Children's
Cancer CoLab

Impact Report

2024 - 2025 | THE FIRST YEAR

Accelerating research, innovation and collaboration

Our major partners

VICTORIA
State
Government

CHILDREN'S
CANCER
FOUNDATION

Contents

Children's Cancer CoLab
Formerly Victorian Paediatric Cancer Consortium

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Acknowledgment of Country
We pay our deepest respect to the Traditional Custodians of Country across Australia and pay respects to the Ancestors and Elders of these lands, past and present. We pay respect to the Wurundjeri Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which our office stands.

Our impact

$5,620,447

awarded in childhood cancer research

7

Funded research projects

29

Supported childhood cancer jobs

3

Established funding and program partnerships

The challenge of childhood cancer

Heartbreaking facts about childhood cancer

Australia has one of the **highest rates** of childhood cancer in the world.

1,000
Australian children and adolescents are diagnosed with cancer every year.

Globally, about **1/3** of adult survivors of childhood cancer are not in paid employment.

400,000
new cases of cancer are diagnosed worldwide every year in children and adolescents.

1 in 5
Australian children diagnosed with cancer do not survive.

3 Australian children die every week from cancer.

80% of children who survive cancer have long-term effects from their treatment.

70
potential years of life are lost when a child dies from cancer.

Targeted childhood cancer research is urgently needed.
Only **12** drugs have been approved for childhood cancer in the past **40** years, yet over **500** drugs have been approved for adults in the same period.

Beyond survival: The true impact of childhood cancer

Every week, more Australian children lose their lives to cancer than to any other disease - a heartbreaking reality that we are determined to change.

For children who lose their lives to cancer, their deaths represent not just personal tragedies but the loss of immeasurable potential and decades of life unlived. For the 80% of children and adolescents who survive their initial cancer, the impact of cancer lasts a lifetime through multifaceted health and psychological problems related to their diagnosis or treatment.

Most childhood cancers have no known cause, making prevention impossible. Many current treatments were designed for adult bodies, not young patients' developing systems, leaving survivors to face lifelong consequences from the therapies that saved them, including developmental disorders, vision and hearing problems, infertility, mental health challenges, and additional cancers. Some cancers, including sarcoma, neuroblastoma, and brain cancer, respond poorly to existing treatments.

Families endure tremendous burdens beyond the medical challenges. Repeated hospital stays, invasive treatments, and uncertain prognoses create chronic stress, while the financial strain continues long-term through ongoing healthcare costs and reduced employment opportunities for survivors. Regional families often must relocate closer to treatment centres, and parents frequently reduce work hours or quit jobs entirely.

Surviving childhood cancer isn't enough. Children's Cancer CoLab was formed to create a future where every child with cancer can survive and thrive.

Collaboration is the key to better outcomes for children with cancer.

About us

Transforming childhood cancer research together

Children's Cancer CoLab is an independent non-profit organisation transforming how childhood cancer research is funded and delivered in Australia. We unite government, philanthropy, researchers, clinicians, advocates, survivors and families to accelerate breakthrough discoveries. By fostering collaboration and innovation across sectors and disciplines, and ensuring survivors and families shape our decisions, we're creating a future where every child and adolescent with cancer can survive and thrive.

Breaking down barriers

Unlike traditional research funders, we take a bold approach to accomplish what no single organisation can achieve in isolation. Our entire funding model is built to incentivise partnership across institutions, disciplines and sectors.

Our research funding is highly competitive, and institutional boundaries or processes do not constrain us. We fund research to de-risk early-stage ideas, avoid duplication across institutions, and focus resources where they will have the greatest impact.

But bold funding models alone aren't enough - they must be paired with rigorous accountability.

Collaborative and accountable

Collaboration is the only way to fast-track progress in childhood cancer. We partner with diverse stakeholders across sectors and disciplines to achieve collective impact.

> We fund research and innovation with clear potential for impact – and we expect results.

Our funding approach responds to the needs of the childhood cancer sector and our partners, while also ensuring the research we support delivers results. Milestone-based funding is released in stages with regular reviews to evaluate progress. This accountability ensures that the innovative research we support produces measurable, high-impact outcomes.

Guided by science and expertise

Most importantly, survivors and families shape and contribute to our funding decisions, ensuring we support bold ideas that matter to those who truly understand childhood and adolescent cancer.

Five strategically designed Impact Programs - spanning drug discovery, translational science, survivorship research, resource platforms, and workforce development - guide our funding decisions to ensure every dollar invested yields real-world impact.

Our highly esteemed committee of independent national and international scientific experts rigorously assesses all funding applications on their scientific merit, clinical impact, and strategic alignment with our Impact Programs. This dual governance model, combining lived experience with scientific excellence, ensures that every funding decision is both rigorous and meaningful.

Connecting the childhood cancer community

We partner with stakeholders across four key groups to build a future where every child and adolescent with cancer can survive and thrive.

Vision

Every child with cancer will survive and thrive.

Mission

To improve outcomes for our youngest cancer patients by funding research, accelerating innovation and fostering collaboration.

Values

Courage

We challenge traditional boundaries to accelerate childhood cancer research discoveries and innovation.

Community

We build a sense of belonging and support for those working on childhood cancer by funding research, accelerating innovation and fostering collaboration.

Compassion

We demonstrate care and understanding for patients and families affected by childhood cancer in all aspects of our work.

Collaboration

We work together with researchers, healthcare providers, industry, funders, survivors and families on childhood cancer.

2024 – 2025 Snapshot

It has been a year of 'firsts' for our newly established independent organisation, which evolved from the Victorian Paediatric Cancer Consortium to become Children's Cancer CoLab.

2024

July
- Inaugural CEO appointed

August
- Appointment of Board Chair and Members

September
- First Board meeting

October
- Official launch as independent entity
- First Consortium Partner Committee meeting
- Communications and Development Manager appointed

November
- Senior Financial Officer appointed

December
- First Scientific Advisory Committee meeting
- First Board Strategic Planning Day

2025

January
- First Patient and Family Advisory Committee meeting
- Impact Programs Lead appointed

February
- CoLab Board Chair visits research partners at Clayton precinct

March
- Rebrand to Children's Cancer CoLab

Children's Cancer CoLab

April
- First funding awarded

May
- First Survivorship and Living Well Roundtable
- MOU signed with Maddie Riewodt's Vision

June
- CoLab CEO attends Cancer Australia's Childhood, Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Ministerial Roundtable

Message from the Board Chair

"Children's Cancer CoLab represents a fundamental shift in how we approach childhood cancer research in Australia."

I am honoured to serve as the inaugural Board Chair of Children's Cancer CoLab and to work alongside a Board committed to transforming childhood cancer outcomes.

The establishment of Children's Cancer CoLab as an independent non-profit organisation represents a fundamental shift in how we approach childhood cancer research in Australia. Independence enables strategic funding decisions free from institutional constraints, prioritising research based on scientific merit and potential impact. This autonomy breaks down silos that have historically fragmented research efforts.

Children's Cancer CoLab was built on the leadership of the Children's Cancer Foundation, galvanising support from the Victorian Government and establishing the framework and networks in which CoLab operates today. The Victorian Government's $35 million investment, championed by Minister Ben Carroll, Minister Mary-Anne Thomas and Minister Danny Pearson, reflects their commitment to positioning Victoria as a leader in paediatric cancer research. This, together with a generous $10 million commitment from the Children's Cancer Foundation, has set up the Children's Cancer CoLab for significant impact.

Our collaborative model unites leading research, clinical, and academic institutions in a genuine partnership. This eliminates duplication, leverages complementary expertise, and accelerates the translation of discoveries from the laboratory to the clinic. This vision requires our research partners, whose commitment extends beyond institutional boundaries, to foster genuine collaboration.

Our governance structure ensures that childhood cancer survivors and families are integral to decision-making, keeping us focused on what matters most. We are also fortunate to have a Scientific Advisory Committee of national and international experts, co-chaired by Prof Grant McArthur AO and Prof Andrew Wilks, to ensure our funding decisions meet rigorous scientific standards. The appointments of Dr Udani Reets as the inaugural CEO and our management team have enabled efficient, impact-driven operations from day one.

In our first year, we established robust grant processes, funded promising research, and built infrastructure for sustained impact. The progress in this report reflects the collective efforts of researchers, clinicians, advocates, government partners, and philanthropic supporters. We are driven by cancer survivors and families whose experiences fuel our determination to transform outcomes for every child and adolescent facing cancer.

Brendan Murphy

Prof Brendan Murphy AC
Board Chair
Children's Cancer CoLab

Message from the CEO

“We are committed to advancing every aspect of our model, partnerships, communications, operations, and outcomes for children and families affected by cancer.”

It is a privilege to have been appointed as the inaugural CEO of Children's Cancer CoLab. As I reflect on our first year, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to lead an organisation dedicated to transforming outcomes for children, adolescents and families affected by cancer.

Our first six months were dedicated to establishing the foundational elements of our new non-profit organisation. This critical work was undertaken hand-in-hand with our colleagues at the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) and the Victorian Government's Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR). The signing of our DJSIR grant agreement and official launch in October 2024 marked the beginning of our mission to advance childhood cancer research and care across Victoria. The collaborative partnership between CCF and DJSIR has been instrumental in creating an innovative model that positions us as a unique force for change.

A defining highlight of our first year was working alongside childhood cancer survivors and families. Their advocacy and unwavering determination to ensure greater outcomes for future patients and families have been inspiring. This engagement culminated in our Survivorship Roundtable, which brought together researchers, clinicians, advocates, survivors and families to address the long-term needs of childhood and adolescent cancer survivors.

I’ve been energised by deepening my networks and expanding my knowledge in paediatric oncology. What strikes me most is the dedication of those, both in and outside of the field, including our pro bono partners who generously devote their time and resources to help advance our mission. This was clear at the Ministerial Roundtable convened by Cancer Australia, where I had the privilege of participating.

During the past year, we have strategically built our small team to deliver on our objectives for the next five years and beyond. This collaborative effort enabled us to successfully deliver three rounds of project funding in our inaugural year, supporting researchers and clinicians working to improve outcomes for children with cancer. These grants represent our commitment to accelerating discoveries that will make a meaningful difference.

Our culture of courage, compassion and continuous improvement guides our approach. We are committed to advancing every aspect of our model, partnerships, communications, operations, and outcomes for children and families affected by cancer. I remain dedicated to meeting regularly with researchers, clinicians, survivors, families, and stakeholders, ensuring our work remains grounded in real-world needs and opportunities.

As we move into our second year, I am excited by the possibilities ahead and grateful for the extraordinary people who make this work possible.

Udani Reets

Dr Udani Reets
CEO
Children's Cancer CoLab

PATIENT STORY

A mother’s strength and daughter’s determination

When Sheila's three-year-old daughter, Maya, began frequently complaining about a sore tummy, Sheila never imagined the cause of Maya's pain would be cancer. Now a teenager, Maya has been cancer-free for 11 years, but the treatments that saved her life have left her with lifelong chronic health issues.

The shocking diagnosis of a rare cancer

When Maya began to show signs of being unwell, their family GP suspected that Maya might have an infection. Three days later, the cause of Maya’s pain was discovered: stage 4 high-risk neuroblastoma – a rare and aggressive cancer that develops from immature nerve cells. In Maya’s case, she had a large tumour in her abdomen, and the cancer had spread throughout her body.

Sheila vividly recalls the moment she was told Maya had cancer. "It was a complete shock to hear that Maya had a cancer we had never heard of, and then being hospitalised and bombarded with multiple blood tests, scans, biopsies, and surgery."

Toxic treatments on a tiny child have devastating consequences

The treatment journey that followed was gruelling and relentless, involving chemotherapy, surgery, a stem cell transplant, radiation therapy and immunotherapy. These toxic treatments killed the cancer, but at the same time, caused devastating impacts on Maya's tiny body that would have lifelong effects.

"Maya experienced hearing loss, growth development complications, and several gut issues along with bowel obstructions, and she was dependent on intravenous feeding for six months. But what was truly upsetting was that Maya's 'new normal' became that of a sick child. Maya had to rediscover what it meant to be a child, all while dealing with a hearing impairment, nasogastric tube feeding, and schooling interruptions due to regular hospital visits."

Although her cancer treatment was successful, Maya has experienced continual health setbacks including having a central line so she can receive intravenous nutrition and medicine.

Yearning to be an independent, pain-free teenager

Now a vibrant 15-year-old with a sparkling personality, Maya dreams of a performing arts career and loves school, but her positive attitude masks the daily challenges she faces.

"I wish I didn't have to worry about flare-ups of my gut condition, which often causes pain at the most inconvenient times, like when I'm performing on stage or sitting exams at school."

However, Maya's greatest wish is to be independent and not reliant on Sheila to manage her daily health care. She also looks forward to the day her central venous catheter is removed.

"I love swimming and going to the beach with my friends, but I can't do that with a central line. I can’t wait until I no longer need nutrition support."

Denied the chance to conceive a family

It's not only Maya's daily health issues that concern Sheila; it's also the future implications of Maya's cancer treatment. Maya couldn’t undergo fertility preservation, so she’ll never be able to conceive a biological child of her own.

"When your child is going through cancer treatment, all you think about is saving them. You don't consider or are not aware of the lasting impacts these harsh treatments might have on your child."

Becoming a voice for other childhood cancer survivors

With the experience of Maya's tumultuous cancer journey and ongoing health issues, Sheila has emerged as a strong advocate for survivorship issues. She wants to paint a realistic picture of the enduring struggles faced by childhood cancer survivors and their families.

"It's important that we don't forget about the childhood cancer survivors who now have lifelong chronic health, psychological and social issues. By contributing to the Children's Cancer CoLab's Patient and Family Advisory Committee, I'm ensuring the voices of young childhood cancer survivors, like Maya, are heard by those who can positively impact their lives through medical research."

Although Maya's health issues are constant reminders of her cancer journey, she is determined to live her life to the fullest and help others who have experienced childhood cancer. Combined with Sheila's fierce determination to raise awareness about the realities of childhood cancer and the need for more research and support, they are a powerful team representing the voices of Australian childhood cancer survivors.

> *“My life would be so different if there were safer therapies with fewer side effects when I was being treated for cancer. Researchers - please keep going because your breakthroughs could make a huge difference to kids with cancer.”*
> - **Maya, neuroblastoma survivor**

Our Impact Programs

Children's Cancer CoLab's five strategic Impact Programs reflect our comprehensive, patient-centred approach that addresses the full spectrum of childhood cancer challenges. This framework ensures that every aspect of childhood cancer, from diagnosis through to survivorship, is supported by world-class research and innovation.

Next-Generation Therapies

Breakthrough treatments for the hardest-to-treat childhood cancers

Safer Therapies

Approaches that minimise treatment-related toxicities and improve quality of life

Survivorship and Living Well

Strategies, care models and innovations that address the lifelong impacts of cancer and its treatment

Future Leaders

Australia’s talent pipeline in paediatric oncology research and care

Innovation Accelerators

Integrated and collaborative data, resources and platforms in priority areas

Funding Principles

Patient-driven	Every aspect of our organisation, from setting Impact Program priorities to funding decisions, incorporates patient, survivor, and family perspectives.
Strategic & Tactical	Our strategic funding approach avoids duplication, breaks down silos, and dynamically allocates resources where they will have the greatest impact.
Independent & Transparent	Independent national and international experts rigorously review all proposals for scientific merit, clinical impact, and alignment with strategic priorities.
Collaborative	We prioritise collaboration in the projects we support and our overall approach. By actively partnering with a diverse range of stakeholders, we ensure our efforts remain responsive to evolving needs.
Milestone-based funding	Funding is released in stages, with regular reviews to ensure measurable, high-impact outcomes. This allows us to support pilot studies or high-risk, high-reward research projects.

OUR IMPACT PROGRAMS

Next-Generation Therapies

Breakthrough treatments for the hardest-to-treat childhood cancers

Developing new therapies specifically for young bodies

Childhood cancer is different to adult cancer. Using existing treatments designed for adults on children can be both ineffective and harmful to their developing bodies. Our Next-Generation Therapies Impact Program prioritises developing new and novel therapies for the deadliest and hardest-to-treat childhood cancers, including brain cancer, metastatic sarcoma, treatment resistant leukaemia, and other refractory cancers.

Through rigorous scientific evaluation combined with lived experience perspective and strategic funding, our Next-Generation Therapies Impact Program aims to transform the treatment landscape for childhood cancers with low survival rates and ensure every child with cancer has a treatment option designed specifically for their unique needs.

Our ambitious goals

- **Identify new therapeutic targets in the hardest-to-treat childhood cancers with potential for clinical translation**
- **Demonstrate safety and efficacy of new paediatric-specific therapies**
- **Advance new paediatric-specific therapeutic candidates to preclinical testing**
- **Initiate clinical trials on new paediatric-specific therapies**

Measuring our impact

First year of funding

This year, $2.1 million was awarded across two grants for the Next-Generation Therapies Impact Program.

Next Generation Paediatric Cancer Therapies Program

Learn more about this project

Total awarded: $1,634,146
Lead researcher: Prof Ron Firestein
Lead institution: Hudson Institute of Medical Research

Combining multi-omic profiling and AI analytical tools to develop novel treatments for aggressive childhood cancers

Hudson Institute's Next-Generation Precision Medicine Program is a significant step towards developing personalised treatments for children with high-risk cancers. Children's Cancer CoLab funding is supporting:

- Comprehensive profiling of 50 paediatric cancer cell lines - capturing the unique genetic characteristics of each tumour
- Advanced AI to predict how cancers respond to treatments and identify promising drug candidates for childhood cancers with the lowest survival rates.

Two Hudson Institute researchers also received Future Leaders Fellowships to support their efforts on this project and help to grow the childhood cancer research workforce.

Lab-grown brain tumour models for new drugs

Total awarded: $455,900
Lead researcher: Dr Iman Azimi
Lead institution: Monash University
Collaborating institution: Monash Children's Hospital

Fast-tracking the discovery of better treatments for childhood brain cancer

This research is developing sophisticated lab-grown models of medulloblastoma, the most common malignant brain tumour affecting children. These 'organoid' models precisely mimic the biology of real tumours and are created using induced pluripotent stem cells, allowing researchers to test many potential treatments quickly and accurately. This research could lead to life-saving treatments that are more effective and far less harmful than current treatments.

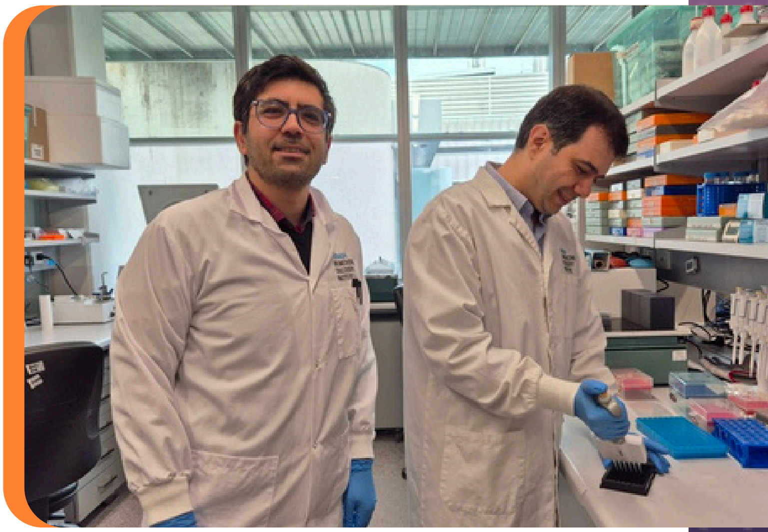
A Monash University researcher working on this project also received a Future Leaders Fellowship to support his research efforts and help to grow the paediatric oncology workforce.

Learn more about this project

IMPACT STORY

Lab-grown tumour models offer new hope for treating childhood brain cancer

Inside a laboratory at Monash University, miniature replicas of the human brain are revealing secrets that could forever change how we treat childhood brain cancer. These tiny 'organoids' – no bigger than a pea – represent a giant leap forward in the fight against medulloblastoma, the most common malignant brain tumour affecting children.



Children's Cancer CoLab has awarded $455,900 as part of its Next-Generation Therapies Impact Program to this groundbreaking research led by Dr Iman Azimi, recognising its potential to dramatically improve survival rates while sparing young patients from the devastating side effects of current treatments.

When current treatments hurt as much as they help

For children diagnosed with medulloblastoma, which accounts for 20% of all childhood brain cancers, the battle is twofold. First, they must fight the cancer itself. Then, they face a lifetime of managing the aftermath of harsh treatments.

Today's standard approaches - surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy - can leave survivors with severe physical and cognitive impairments that affect them for life. For children with the most aggressive forms of the disease, the odds are even more challenging, with 5-year survival rates below 50%.

Growing hope in the lab

Dr Azimi, Head of the Cancer Drug Discovery and Cellular Ageing Lab at Monash University, is developing sophisticated lab-grown models of medulloblastoma that precisely mimic the biology of real tumours, particularly focusing on Group 3 - the most aggressive and treatment-resistant type.

These models are created using induced pluripotent stem cells, allowing researchers to test many potential treatments quickly and accurately. What makes this work especially exciting is that the team intends to screen over 900 existing medications that can already cross the blood-brain barrier, potentially accelerating discoveries into clinical use.

"We're essentially building miniature versions of a child's brain tumour in the lab. This gives us an unprecedented window into how these cancers grow and respond to different treatments, without subjecting children to experimental therapies until we know they're likely to work," Dr Azimi said.

> *"We urgently need treatments that target cancer cells more precisely while leaving healthy brain tissue unharmed. Our young patients deserve both the chance to survive and to thrive after treatment."* - **Dr Iman Azimi, Monash University**

Children's Cancer CoLab's investment in this project represents a critical step toward personalised, less toxic therapies for childhood brain cancer – and potentially, a new chapter in how we understand and treat these devastating diseases.

A Monash University researcher working on the project, Dr Kaveh Baghaei, has received a Children's Cancer CoLab Future Leaders Fellowship to support his efforts to drive discoveries and clinical advancements in childhood brain cancer.

OUR IMPACT PROGRAMS

Safer Therapies

Approaches that minimise treatment-related toxicities and improve quality of life

Reducing the harms caused by life-saving cancer treatments

Every year, hundreds of Australian children begin cancer treatment that will save their lives. But chemotherapy, radiation therapy, bone marrow transplants, and other life-saving interventions come with devastating side effects. These can range from temporary discomforts like hair loss and nausea to life-threatening complications and chronic health conditions that last a lifetime.

Our Safer Therapies Impact Program funds research to improve current therapies and care models that reduce cancer treatment-related toxicities, aiming to improve long-term quality of life for young cancer patients, without compromising survival rates.

Our ambitious goals

- **Identify the causes of cancer treatment-related toxicities in specific patient groups**
- **Develop and test new treatment approaches and protective therapies that improve safety of current therapies**
- **Initiate clinical trials to evaluate treatment protocols for reducing treatment-related toxicities**
- **Implement models of care or therapies that reduce treatment-related toxicities**

Measuring our impact

First year of funding

This year, $2.63 million was awarded across two grants for the Safer Therapies Impact Program.

The Victorian Paediatric Oncology Network for Drug Safety

Learn more about this project

Total awarded: $1,759,000
Lead researcher: A/Prof Rachel Conyers
Lead institution: Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI)
Collaborating institutions: Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre, Monash Children's Hospital, Princess Máxima Center for Pediatric Oncology and Royal Melbourne Hospital

Expanding the evidence base and improving the implementation of safer therapies

Harnessing the power of pharmacogenomics - using genetic information to predict drug responses - the Victorian Paediatric Oncology Network for Drug Safety combines several innovative approaches aimed at improving the safety and effectiveness of childhood cancer treatments.

The team is gathering comprehensive data on medication side-effects from patients and pharmacists, is leading Australia's first study on how children process complex cancer medicines, and is conducting a world-first investigation into cases where genetic predictions don't match actual drug reactions, offering new insights for personalised treatment approaches.

Beyond advancing scientific understanding, the project aims to improve practical patient care by evaluating whether critical drug level tests can be performed locally in Victoria rather than interstate, potentially improving accuracy and speed. The team is also building healthcare professional expertise and laying the groundwork for future research, ultimately working to achieve better outcomes for children and young people with cancer.

Five MCRI researchers are working alongside A/Prof Rachel Conyers on this project, all supported by this Children's Cancer CoLab Safer Therapies Impact Program grant.

Strengthening the immune system after a transplant to prevent infections

Total awarded: $868,000
Lead researcher: Prof Mark Dawson
Lead institution: Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
Collaborating institution: University of Melbourne, Royal Children's Hospital and Royal Melbourne Hospital

Learn more about this project

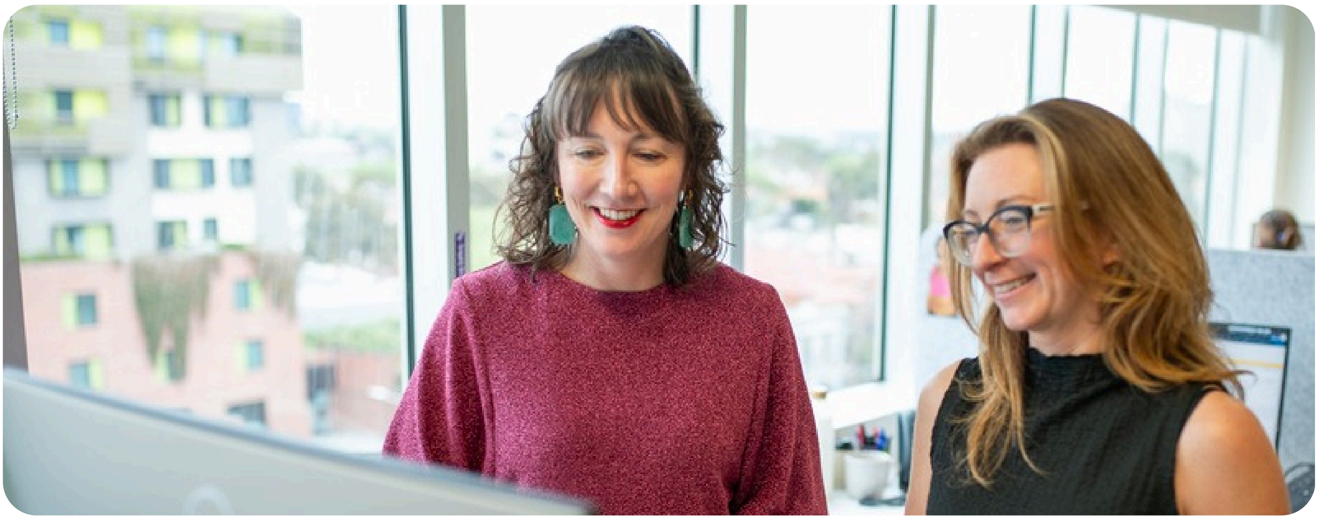
Enhanced T-cell reconstitution to reduce morbidity and mortality from opportunistic infections following haematopoietic stem cell transplantation

Haematopoietic stem cell transplants (HSCT) offer potential cures for more than 10,000 children, teenagers and young adults with cancer worldwide each year. However, after this life-saving procedure, patients face a critical vulnerability: while some immune cells return within weeks, T-cells, the body's strongest infection-fighters, remain mysteriously absent when needed most.

Prof Mark Dawson's multidisciplinary team of blood and immune system experts, mRNA specialists, transplant doctors, and cell therapy leaders has discovered a previously unknown gene that dramatically speeds up T-cell recovery after HSCT, successfully testing it in mice.

They're now developing this discovery into a new mRNA-based cell therapy that helps transplanted stem cells express this gene and rapidly restore immune function. The project aims to create a safe treatment using mRNA technology and determine precisely how the gene accelerates stem cell transformation into T-cells.

This research could deliver the robust preclinical evidence required to advance this innovative therapy into clinical trials.



IMPACT STORY

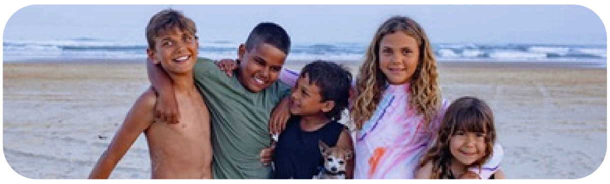
Unlocking genetic insights for safer childhood cancer treatments

Every year, hundreds of Australian children begin cancer treatment with their families bracing for the double-edged sword of modern medicine. The chemotherapy, bone marrow transplants and radiation therapy that could save their child's life often come with devastating side effects – some mild, like hair loss and nausea, others severe enough to cause life-threatening complications.

While childhood cancer cure rates have reached an impressive 85%, most children are treated with drugs originally developed for adults, and the journey to recovery remains fraught with uncertainty about how each child's body will respond to treatment.

But what if doctors could predict exactly how each child's body would respond to treatment before the first dose was given?

This vision is becoming reality through a pioneering genetics research program led by A/Prof Rachel Conyers at the Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI). With $1.76 million in funding from Children's Cancer CoLab, the Victorian Paediatric Oncology Network for Drug Safety aims to improve the safety and effectiveness of childhood cancer treatments.



When one size doesn't fit all

A/Prof Conyers, a paediatric oncologist and clinician at MCRI, explained that pharmacogenomics - using genetic information to predict drug responses - can help to reduce the side effects caused by cancer treatments.

> *"Pharmacogenomics is like having a personalised instruction manual for each child's body, telling doctors which medications will work best, and which doses will be safest. This information is crucial because children process medications differently from adults, yet most treatment guidelines are based on adult research."* - **A/Prof Rachel Conyers**

Children's Cancer CoLab's investment in this project will put world-class Victorian research at the forefront of global efforts to make childhood cancer treatments more personalised and less toxic on developing bodies.

OUR IMPACT PROGRAMS

Survivorship and Living Well

Strategies, care models and innovations that address the lifelong impacts of cancer and its treatment

Childhood cancer survivorship is a lifelong issue

The challenges of childhood cancer don't end when treatment stops. Survivors face complex, lifelong impacts across every aspect of their lives, including physical health, cognitive function, education, employment, relationships, and financial stability. Taking a holistic perspective on survivorship care and support is essential.

Through consultation with survivors and families alongside alignment with sector leaders and charity partners, our Survivorship and Living Well Impact Program aims to transform long-term care for childhood and adolescent cancer survivors, ensuring every child, young person, and their families have access to comprehensive support designed specifically for their journey from patient to thriving adult.

Our ambitious goals

- **Develop and promote national best-practice frameworks for survivorship and supportive care in childhood and adolescent cancer**
- **Develop, test and implement digital solutions, early interventions, and novel approaches to improve long-term quality of life and survivor and family experience**
- **Develop supporting evidence for comprehensive policy and practice reform across the system**

> **“It's like falling off a cliff when treatment stops. All that support disappears, but the challenges don't. You're left trying to rebuild your life with no roadmap.”** Taylah Miranda, childhood leukaemia survivor

> **“As a parent of two survivors, my experience is that the end of treatment is just the beginning of a new journey.”** A/Prof Michelle Yong, Children’s Cancer CoLab Board Deputy Chair and parent of two childhood cancer survivors

Measuring our impact

The beginning of our survivorship initiatives

This year, we launched an extensive consultation process to understand the complex needs of childhood cancer survivors and families as they transition from active treatment to lifelong survivorship.

Through a patient and family-centred approach, we captured 207 insights from survivors, families, researchers, clinicians, health service administrators, and charity representatives, ensuring diverse perspectives shaped our understanding of the survivorship experience.

What we learned

The transition from active treatment to long-term survivorship presents profound and persistent challenges. Survivors and families face fragmented healthcare systems, mounting financial pressures, disrupted education, social isolation, and significant psychological impacts that affect the entire family unit. These challenges don't end when treatment stops. They often intensify or emerge years later, leaving families struggling to navigate disconnected health, education, and social support systems with little guidance.

Charting the path forward

Our consultation revealed five critical focus areas requiring immediate attention:

1. Family counselling and support needs
2. Financial toxicities
3. Educational challenges, social connection and reintegration
4. Health care fragmentation
5. Barriers to access and capability

The path to better survivorship care is clear. Families need holistic psychosocial and mental health support that extends well beyond treatment. They require practical financial guidance to navigate the economic burden of cancer. Young survivors need tailored educational and vocational assistance to reclaim their futures. Healthcare systems must improve care coordination across providers, and primary care and community health professionals need specialised training to support survivors effectively.

> Survivors and families must be at the centre of all future research, policy development, and service design. Only through comprehensive, family-centred approaches that address the full spectrum of survivorship needs can we truly support those who have faced childhood cancer.

Read our Survivorship Consultation Report

OUR IMPACT PROGRAMS

Future Leaders

Australia’s talent pipeline in paediatric oncology research and care

Building a collaborative childhood cancer workforce

Childhood cancer research in Australia faces a critical talent crisis. Despite the urgent need for specialised expertise to tackle the unique challenges of paediatric cancer, early career researchers and clinician-researchers lack dedicated training pathways and adequate support and mentorship. The result is a depleted pipeline of experts when breakthrough discoveries demand sustained, focused research expertise.

Our Future Leaders Impact Program addresses this critical training gap by investing strategically in emerging talent, building capability and fostering sustainable career pathways. By nurturing the next generation of specialised clinicians and researchers, we're building the expertise needed to tackle childhood cancer's unique challenges and achieve our vision that every child with cancer will survive and thrive.

Our ambitious goals

- **Create a pipeline of clinicians and researchers with capabilities to transform outcomes in childhood cancer**
- **Attract and retain world-leading experts in childhood cancer research and care in Australia**
- **Develop a connected and collaborative ecosystem that brings together multidisciplinary researchers, clinicians, industry partners and community voices to share expertise and co-design solutions**
- **Build international recognition of the strengths, capabilities and quality of the childhood cancer research and care in Australia**

Measuring our impact

First year of funding

This year, three Future Leaders Fellowships were awarded.

Dr Yichen Zhou

Hudson Institute of Medical Research

Dr Yichen Zhou is a research scientist working on the Hudson Institute's Next Generation Precision Medicine Program, led by Prof Ron Firestein. Dr Zhou is currently involved in high throughput functional genomics screens using CRISPR/Cas12 systems to map functional dependencies in diverse cell lines from human paediatric diffuse midline gliomas.

🔗 **Meet Dr Yichen Zhou**

Dr Hanbyeol Lee

Hudson Institute of Medical Research

Dr Hanbyeol Lee is a research scientist working on the Hudson Institute's Next Generation Precision Medicine Program, led by Prof Ron Firestein. At the Hudson Institute, Dr Lee is expanding her strong interest in functional genomic screening to identify new therapeutic targets for children with brain cancers.

🔗 **Meet Dr Hanbyeol Lee**

Dr Kaveh Baghaei

Monash University

Dr Kaveh Baghaei is a Research Fellow in the Pharmacology Department at Monash University, where he is working on lab-grown brain tumour models for new drugs to fast-track the discovery of better treatments for childhood brain cancer. This project, led by Dr Iman Azimi, could provide a transformative step towards personalised, less toxic therapies for children with medulloblastoma.

🔗 **Meet Dr Kaveh Baghaei**

OUR IMPACT PROGRAMS

Innovation Accelerators

Integrated and collaborative data, resources and platforms in priority areas

Removing barriers to accelerate collaboration

Research infrastructure, equipment, and expertise are essential for advancing childhood cancer outcomes, yet these critical resources are often fragmented across multiple organisations. Rather than working in silos or as isolated initiatives, there is a significant opportunity to connect capabilities across the sector to avoid duplication and maximise impact when resources are limited.

Our Innovation Accelerators Impact Program prioritises streamlined technology platforms that foster multidisciplinary approaches to accelerate breakthrough discoveries in childhood cancer research. This collaborative effort will enable researchers, clinicians, and industry partners to share resources and knowledge, ultimately driving innovation and improving outcomes for young patients through greater efficiency.

Our ambitious goals

- **Include roundtable consultations and landscape assessments to identify sector needs and emerging opportunities**
- **Incentivise and foster collaborative approaches that attract further funding, support the development of sustainable research platforms, and enable commercialisation opportunities**
- **Establish national collaborative research pipelines to accelerate breakthrough discoveries and drive innovation**

Measuring our impact

First year of funding

In our first year, $770,162 was awarded across two grants for the Innovation Accelerators Impact Program. Prior to the awarding of these two grants, an interim grant of $133,238 was provided to the Hudson Institute of Medical Research for three months to ensure continuation of critical biobanking services.

Learn more about this project

Monash Children's Cancer Biobank

Total awarded: $360,000
Lead researcher: A/Prof Peter Downie AM
Lead institution: Monash Children's Hospital / Monash Health
Collaborating institution: Hudson Institute of Medical Research

Collecting and storing samples from children with cancer for research and to enhance the standard of care

Childhood cancer research requires high-quality biological samples to develop better treatments and understand how these rare cancers develop, yet accessing sufficient samples has long been a barrier to breakthrough discoveries.

The Monash Children's Cancer Biobank (MCCB) addresses this critical need. Samples collected directly benefit patients through streamlined standard-of-care tests, enable enrolment in precision medicine programs and clinical trials, and support research projects like the Hudson Institute's Next Generation Paediatric Cancer Therapies Program, also funded by Children's Cancer CoLab.

Since its establishment in 2011, the MCCB has experienced exponential growth in patient participation and sample collection, demonstrating its vital role in advancing childhood cancer research locally and internationally.

Hudson Institute Living Biobank

Total awarded: $410,162
Lead researcher: A/Prof Jason Cain
Lead institution: Hudson Institute of Medical Research
Collaborating institution: Monash Children's Hospital

Developing living models of childhood cancers to accelerate safer, more effective treatments

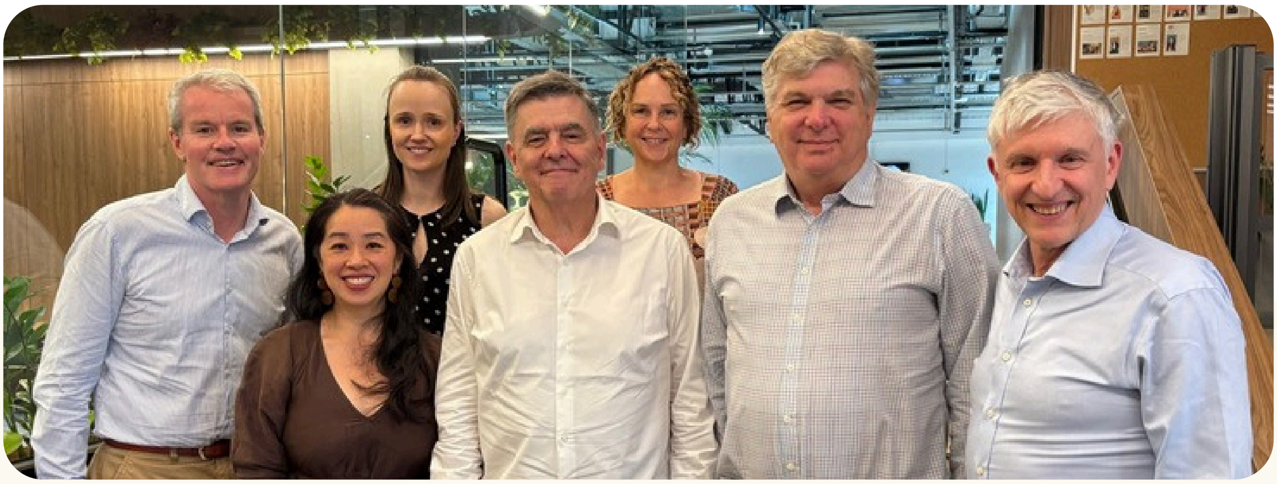
Developing safer, more effective therapies for childhood cancers relies on having preclinical models that closely resemble the tumours found in young patients, covering the range of cancer types. This is difficult because childhood cancer is rare, and creating these models is challenging. The Hudson Institute Living Biobank addresses this unmet need by utilising specialised methodologies to generate high-quality, renewable models for researchers worldwide to access.

Unlike traditional biobanks, which store non-renewable, fixed or frozen samples that offer only a single point-in-time analysis and can be quickly depleted, the Living Biobank's 'living' models can be expanded indefinitely, enabling ongoing advanced studies and global sharing to drive novel discoveries and better outcomes for children with cancer.

Learn more about this project

By providing access to high-quality, renewable preclinical models and tumour tissue paired with clinical data, this initiative supports researchers in testing innovative therapies, identifying personalised treatment options, and deepening understanding of tumour biology. These efforts directly benefit children with limited treatment choices and poor prognoses, helping to accelerate the discovery of safer, more effective therapies to improve survival rates and enhance the quality and years of life for children diagnosed with cancer.

Our operational excellence



Board of Directors

(As of 30 June 2025)

Our Board of Directors, led by Prof Brendan Murphy AC, includes those with lived experience alongside scientific and clinical expertise across commercialisation, healthcare, government, non-profits, and finance.

The Board of Directors met five times during the year and held one strategic planning day, with all Board members attending each activity.

Prof Brendan Murphy AC
MBBS FRACP PhD FAHMS FAICD
Board Chair
Distinguished health executive and public servant

A/Prof Michelle Yong
MBBS FRACP MPH PhD
Board Deputy Chair
Adult infectious diseases physician and lived experience of childhood cancer

Prof Andrew Wilks
FAA FTSE FAHMS
Scientist, entrepreneur and drug discovery innovator

Prof Grant McArthur AO
MBBS FRACP PhD FAHMS
Medical oncologist and health executive

The Hon. Jaala Pulford
BBus (Mgmt) MPol GAICD
Children's Cancer Foundation Board Chair and lived experience of childhood cancer

Vivienne Petroff
BCom CA
Children's Cancer Foundation Board member and corporate finance executive

David Heath
BEc (Hons) FIAA FCPA FFin GAICD
Actuary and company director

Scientific Advisory Committee

(As of 30 June 2025)

Children's Cancer CoLab prioritises scientific rigour and independent expertise in all our funding decisions. Our Scientific Advisory Committee comprises highly esteemed national and international experts across childhood cancer disciplines.

These dedicated volunteers generously contribute their time and expertise to ensure our competitive funding model supports highly impactful, collaborative research that accelerates discoveries and improves outcomes for children with cancer in Australia and globally.

Prof Andrew Wilks
FAA FTSE FAHMS
Co-Chair

Prof Grant McArthur AO
MBBS FRACP PhD FAHMS
Co-Chair

Dr Phil Kearney
BSc (Hons) PhD MBA

Dr Martine Keenan
BSc PhD FRSC

Prof Deborah White
PhD FFSc (RCPA)

Prof Brandon Wainwright AM
BSc (Hons) PhD

Prof Amos Burke
MBChB PhD MA(Cantab)
FRCPEdin FRCPCH

Prof Martha Grootenhuis
MSc PhD

Prof Christopher Sweeney
MBBS DHSc FRACP

Prof Tracey O'Brien AM
FRACP MBA LLM (Health)
GAICD MBChB BS

Robyn Strong
DipASc GDipComp MHIM MPH

Patient and Family Advisory Committee

(As of 30 June 2025)

Survivor and family engagement ensures that childhood cancer research tackles real-world priorities and translates discoveries into meaningful improvements in care, quality of life, and outcomes for our youngest cancer patients.

Our Patient and Family Advisory Committee (PFAC) embodies this principle, comprising members who have experienced childhood cancer as either patients, siblings or parents. Meeting quarterly and participating in Children's Cancer CoLab activities, these dedicated volunteers guide our funding priorities, review grant applications, and contribute their invaluable lived experience to ensure research creates a better future for children with cancer and their families in Australia and globally.

Taylah Miranda
BBioMedSci (Hons)
Childhood and adult cancer survivor

Bridgette Veneris
Childhood cancer survivor

Lucy Francazio
Childhood cancer survivor

Maryjo Saliba
BBioMedSci
Childhood cancer survivor

Mary Tsouvalakis
BA LLBHons MPH
Childhood cancer survivor

Dr Sheila Patel
BSc (Hons) PhD
Parent

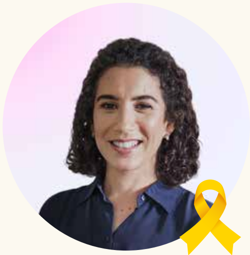
Andrea Valvo
CNS
Parent

Dr Lori Chait-Rubinek
BSc MBBS (Hons)
Parent

Monique Boggia
BMusPerf GradCertCAT
GradDipMusEd MAEd
Parent

Nader Eloshaiker
BEngCS MBA
Parent

Nelly Mohibi
Parent



Dr Rebecca Goldstein
MBBS (Hons) FRACP PhD
Parent

Jennifer Rooney
Parent

Our Team

(As of 30 June 2025)

The Children's Cancer CoLab management team, led by Dr Udani Reets, brings expertise in medical research, innovation, partnerships, finance and strategic communications.

Dr Udani Reets
BSc (Hons) PhD GAICD
Chief Executive Officer

Dr Sarah Hsiao
BBioMedSci BSc (Hons) PhD
Impact Programs Lead

Merrin Morrison
BBusComm GradDipBusMgmt
Communications and Development Manager

Julia O'Donnell
BA (Hons) FCA
Senior Finance Officer

Emma Grimley
Executive Assistant and Governance Coordinator

Consortium Partner Committee

(As of 30 June 2025)

The purpose of this committee is to provide a formal mechanism for Research Partner organisations to share insights, coordinate activities, and foster collaboration.

Prof Brendan Murphy AC
Children's Cancer CoLab - Committee Chair

Prof Melissa Southey OAM
Monash University

Dr Michelle Martin
Monash Children's Hospital

Prof Sarath Ranganathan
University of Melbourne

Prof Elizabeth Hartland AM
Hudson Institute of Medical Research

Prof Kathryn North AC
Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Prof David Eisenstat
Royal Children's Hospital

Prof Misty Jenkins
Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

Dr Kirsty Wiltshire
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Margaret Fitzherbert
Children's Cancer Foundation

Researcher and Clinician Committee

(As of 30 June 2025)

The purpose of this committee is to foster meaningful collaboration opportunities that bring together relevant Children's Cancer CoLab stakeholders and create environments for knowledge exchange.

Dr Claire Sun
Hudson Institute of Medical Research
Committee Co-Chair

A/Prof Rachel Conyers
Royal Children's Hospital
Committee Co-Chair

A/Prof Jason Cain
Hudson Institute of Medical Research

A/Prof Maria McCarthy AM
Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Dr Hannah Walker
Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Dr Leanne Super
Monash Children's Hospital

Prof Katrina Williams
Monash University

Prof Marcel Nold
Monash University

A/Prof Paul Ekert
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

Dr Deborah Meyran
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre

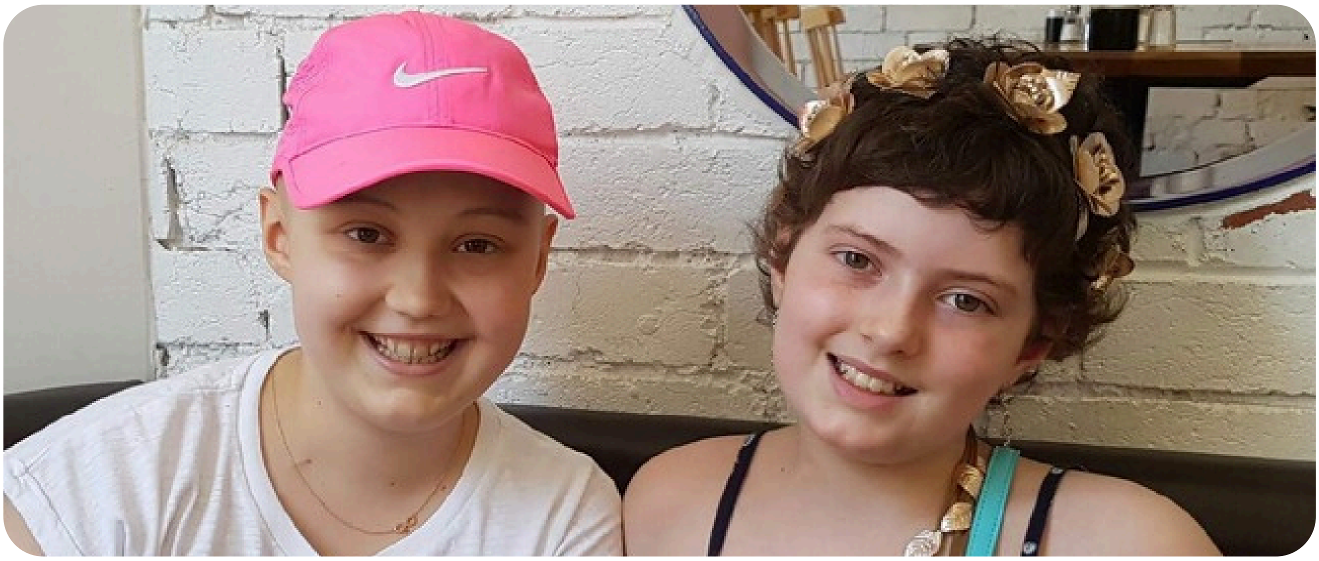
Dr Diane Hanna
Royal Children's Hospital

A/Prof Gabrielle Haeusler
University of Melbourne

Prof David Eisenstat
University of Melbourne

Dr Stacie Wang
Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

Prof David Huang
Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research



PATIENT STORY

The healing power of friendship in childhood cancer

In a quiet Melbourne café in 2017, two young girls sat across from each other. Lucy, 11, filled every pause with words - anything to make it less weird. Bridgette, 9, loved that this stranger sitting next to her also understood what it felt like to lose your hair before you'd even learnt how to braid it.

That café conversation wasn't just small talk between two kids. It was the beginning of a friendship that would transform them from patients into powerful advocates for change.

When hospital hallways are your second home

While other kids their age worried about spelling tests and schoolyard drama, Lucy and Bridgette faced a different kind of childhood - one defined by chemo cycles, scan days, and the exhaustion of fighting for their lives.

But sometimes the most powerful medicine isn't found in an IV bag. Sometimes it's found in a text message before your scan, saying "Thinking of you." Sometimes it's the friend who shows up to your hospital room with snacks and TikToks to watch, or someone who doesn't flinch when you say you're scared.

"We didn't have to explain ourselves. We both knew what a lumbar puncture or scan day felt like. We both knew the fear, the exhaustion, and the way cancer changes everything, even after it's gone," Lucy explained.

> *"It's hard to describe how childhood cancer blows up your life, but it does. Cancer doesn't end when treatment ends, not for the patients, parents or loved ones. Cancer lives on in our immense gratitude, but also in our trauma, shifted perspectives and memories."* - **Lucy and Bridgette, childhood cancer survivors**

The girls synchronised their hospital visits, just like other friends might coordinate sleepovers. You'd often find them in the music therapy room, making the most of their time unhooked from their IV poles and always laughing so loudly that everyone always knew they were there. Lucy and Bridgette's friendship was one built on inside jokes, shared fears, and an unspoken promise to never let the other face any of this alone.

The invisible battles continue

After the intensity of their cancer treatment subsided, the girls began to embrace every moment of ‘normal’ they could find. They graduated from high school and are both studying at Monash University, with the goal of one day having a career that improves the lives of paediatric cancer patients.

They still face challenges that most of their classmates can't see. Lucy faces cognitive fatigue and working memory challenges, late effects from the treatments that saved her life but left their mark. Bridgette navigates the emotional aftershocks that can hit without warning.

"Sometimes I walk into a room, and it smells like the hospital, and Lucy's the only one who truly understands these feelings," Bridgette added quietly.

This is the reality that often gets lost in the ‘cancer survivor success story’ narrative. Cancer’s aftereffects evolve and find new ways to remind you of what you've been through. But when you have a best friend who gets it, those invisible battles become less lonely.

Turning trauma into purpose

Lucy and Bridgette could have simply moved forward with their lives, but instead, they've chosen to transform their experience into advocacy for other children facing cancer.

As members of Children's Cancer CoLab's Patient and Family Advisory Committee, they're advising on our Survivorship and Living Well program, as they’ve learnt that some of the greatest challenges emerge after treatment ends.

Lucy and Bridgette’s friendship proves something powerful: that connection doesn't just heal, it transforms. It turns survivors into advocates, patients into best friends, and pain into a collective purpose.

Lucy and Bridgette’s advice for children experiencing cancer

Cancer is not everything that you are - it's just part of your story. So, hang in there. Try to find the things that make your eyes light up. Do more of those.

It's okay to feel behind everyone else your age. Not everyone else your age is dealing with what you are.

Always remind yourself that your track record for making it through your bad days is perfect.

Don't let anyone who hasn't been in your shoes tell you how to tie your laces.

One day, you will sit in the sun and things won't feel so bad.

Our partners

We are expanding our partnerships across sectors because no single organisation has all the resources, expertise, and influence needed to transform childhood cancer outcomes.

Major partners

Victorian Government

To position Victoria as a global leader in childhood cancer research, the Victorian Government made a transformative $35 million investment in 2023 to establish Children's Cancer CoLab. Combined with a commitment of $10 million from the Children's Cancer Foundation, this $45 million partnership has created a collaborative hub uniting Victoria's leading research, clinical, and academic institutions working in paediatric oncology.

The Victorian Government's investment represents a new approach for Victoria: supporting an independent entity specifically designed to address the unique challenges of rare cancers. This model not only enhances outcomes for young cancer patients but also builds research workforce capability, attracts international talent and investment, and delivers economic returns through medical research and innovation. The commitment to Children's Cancer CoLab is part of the Victoria Government's record $1.1 billion investment in medical research during the past decade and reinforces the State's ambition to become a worldwide leader in childhood cancer research and care.

Children's Cancer Foundation

Since its establishment in 1992, the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) has been steadfast in its mission to improve outcomes for children with cancer by supporting research, clinical care, and family support.

Guided by its bold vision and strong partnerships across the paediatric oncology community, CCF has played a transformative role in shaping Victoria's childhood cancer research landscape. CoLab reflects the culmination of CCF's long-term commitment to building a unified, world-class research ecosystem dedicated to improving survival and quality of life for children with cancer.

CCF's landmark $10 million commitment, alongside the establishment of governance and operational frameworks and collaborative networks, marked a defining moment in its history. This catalytic support, together with CCF's strategic advocacy and leadership, was instrumental in unlocking $35 million from the Victorian Government, paving the way for the creation of Children Cancer CoLab as an independent, not-for-profit organisation.

Continues on next page.

Through its strategic vision and relentless advocacy, CCF continues to ensure that Victoria - and Australia - remain at the forefront of paediatric cancer research, uniting expertise across sectors to drive innovation and deliver hope to families affected by childhood cancer.

Driving change through independence and partnership

CCF's vision for CoLab was ignited by a powerful conviction: uniting partners across research, academia, government and philanthropy could achieve what no single organisation could accomplish alone.

"Melbourne had world-class capabilities, but they were siloed. We needed an independent organisation that could determine where childhood cancer research funding should flow, guided by scientific rigour and the voices of patients, families and survivors," said CCF's Board Chair, the Hon. Jaala Pulford.

"In 2019, CCF Board members lobbied the then Australian Government and Opposition to create the Victorian Paediatric Cancer Consortium."

"In 2022, CCF worked with the Victorian Government to fully bring their vision to life - the creation of CoLab, an independent non-profit uniting Victoria's brightest minds to accelerate breakthroughs for children with cancer," she added.

The work is far from complete. CCF is calling on more partners to join this movement, pooling resources and expertise to amplify impact and deliver hope to every child and their family facing cancer.

Program partners

Our program partners work together through formal collaboration, prioritising efforts, sharing expertise, and co-funding initiatives in key areas of shared interest.

Maddie Riewoldt's Vision

Recognising the intricate relationship between childhood cancers and Bone Marrow Failure Syndromes, Children's Cancer CoLab and Maddie Riewoldt's Vision formed a strategic partnership in March 2025 to collaborate on opportunities where research could make a difference for young patients experiencing these conditions. Commencing with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding, this partnership will co-fund a clinician-researcher fellowship in Children's Cancer CoLab's 2025-2026 funding round.

Research partners

HUDSON
INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

MONASH
University

Peter Mac
Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre
Victoria Australia

The Royal Children's
Hospital Melbourne

WEHI
brighter together

Monash
Children's
Hospital

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

murdoch
children's
research
institute

Pro bono partners

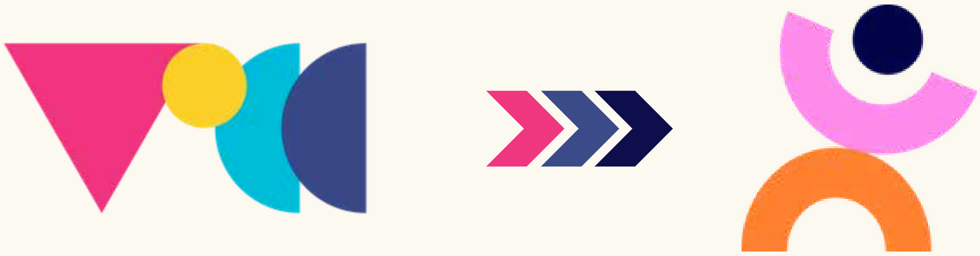
RSM

tekFoundation.

Arnold Bloch Leibler
Lawyers and Advisers

NXT.AI

Our reach



A new brand for a new era

On 24 March 2025, the Victorian Paediatric Cancer Consortium transitioned to Children's Cancer CoLab, a rebrand reflecting our expanded mission to benefit young cancer patients beyond Victoria. This transformation was supported by a comprehensive brand and digital strategy that signified our evolution as an independent non-profit organisation.

The rebranding process involved a landscape analysis and engagement with research, clinical, academic, and philanthropic stakeholders to gather feedback, build support, and ensure a smooth transition. The new brand and visual identity that resulted were designed to give CoLab a unique position in the childhood cancer ecosystem while reinforcing our mission and vision.

Growing our digital presence

Our new website **cccolab.org.au** launched alongside the rebrand as a comprehensive platform serving multiple audiences. Importantly, the website provides researchers and clinicians with all the necessary information to access CoLab funding and highlights our Impact Programs. The site also showcases our partners, funded projects and people, scientific and lived-experience advisors, and impact stories.

We also established a growing social media presence across LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, with content published multiple times a week to support our activities.

Our monthly e-newsletter, CoLab Connect, was launched as part of the rebrand and features research updates, events, and funding information. The inaugural edition achieved a 71.4% open rate, significantly exceeding the average of 20-40% in the medical research sector, demonstrating strong engagement from our community. We also established the CoLab Funding Alert to communicate time-sensitive funding opportunities to our network.

These strong brand and digital foundations enable us to amplify awareness of our work, highlight the collaborative research and partners we support, and ultimately contribute to improved outcomes for our youngest cancer patients and their families.

Building relationships across sectors

Throughout the year, members of the Children’s Cancer CoLab Board and management team conducted in-person tours, visits and roundtables with partner organisations, strengthening collaborative relationships across our network of researchers, clinicians, advocates and stakeholders essential for driving childhood cancer research and innovation forward.

Financial summary

Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2025

	Total Equity $'000
Opening balance at 1 July 2024	(12)
Revenue	6,995
Impact Program grant payments	(1,172)
Impact Program delivery costs	(120)
Operating costs	(681)
Surplus / (deficit) for year	5,022
Balance at 30 June 2025	**5,010**

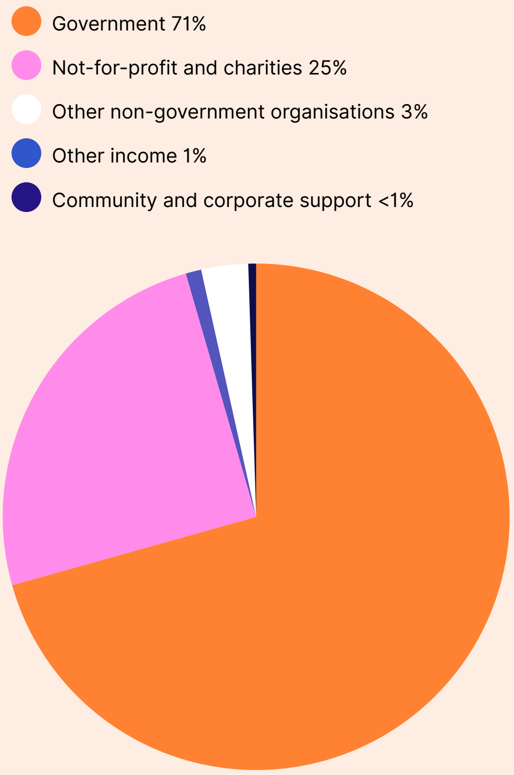
2025 Financial Overview

All figures in Australian dollars

Where the money came from	**$'000**
Government	4,989
Not-for-profit and charities	1,750
Other non-government organisations	201
Community and corporate support	1
Other income	54
Total revenue	**6,995**

Children's Cancer CoLab is in a sound financial position to pay its debts when they become due and payable.

Sources of income



The full Annual Financial Report and Directors Report for the year ending 30 June 2025, audited by RSM Australia, are available at www.acnc.gov.au/charity

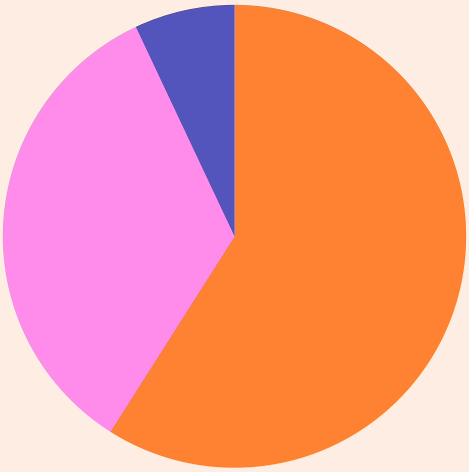
2025 Financial Overview continued

All figures in Australian dollars

How the money was spent	$'000
Impact Program grant payments	**1,172**
- Next-Generation Therapies	945
- Innovation Accelerators	226
- Survivorship and Living Well	1
Impact Program delivery costs	**120**
- Program delivery salaries and wages	88
- Program delivery expenses	32
Operating costs	**681**
- Administrative salaries and wages	572
- Administrative and operating costs	109
Fundraising costs	**0**
Total	**1,973**

How the money was spent

- ● Impact Program grant payments 59%
- ● Impact Program delivery costs 6%
- ● Operating costs 35%
- ○ Fundraising costs 0%

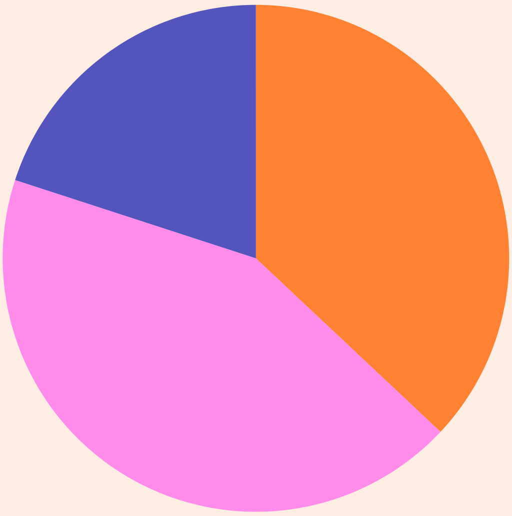


Total Impact Programs awarded in 2025

Impact Program funding awarded	$'000
Next-Generation Therapies	2,090
Safer Therapies	2,400
Innovation Accelerators	1,130
Total	**5,620**

Impact Program funding awarded in 2025

- ● Next-Generation Therapies 37%
- ● Safer Therapies 43%
- ● Innovation Accelerators 20%



Definitions

- 'Impact Program grant payments' includes all milestone payments made to research partners once the performance obligations in the funding agreements have been met. It excludes the associated CoLab program delivery costs.
- 'Impact program delivery costs' represent staff expenses related to the coordination, management, and administration of grant applications and funded projects.
- 'Operating costs' cover the administrative and other costs inherent in running the organisation, including staff time in areas such as finance, governance, information technology and administration, insurance premiums, professional fees (where not provided pro bono), office space and other running costs.
- 'Impact Program funding awarded' includes all grant rounds commenced in FY25 and all committed funding that is recognised over the life of the program.

Notes

- The Fellowship positions noted in the report were funded from the Next-Generation Therapies Impact Program.
- A clinical research assistant role as part of a Safer Therapies project was funded from the Innovation Accelerator budget.

Support us

You can help every child with cancer to survive and thrive

Every week, three Australian children die from cancer, and 80% of children who survive have long-term effects from their treatment.

Children's Cancer CoLab is determined to create a future where all children with cancer can survive and thrive.

We achieve this by funding world-class research and innovation while building a collaborative network that unites researchers, clinicians, advocates, survivors, families, charities, and governments - all integral to our mission.

Your support can make a difference

Your support helps us to fund:
- The development of interventions that reduce long-term treatment effects on growing bodies
- The screening of existing drugs for re-purposing into safer childhood cancer treatments
- Groundbreaking discoveries to become new treatments for young patients
- Early-career researchers to collaborate with international experts

Individual donations

Your individual donation helps researchers and clinicians accelerate their discoveries. Our competitive funding model and independent scientific advisors ensure that only research with the highest impact potential is supported. All donations over $2 are tax-deductible.

Gifts in Wills

Leave a legacy of hope by including Children's Cancer CoLab in your Will. Your gift will create a lasting impact on the lives of young cancer patients and their families for generations to come.

Workplace giving

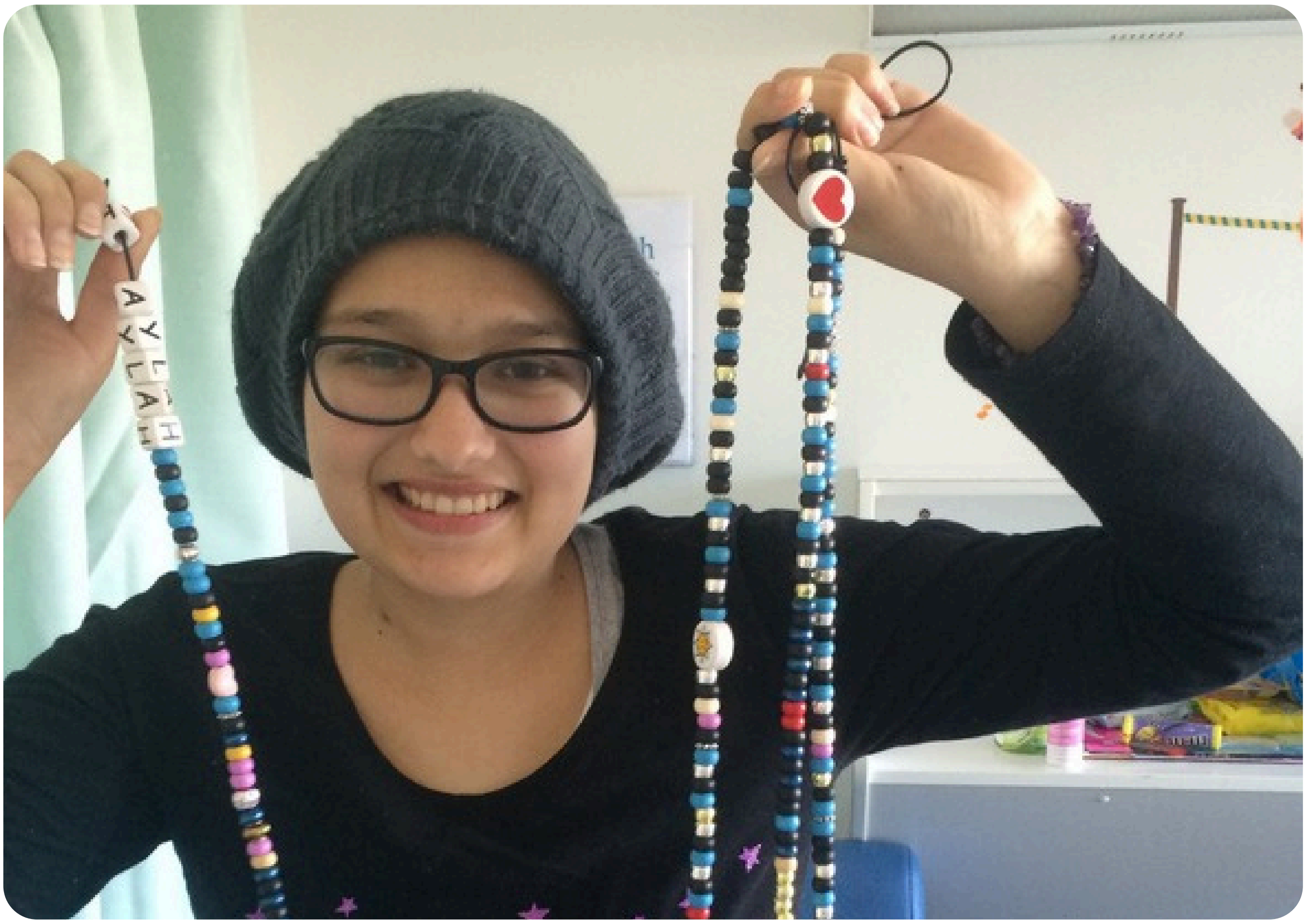
Support childhood cancer research through regular pre-tax donations from your pay. This simple, cost-effective method eliminates the need to collect receipts or wait for tax refunds while supporting the research and innovation supported by CoLab.

Corporate partnerships

Does your company share our vision for young cancer patients to survive and thrive? As a corporate partner, you'll help accelerate collaborative research and innovation that benefits young cancer patients in Australia and globally. We work with you to develop bespoke partnerships that align with your marketing, philanthropy, or corporate social responsibility goals.

By supporting Children's Cancer CoLab, you become part of a community breaking traditional barriers to accelerate research discoveries, creating real impact for young cancer patients and their families.

Donate here



PATIENT STORY

From survivor to advocate

At just 14 years old, Taylah Miranda was a vibrant, sport-loving teenager with a bright future. Her days were filled with school, friends, and dreams of what she could achieve. But in a matter of weeks, her world turned upside down.

Taylah's cancer journey begins

Persistent headaches and overwhelming fatigue took over Taylah’s life. Initially misdiagnosed with depression, Taylah's condition worsened until she was referred to Monash Children’s Hospital Cancer Centre. There, the devastating diagnosis of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) was revealed.

This marked the beginning of a gruelling journey that would test her strength and resilience in unimaginable ways, but it would also lead her to discover a passion for advocacy and medical research.

Cancer strikes again, but Taylah’s care is now in the adult system

At 19, when the world was grappling with the COVID pandemic, Taylah faced a heartbreaking relapse of ALL. This time, as an adult, her cancer care experience was vastly different from her teenage years. The isolation of undergoing treatment in the adult oncology system left her feeling alone and vulnerable.

"Having spent three years in the childhood cancer system, I was quite shocked when, as a 19-year-old, I was forced to face treatment without the comfort of private rooms, anaesthetics for procedures, or the reassuring presence of my family."

Channelling her dual cancer experience to help others

Taylah's experience of childhood and adult oncology has given her a unique perspective on the challenges patients face in both systems. Her firsthand understanding has been invaluable in her role as a patient advocate on the Children's Cancer CoLab Patient and Family Advisory Committee. Taylah's experience has fuelled her dedication to improving care for those navigating both paediatric and adult cancer journeys.

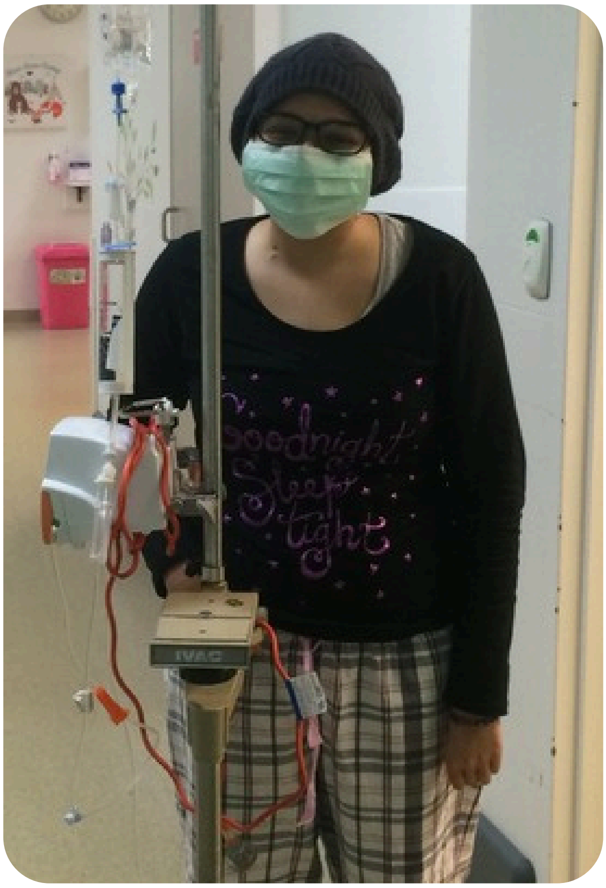
"Teenagers and young adults often face challenges that aren't fully addressed in either paediatric or adult cancer care settings. As an underrepresented group, I'm passionate about advocating for their concerns in decision-making, research, and treatment, especially regarding independence, identity, relationships, and the transition from childhood to adulthood."

Taylah's cancer journey sparks a love of science

Taylah's cancer journey has fostered a deep passion for medical research. Despite undergoing cancer treatment throughout her final three years of high school, Taylah was accepted into Monash University, where she pursued a Biomedical Science degree. Even when faced with another relapse during her studies, Taylah persevered, completing her degree and then undertaking an Honours year at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute.

Taylah is now eager to start a career in medicine, travel the world, and one day start a family. Despite her tumultuous cancer journey, Taylah continues to raise awareness that more research and support are needed for patients, survivors and their families.

> *"The harsh reality is that children are still dying from cancer, and many of the friends I made while receiving treatment are no longer here. Each loss is a painful reminder that we must do more to help children with cancer live long and healthy lives."* - **Taylah Miranda, childhood and adult cancer survivor**



Children's
Cancer CoLab

Accelerating research, innovation and collaboration

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E: hello@cccolab.org.au
W: cccolab.org.au