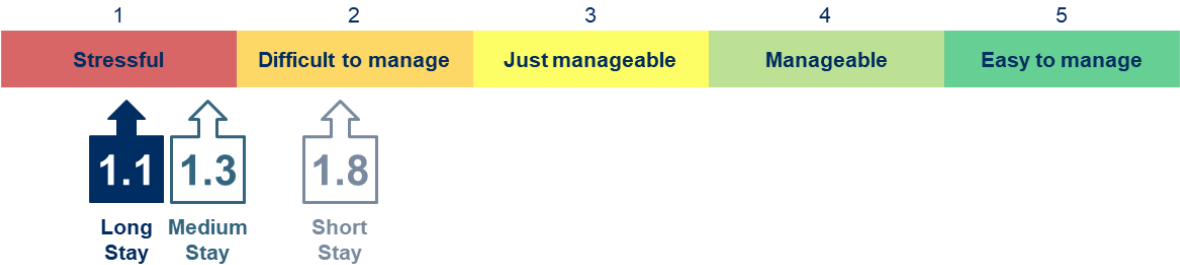
*"Wouldn't have been able to stay in Perth without [RMHC WA]"*  
**Parent**

*"Staying at the house was a huge financial help, particularly as breakfast and dinner is covered."*  
**Parent**

 **The length of stay for families has a direct correlation to the impact of RMHC WA on financial wellbeing**

As a family's length of stay increases, the impact of RMHC WA on financial wellbeing increases. Long stay families (greater than one month) had the lowest financial wellbeing rating if they could not stay at RMHC WA, followed by medium and short stay families. While all families experienced lower financial wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021, the higher number of long stay families in 2022 would have further influenced the greater impact RMHC WA had on financial wellbeing for families in 2022.

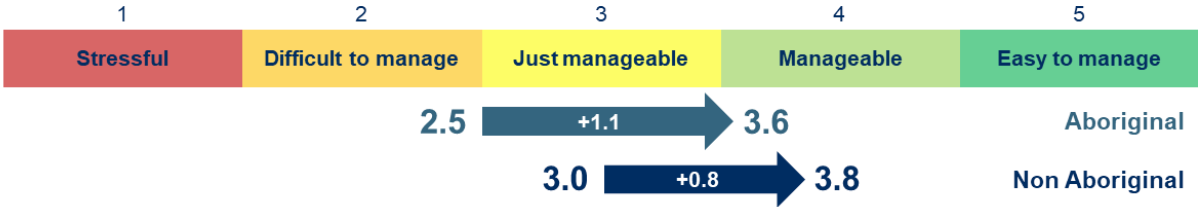
If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family's financial wellbeing would have been...



### RMHC WA had a greater impact on the financial wellbeing of families who identified as Aboriginal

RMHC WA had a significant impact for families who identified as Aboriginal, with a 1.1 score increase in financial wellbeing after staying at RMHC WA, compared to 0.8 increase for non-Aboriginal families. The financial wellbeing of Aboriginal families was still lower after being at the house, however the gap between Aboriginal families and non-Aboriginal families financial wellbeing had reduced from 0.5 on entry to 0.2 on exit.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...



### Regional families had lower financial wellbeing than families within 500 km of Perth

Families who live further than 500 km away from Perth also struggled with lower financial wellbeing, with lower improvement while at RMHC WA (0.8) compared to families within 500 km (1.0). In particular, the gap between long distance families and other families at RMHC WA increased while at RMHC WA, from 0.4 upon entry to 0.6 on exit.

Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's financial wellbeing was...





**Cultural Wellbeing**

*“The care and concern for me and my son makes us feel like we are coming home to an extended family after a day of appointments”*  
**Parent**

In 2022, RMHC WA had a high impact on the cultural wellbeing of families staying at the house, with a 15% increase in the average cultural wellbeing rating from entry to exit. The number of families who stated their wellbeing was good or very good increased from 70% of all respondents on entry, to 90% of all respondents on exit. In particular, 55% of families stated that if they had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, their cultural wellbeing would have been low or very low.

**Before arriving at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing was:**

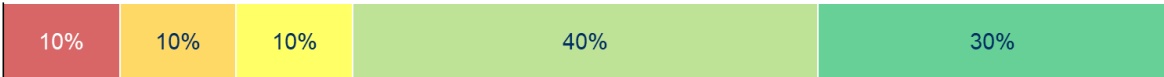


**While staying at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing was:**



\*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

**Just before arriving at RMHC WA my family’s cultural wellbeing was...**



**At RMHC WA my family’s cultural wellbeing was...**



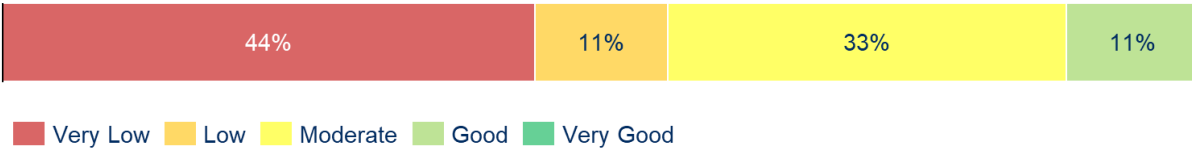
Very Low Low Moderate Good Very Good

**If we had not been able to stay at RMHC WA, our cultural wellbeing would have been:**

**3.0 /5**

**Moderate**

**If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family’s cultural wellbeing would have been...**



While no survey or interview participants specifically discussed the cultural safety of RMHC WA in relation to different religions or cultures, many talked about the welcoming and inclusive culture of the house.

*“Everyone there is in a similar situation so respects what is going on”*

**Parent**

*“Family loves RMH, like a second home.”*

**Parent**

*“No one in the house cared, [siblings] loved being there and could just be kids.”*

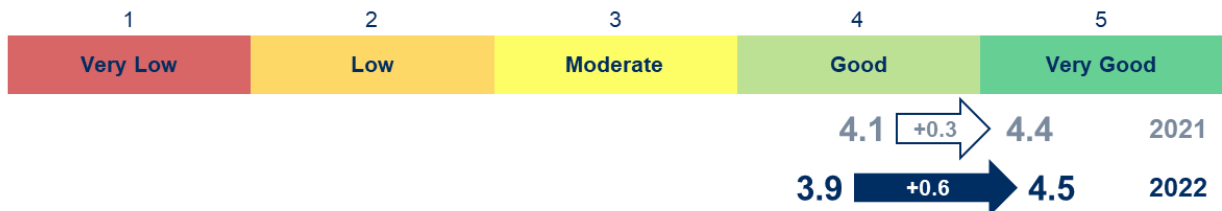
**Parent**

**RMHC WA had a greater impact on cultural wellbeing in 2022 compared to 2021**

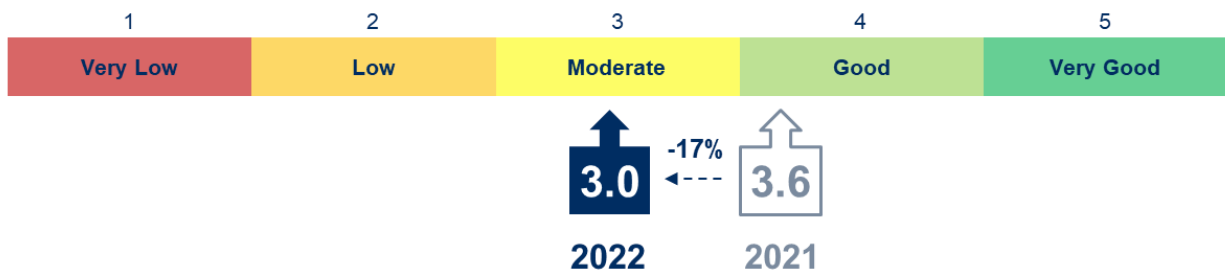
While the average cultural wellbeing of families from entry to exit at RMHC WA was very similar between 2021 and 2022, in 2022 RMHC WA had a slightly greater impact. Families arrived at the house in 2022 with a slightly lower wellbeing rating of 3.9 out of 5 (compared to 4.1 out of 5 in 2021), and experienced slightly greater cultural wellbeing while at the house

(4.5 out of 5, compared to 4.4 in 2021). If families had not been able to access RMHC WA, they also would have experienced lower cultural wellbeing in 2022, compared to 2021.

**Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's cultural wellbeing was...**



**If we had not been able to stay at Ronald McDonald House our family's cultural wellbeing would have been...**



**RMHC WA had a bigger impact on the cultural wellbeing of families with no siblings**

Families without siblings had a slightly lower cultural wellbeing when arriving at the house, compared to families with siblings, and experienced a slightly higher cultural wellbeing while at the house compared to families with siblings. This meant that RMHC WA had a greater impact on the cultural wellbeing of families without siblings (increase of 0.6), compared to families with siblings (increase of 0.1). This could potentially be due to the social nature of RMHC WA benefitting smaller family units and parents who have no other siblings to focus on beyond the child experiencing treatment.

**Just before arriving ➡ While staying at RMHC WA my family's cultural wellbeing was...**





**Environmental Wellbeing**

*“Being able to retreat to the RMHC WA was a breath of fresh air to get away from the ward and traumatic hospital environment. It restored a sense of normality for us as a couple and gave us a healthy space to create routine.”*

**Parent**

In 2022, RMHC WA had a moderate impact on the environmental wellbeing of families staying at the house. 93% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that without the RMHC WA house environment, they would have experienced stress for their family wellbeing. Many families mentioned the RMHC WA environment during interviews as being a major contributor in improving emotional and cultural wellbeing. The environmental wellbeing questions changed significantly between 2021 and 2022, and so no comparisons between years was done as part of the 2022 report.

**My family home is a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment.**



**RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home that is safe, healthy and enjoyable for our family.**



\*wellbeing ratings are an average of responses, scored out of 5

**My family home is a safe, healthy and enjoyable environment.**



**RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home that is safe, healthy and enjoyable for our family.**



Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

**Not being able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing.**

**1.6 /5**

**Caused stress**

Not being able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing.



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

*“House is worth more than words can describe”*  
**Parent**

*“Home away from home”*  
**Parent**

*“Homely not hospital feel”*  
**Parent**

*“Everybody they met was in different situations but everyone was welcoming and warm – lovely environment to be in”*  
**Parent**

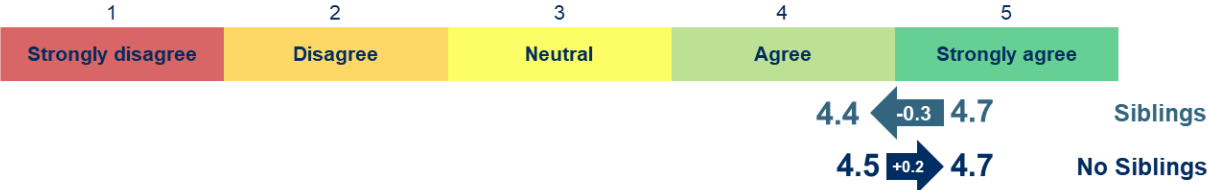
**Families with siblings experienced slightly lower environmental wellbeing at RMHC WA compared to their home**

For families with siblings, staying at RMHC WA is a larger disruption to family life and the different environment is more noticeable than for families where their only child is experiencing treatment. This is shown in survey data, where families with siblings felt more positive about their home environment compared to the RMHC WA environment. Despite this, families with siblings did feel that without RMHC WA, they would have experienced greater stress on their family wellbeing, with 57% stating they strongly agree that “not being



able to access the family-friendly, safe, healthy, enjoyable environment provided by RMHC WA would've caused stress to our family wellbeing", compared to 47% of families with no siblings.

My family home ➔ RMHC WA feels like a home-away-from-home that is safe, healthy and enjoyable for our family.



*"Felt better knowing we were all under the same roof"*  
**Parent**


# Outcomes for families and siblings

**Outcome domains for residential families and siblings**

-   
**1. Reduction in stress**
-   
**2. Enhance family support**
-   
**3. Siblings supported**
-   
**4. Stronger in the longer term**

*“This service [RMHC WA] is exactly what my family needed to take away the stress and anxiety around my daughter’s hospital admission.”*

**Parent**

 **Reduction in stress**  
*Families’ immediate stresses are reduced*


**Impact Rating**

**4.5**

**Very High**

*“Big relief when we got to RMHC WA. Wouldn’t have been able to do it without RMHC WA being there”*


**Parent**


 **Families’ basic needs are met at no cost**

While less families stayed at RMHC WA in 2022 compared to 2021 due to COVID-19, families stayed for an average of 30% longer at the Nedlands House, and 17% longer at the PCH house. Both Nedlands and PCH houses offer meals for families along with

accommodation. St Catherine’s does not offer meals, however, families have the option of going to the Nedlands House for meals and other facilities.


**Nedlands**  **12,347 nights of accommodation provided**

**PCH**  **4,059 nights of accommodation provided**

**St Catherines**  **2,566 nights of accommodation provided**

*“food was a big help – not having to worry about it”*  
**Parent**

*“Not having to commute one hour each way daily while our son was in ICU was a blessing. The reduced stress financially and emotionally, not to have to think about meals or finding a place to wash clothes, having a place for some time out from the ward has been absolutely amazing”*  
**Parent**

 **Families’ immediate emotional needs are met**

Most families (88%) agreed or strongly agreed that RMHC WA helped reduce their general levels of stress and anxiety. These findings were consistent across all cohorts and are similar to 2021 data (where 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement).

**Helped reduce my general levels of stress and anxiety**



Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree

*“felt like every little thing was taken care of... all needs were met”*  
**Parent**

*“Meals are amazing, one less thing you have to think about when your child is sick”*  
**Parent**



## Enhanced family support

*Families can focus on their children*

*“You could do your job as a parent and focus on looking after your child, as RMHC WA was looking after the parent”*

**Parent**



## Families can focus on caring for their children

While not asked in the survey, many families in interviews expressed how the support provided by RMHC WA helped them focus on their children. Daily concerns were removed, which gave carers the emotional and physical space to focus both on their child receiving treatment, and on other siblings staying with them in the house and their experience.

*“Did not need to stress about anything. It gave us more time to concentrate on our Grandchild.”*

**Parent**



## Families feel supported in the hospital environment

RMHC WA provides support within the houses, and throughout the hospital. While RMHC WA does not provide any care or support related to the child's treatment, they provide other supports for families within the hospital environment that helps provide a foundation for the family. This was particularly important during 2022 and many families were not able to have their wider support networks present in the hospital due to COVID-19 restrictions, and so FLOs became more important for families wellbeing.

*“All the staff and volunteers were brilliant, if you asked a question they would give you the answer or go find out.”*

**Parent**

*“Support was heightened during [COVID-19]... RMHC WA staff went over remit do whatever they needed to do to support family.*

**FLO**

*“families see regular RMHC WA support and consistent care everywhere they go throughout the hospital.. RMHC WA provides that wrap around support for families”*

**Hospital worker**



## Siblings supported

*Siblings stay with their families in a positive environment*

### Impact Rating

**4.4**

**Very High**

*“As soon as the girls walk into RMHC WA they are relaxed, which is a good feeling when you are a parent’*

**Parent**



## Siblings remain close to their families

Of survey respondents with siblings, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that RMHC WA helped their other children feel less stressed or anxious. Many parents interviewed stated that this was due to their proximity to family and to their sibling receiving treatment. Particularly during 2022, where COVID-19 restrictions meant that fewer visitors were allowed in the hospital, having a place very close where siblings could stay helped alleviate stress and anxiety for the entire family.

*“Kids were able to spend time with their mum and see their brother”*

**Parent**

## Helped our other child/children feel less stressed or anxious



*“Completely helped children be less anxious – they were close to parents.”*  
**Parent**



## Siblings can access play and learning environments together with their sibling receiving treatment and other children

Despite some play areas being closed during COVID-19, the positive environment of RMHC WA and spaces provided still had a significant impact on families wellbeing, with 96% of families with siblings surveyed agreeing or strongly agreeing that RMHC WA helped their other children to feel included and happy.

## Helped our other child/children to feel included and happy



*“Son asked if we could go back and stay at hospital next time we go to Perth”*  
**Parent**

*“Siblings were helped by the teacher, loved her. Enjoyed activities”*  
**Parent**

*“Children loved the movie nights, playrooms – Used education books, painting and drawing scrapbooks*  
**Parent**


The positive impact of the additional play areas, activities and space provided in the Nedlands House can also be seen in survey responses, with families who stayed at the Nedlands House agreeing more strongly compared to PCH families.

**Helped our other child/children feel less stressed or anxious**



**Helped our other child/children to feel included and happy**



 **Stronger in the longer term**  
*Families are stable and strong*

**Impact Rating**

**4.5**

**Very High**

*“was an amazingly helpful service in trying times.”*  
**Parent**

 **Disruption caused by child’s illness has a reduced long term impact on family**

93% of families surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that staying at RMHC WA helped their family maintain a sense of their normal life and feel closer to each other. These results are consistent with 2021 survey data, where 90% of respondents agreed that staying at RMHC

WA enable them to maintain a sense of their normal life, and 83% felt it made their family feel closer to each other.

### Helped my family maintain a sense of our normal life and feel closer to each other



*“A little bit of normality – our family can keep our routine when at RMH.”*  
**Parent**

### Families are stronger

95% of families surveyed felt that staying at RMHC WA helped their family feel stronger and more resilient to cope with their difficult circumstances. This was particularly true for long term families, where 88% strongly agreed compared to 64% of medium term families and 55% short term families strongly agreeing.

### Helped my family feel stronger and more resilient to cope with our difficult circumstances



*“We were able to maintain strong connection as a family and focused on a stress free recovery for our son.”*  
**Parent**



# Outcomes for children receiving treatment

## Outcome domains for residential children receiving treatment



5. Positive experiences



6. Happier



7. Education maintained



8. Longer term identity and resilience

*“Enjoyed space at RMHC WA, knowing she was going to have some space, and not be poked or prodded”*

**Parent**



### Positive experiences

*Children have more positive childhood and treatment experiences*

*“Loves the playground and playing with other kids after sitting so long [at PCH]”*

**Parent**



### Children have positive childhood experiences

While there were no survey questions, parents shared in interviews how staying at RMHC WA helped their child receiving treatment to have positive experiences. This is particularly the case for children who regularly visit Perth for ongoing treatments, and are staying at RMHC WA instead of the hospital.

*“Used the games room lots. He enjoyed the room, could spread out compared to the hospital”*

**Parent**

For children who were in hospital, having family and siblings close by helped them have positive experiences despite their treatment. Activity packs created by RMHC WA also helped these children have positive experiences despite the closer of family rooms due to

COVID-19. It is important to note that many parents interviewed in 2022 were staying at RMHC WA due to a newborn receiving treatment, and so this question was not applicable for them.

*“Visits from siblings made a massive difference”*  
**Parent**

*“Great to be so close at RMHC WA, [our child] didn’t look forward to going to hospital, so great it was just a quick trip”*  
**Parent**



**Happier**

*Children are happier and less stressed*



*“At the end of her stay at PCH, perked up knowing she was going to RMHC WA”*  
**Parent**

**Children feel safe and supported**

84% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that staying at RMHC WA helped their child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported.

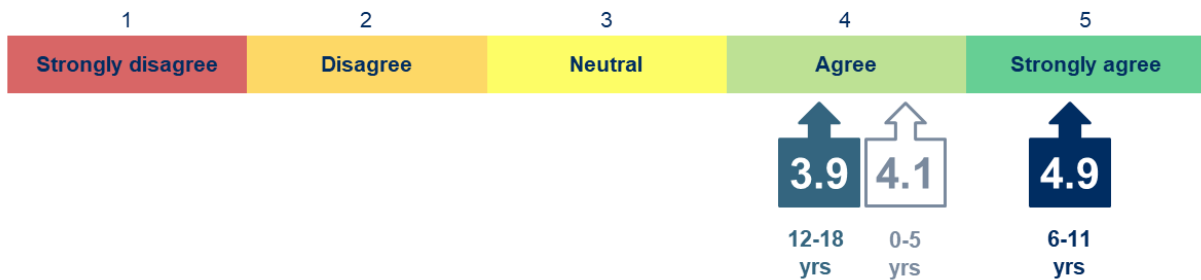
**Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported**



34% of survey respondents had a child under 1 year receiving treatment, and so it was difficult for those families to provide insight into their child’s happiness. 20% of survey respondents had a child aged between 12 and 18, however, and 22% had a child aged

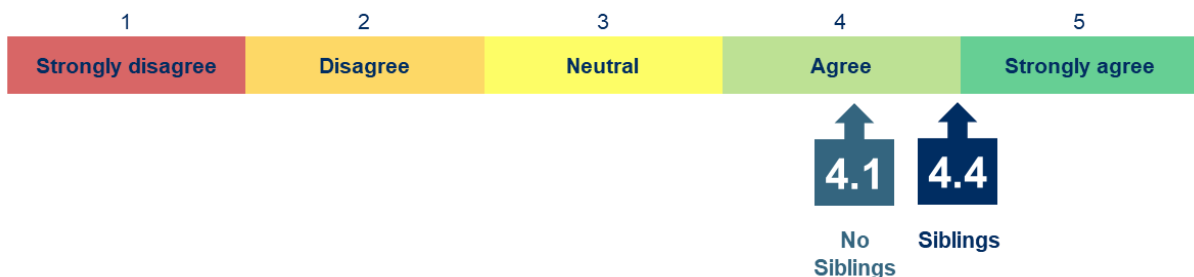
between 6 and 11 years old. Of these age groups, parents felt that their children aged between 6 and 11 felt the most calm, safe and supported by staying at RMHC WA during treatment.

## Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported



On average, families with siblings also felt that their child was more calm, safe and supported compared to families without siblings. This is likely to be due to the extra social support and positive experiences that are provided by siblings for children receiving treatment.

## Helped my child receiving treatment to feel calm, safe and supported



## Children feel less anxious and more confident

While the majority of families interviewed were parents of an infant receiving treatment, those that had older children often said that staying at RMHC WA and having family close by helped their child receiving treatment feel less anxious. For children receiving treatment that were not feeling social, parents also highlighted the space and respect provided by RMHC WA for those children to feel comfortable as well.

*“Very relaxed and happy, chatting to other kids they saw”*

**Parent**

*“Always packs her suitcase and is excited to go to Perth”*

**Parent**



## Education maintained

Children are supported to maintain education and learning



## Children supported to maintain education and learning during treatment

RMHC WA offers multiple learning opportunities through their Learning Centre (Nedlands House) and Family Room programs at PCH. Play-based learning and private tuition are some of the different activities patients and siblings can take part in. While not all sessions were run throughout 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions, learning and activity packs were created for children. Not all children want to attend, or feel comfortable attending sessions, however the opportunity is provided in case children desire.



Learning  
Centre

2097 children attended sessions

380 sessions facilitated

*"Learning centre was amazing"*

*Parent*

*"All the little things – colouring books, games"*

*Parent*



## Children are ready and more confident to return to school

Most families interviewed in 2022 had infants or very small children, and so could not provide much insight into the ongoing affects of the learning program for their child I returning to school. Some regional families with older children also had their child enrolled in an online school program already, so did not feel the need to take part in the RMHC WA learning program.

*"School program helped him for two years"*

*Parent*



## Longer term identity and resilience

*Children move through and beyond difficult circumstances*



**Children are empathetic and resilient adults who develop an identity beyond their illness.**

Parents interviewed highlighted the importance of social connections their children make while staying at RMHC WA as a key factor in ongoing resilience and happiness. Children can make connections with others experience similar situations and maintain those relationships beyond their stay at the house. This is particularly true of long term families.

*"[He] made friends that he's still in contact with and good friends with now."*

**Parent**

As no alumni interviews were undertaken in 2022, additional insights into the impact RMHC WA has had for children receiving treatment as they get older.

# Recommendations

## 1. Continue increasing the number of families that can be accommodated

Surveys and interviews show the great impact that RMHC WA has for families, and how many families rely on RMHC WA particularly for their emotional and financial wellbeing when a child gets sick. Families were very supportive of the work that RMHC WA does, with many mentioning the only improvement they could make is to increase the number of rooms they have. Increasing the number of rooms and families that can be accommodated will help RMHC WA to increase the impact they have for WA families.

When increasing capacity, RMHC WA is encouraged to consider:

- Larger rooms and self-contained apartment type spaces for larger families and those who prefer more privacy or would like to cook for familiar food for their family.
- Ensuring communal spaces and opportunities for families to still engage in the culture of the RMHC WA house, as this was highlighted during interviews as a key support for maintaining families' emotional wellbeing.

*"I could go on the news to talk about RMH"*

**Parent**

*"The staff, volunteers, facilities, location, support, services, room - everything was an absolute God-send."*

**Parent**

This recommendation was also provided in the 2021 Impact Report. Since the 2021 Impact Report, RMHC WA has:

- Increased the number of rooms leased at St Catherine's to support an additional 15 families per day.
- Reduced the number of families on the waitlist per month due to additional capacity.
- Made progress on arrangements for increasing the number of rooms leased at S Catherine's and extending the Nedlands House to increase capacity.

## 2. Build partnerships and relationships to support families and provide follow up care once they leave RMHC WA

RMHC WA provides such an excellent service and support for families that when families go home, they can often struggle from the sudden lack of support, particularly if they stayed at RMHC WA house for an extended length of time. RMHC WA is encouraged to build partnerships and relationships with other organisations that provide at home care and follow up support, and link families with these services prior to them leaving the house.

*"It was when they got home that things got hard"*

**Parent**

*"Families feel like they were 'dropped by RMHC WA' – there is no follow up."*

**FLO**

*"Families have commented when they come back that they found it very hard to integrate back into their own home because they were used to the supports of RMHC WA."*

**FLO**

## 3. Invest in additional outdoor spaces and areas for families

More outdoor space for families to gather and for children to play in would be greatly beneficial, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and other families who prefer not to be inside all day and who don't have the flexibility to visit outdoor spaces in Perth. Communal vegetable gardens and other opportunities for families to work in the garden and spend productive time outdoors would also be beneficial for emotional and environmental wellbeing.

*"It's calming but not being able to go outside without leaving bottom floor was difficult as I spend most of my time outside at home."*

**Parent**

*“He saw that I was one of the blokes who didn’t like talking. Let me go to town with the garden when I was there.”*

**Parent**

This recommendation was also provided in the 2021 Impact Report. Since the 2021 Impact Report, RMHC WA has been exploring access to and redevelopment of underutilised outdoor spaces at PCH. Discussions around project considerations are ongoing.

#### **4. Provide extra support for families with siblings, particularly single parent / carer families**

During 2022, families struggled with the increased child supervision rules at RMHC WA and the visitor restrictions at the hospital due to COVID-19. RMHC WA is encouraged to explore providing extra support to families with siblings, or connect families with external services that could provide child minding support. This is particularly relevant for single parents or carers with no family or support network in Perth.

*“I would have loved an option to have siblings minded at RMH while attending appointments at PCH. We were very limited by PCH's no siblings restrictions.”*

**Parent**



## 5. Explore parent support groups to provide extra social support for families

Many families interviewed and surveyed stated that the social environment and support they felt being surrounded by other people in the same situation was a key factor in maintaining and improving their emotional wellbeing. Some families identified that providing opportunities for this to happen may be helpful for parents or carers who are looking for that support but may not have opportunities to do so.

*“Parent support groups could be good once a week just a space for parents to get together in one room and relate to each other/ share stories over a cuppa tea... talking to others going through their own difficulties really helped us when the opportunity presented itself”*

**Parent**

*“Parent groups where a social worker organizes a day for parents on the ward to sit down together in a non clinical environment to talk about their experiences.”*

**Parent**

## 6. Explore measuring the level of support parents / carers receive from partners or other family members.

Currently the survey does not ask the level of support the parent has received or has access to from partners or other family members. For single parent / carer families, there are extra stressors when a child gets ill and the family needs to stay at RMHC WA, including the lack of any family incomes while in Perth, the lack of family support to mind siblings or provide emotional support. This is enhanced when the family is from regional or remote WA and does not have a support network in Perth.

