

We understand that the impact of having a child with a life-limiting illness resonates through the whole family.

What matters most at Bear Cottage, is that every child and their family enjoys time together to the fullest and is given opportunities to create special memories.

To support families, Bear Cottage casts an 'invisible string' around each member – to hold, connect and sustain them through their journey.

This invisible string underpins our Family Support Team's creative and innovative programs which offer fun and challenging activities; opportunities for learning and personal achievement, reducing isolation and building connections, confidence, self-esteem and peer support.



"People who love each other are always connected by a very special string made of love. Even though you can't see it with your eyes, you can feel it deep in your heart and know you are always connected to the ones you love."

The Invisible String, Patrice Karst

For more information about any of our Family Support Programs, please phone Bear Cottage on (02) 9976 8300.



The Sydney
children's
Hospitals Network
care, advocacy, research, education



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Bear Cottage

2 Fairy Bower Road Manly NSW 2095
Tel: (02) 9976 8300 Fax: (02) 9976 8303
bearcottage.schn.health.nsw.gov.au

BRC3650/0916

Bear Cottage Children's Hospice

Family support

Dads

Dads' Camp offers Dads the chance to relax and unwind together, which opens doors to conversation, friendship and laughter. This provides a unique opportunity to spend time with other men who understand the multiple demands of supporting their partner and family, caring for their sick child, employment and trying to maintain personal health and wellbeing.

PitStop is part of the Bear Cottage Wellness Program. The idea behind PitStop is to attach the concept of a regular mechanical tune-ups to their own health. The camp is open to all Bear Cottage Dads, both bereaved and non-bereaved. It is a structured program that supports Dads to take charge of their wellbeing and work to become healthier and happier. A range of experts are enlisted to support Dads and motivate them to make positive changes in their lives.

Siblings

Our Sibling Support Program provides a supportive environment where siblings can have fun and connect with others and enhance their self-esteem, confidence and inner strength. Activities include camps for junior and senior siblings, young adult social evenings and days for the younger siblings. Activities are varied and include circus workshops, skiing, yoga, art and music therapy, sailing, water drumming, geocaching and even 'wild animal encounters'!

"I love coming to sibling camp, I love just hanging out with people who are the same as me."



Mums

Mums' Camp facilitates in-house group programs for Mums and their sick child. Bear Cottage staff care for the children while Mums are provided time to rest and take time out. Activities may include therapeutic art and craft, wine and cheese evenings and beauty care. The sharing of these experiences offers valuable and lasting social connections.

BootCamp@BearCottage is part of our Wellness Program, offering a chance for mums to put themselves first and focus on their health by providing education and advice on nutrition, fitness, mental health, family wellness and self-care. BootCamp offers yoga, belly dancing, early morning coastal walks, meal planning and preparation, cooking demonstrations, exercise and activities like makeovers and meditation sessions. We have seen women take charge of their own health and wellbeing, as well their family's and form strong and lasting bonds with other mums in this nurturing environment.

Grandparents

At Bear Cottage we often witness grandparents playing a special and significant role in their grandchild's life and care. Grandparents often share a magical bond with their grandchild and have a unique place in the family, providing an emotional and social safety net. Our **Gramping Camp** allows our bereaved and non-bereaved grandparents to have a weekend all about them, to meet others who share a similar experience and create memories and lasting connections.



Bereaved families

Bereavement support is an essential aspect of Bear Cottage care. **Footprints in the Sand** is a multi-faceted bereavement program for families at various stages throughout the grief process. Events include morning teas, an annual **Remembering Day** service and ongoing invites to special events such as the Christmas Party and Superhero Day. Additionally, families continue to receive the newsletter to remain connected to Bear Cottage staff and families.

Our **Back to Bear Cottage BBQs** offer families the opportunity to return to Bear Cottage to see staff and meet other families also dealing with the loss of a child.

The death of a child is devastating and can sometimes mean the end of many connections and relationships, leading to feelings of isolation on top of the grief and sadness being experienced. Our **camps for bereaved families** provide an opportunity for these families to get together, laugh, cry, share and build social connections.

Home crisis

Many families experience times of crisis and for Bear Cottage families, these are more difficult to cope with due to their child's serious illness. Our **Volunteer Home Crisis Support Program** addresses the short-term difficulties so often faced by families with children with life-limiting illness. This volunteer-led initiative provides help with basic household tasks and company for the parent when needed.

