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our house news

VOLUME 3 SUMMER 2016

A project by Northern Rivers Community Cancer Foundation & Our Kids

Our House turns Three!

Our House has just celebrated its third anniversary since opening!

Running at over 87% occupancy Our House has certainly filled the needs of those travelling to Lismore, with week nights constantly reaching 100%. Our guests are still coming from a broad geographic area and for a wide range of medical reasons. They include those being treated for cancer, the carers of cancer patients, parents of children in hospitals, family members who have loved ones in ICU or in other wards of Lismore Base Hospital, as well as St Vincent's Hospital.

This year saw the increase of the IPTASS rebate for guests who meet the eligibility requirements. On behalf of the board of Our House, I'd like to say thank you to all in the community who supported us during this time as it has ensured long-term viability for Our House here in Lismore.

This outcome would not have been possible without the tremendous support of the local community which is essentially now part of the fabric of Our House. We will continue where possible to offer additional support for patients suffering financial hardship as we have always operated with a philosophy of inclusion. The recent state government announcement concerning accommodation rebates should allow us to accept all guests and offer support to those most in need.

Thank you to the State Government for listening to our plea to keep a level playing field financially for patients in motels and in not for profit accommodation and for making the necessary changes to help us care for all those who suffer from cancer and their families.

The community continues to be heavily involved with Our House with the extension of the Lord Taverners Community BBQ's to two nights a week – Tuesdays and Thursdays. This is the highlight of the stay for many guests and beautifully demonstrates how our community plays a significant role at Our House.



Pictured: Chair Chris Ingall and Director and Treasurer Brian Henry are thrilled with the state government announcement around financial assistance for IPTASS patients

Celebrating our 2000th guest

This year Our House celebrated its 2000 guest, Brian Wenham and his wife Judy.

Brian and Judy had just started the trip of a lifetime travelling around Australia and had stopped at Brooms Head to enjoy some surfing. During this time Brian suffered from pains and ended up at the doctors only to be told that he had bowel cancer with a couple of weeks to live, unless he underwent risky surgery.

Brian went ahead with the operation, lost 25 kilograms and then commenced the massive amounts of chemotherapy required to kill a secondary cancer which had spread to his liver and was creating jaundice. It was this condition which brought the Wenhams to Our House.

During his eight months of treatment Brian and Judy stayed at Our House instead of having to make the daily drive from Brooms Head.



"We were blessed to have "second to none" cancer treatment facilities available at Lismore Base Hospital, with accommodation at Our House being a key ingredient," said Brian.

Brian is now doing well enjoying the surf back in Brooms Head and the couple regularly drop in to Our House and stay for the BBQs held every Tuesday and Thursday.

A Cut Above The Rest

Recently, Byron Plumbing Site Manager Corey Holden gave up his four-year old blonde waist length dreadlocks for local charity 'Our Kids', the sister charity of Our House.





Above: Corey Holden and Stuart Clark, Project Manager, Brookfield Multiplex
Above right: Corey with Rebekka Battista before the big shave

Corey is the Plumbing Site Manager of A Murray and Sons Plumbing, a sub-contractor on the Byron Central Hospital project. His aim was to raise $10,000 before he would let anyone come near his locks.

Little did Corey know the support he would get to get rid of his impressive dreadlocks.

During a visit to the Children's Ward at Lismore Base Hospital, Corey, who was accompanied by Stuart Clark from Brookfield Multiplex, the national contractor, was amazed when Stuart kicked of the campaign with a $40,000 to Our Kids from workers at the hospital site.

"$40,000 for a haircut, my first initial target was $5,000! I cannot begin to fathom the amount of generosity and support from friends, family and especially the bosses, builders, sub-contractors & suppliers involved with the Byron Central Hospital Site" said Corey Holden.

"I had had a few weeks to get used to the new style and also take a step back and take it all in. It's pretty overwhelming to see how much support there is to get behind a great cause and to see a guy get a haircut," said Corey.

"The amount of local support and generosity bequeathed to Our Kids and Our House is fantastic and amazing to see in a regional community, and something I have not experienced in Sydney. Also, the facilities offered are far superior to those in many city locations for families with people in care. Rebekka and her team are truly amazing ambassadors for the foundation." said Stuart Clark, Project Manager Byron Central Hospital

Our Kids is the local charity that raised funds to purchase paediatric equipment for children for Lismore Base Hospitals and the surrounding hospitals in the region. The equipment purchased helped more children receive the care they need locally.

"This is a tremendous effort by the team on the Bryon Hospital Site. They should be incredibly proud of this amazing donation, it is one of the largest donation from an event held by the community for Our Kids." said Rebekka Battista

The money donated will go to purchase a piece of equipment for Lismore Base Hospital and for the new Byron Hospital when it opens in 2016.

Being Frank!



Part of the upkeep of our great complex is maintaining our garden and other odd jobs. These are done by a volunteer who donates a day a week to help keep Our House green and flowering and looking good. Huge thanks to Frank who at one time went by the Our House nickname of Gnome, for obvious reasons.

Ladies who Lunch



The guests Our House come from all over the North Coast and sometimes intestate and arrive at Our House ready for their treatment, not knowing anyone. This seen changes as complete strangers become true friends at Our House.

These lovely ladies are off to lunch as part of their weekly activities and are already organising a reunion of the group for next year.

Snapshots of community



Recently Our House hosted a Cancer Accommodation Conference for all providers in regional NSW. These facilities are operated by community service organisations such as Rotary, the Cancer Council of NSW and Our House and key personnel met to discuss best practices and ways to meet the needs of an increasing number of guests.



We had to recently swap all the beds at Our House, all 40 of them. The guys from Olympus Strength & Performance came and helped us move mountains ... I mean beds. Many thanks guys, your help made all the difference to this big job.



These gorgeous ladies from the Quota Club of Lismore recently held a wonderful Trivia Night to raise funds for Our House. A huge shout out for your generosity. Thank you ladies! We so appreciate your support and all that you do for the community.



Another beautiful day with members of the Lismore Workers Fishing Club who held their annual Tom Sommerville Memorial Day at the Golf Club. The funds raised from the golf day were donated to the Our House Financial Hardship Fund to help those in financial difficulty and to assist their stay at Our House. The Fishing Club's support is very much appreciated.



We have great supporters...here are the residents of Sanctuary Village in Lennox Head who host a Christmas Spectacular each year. The proceeds of their last "light up "were donated to Our House. Thanks to the organisers and to all those who came along and enjoyed the event.



At the recent Friendship Dinner hosted by the Quota Club of Kyogle, the ladies pledged their continual support to Our House. Their donations will go to the Hardship Fund set up to help Our House guests experiencing financial stress. Thank you ladies for you amazing efforts in the community and for helping us accommodate our valued guests.

Hilda a survivor through and through

The guests who come through Our House all have stories. Hilda Corney, a resident of Tenterfield, has certainly topped the list of remarkable stories from guests that have come through our doors.



Hilda Corney casually enjoying the gardens of Our House during her stay.

As you know, Our House is purpose built accommodation for patients coming to Lismore for medical treatment.

Hilda, who has been a guest at Our House for five weeks is a survivor. She is presently being treated for breast cancer, but her spirit of survival began in her remarkable childhood.

Born in communist Slovenia in 1934, Hilda's hometown was Sveti Jurij, just a short distance from the Austrian border. In those times it was against the law to cross the border.

Life in Slovenia was characterised by hard work with little reward. The country had been ravaged by the Great Depression followed by conflict between Germany and Russia in the Second World War. This coupled with a poor relationship with an unloving father, drove a desire in Hilda to escape from this life. Armed with dressmaking skills gained as an unpaid apprentice and the bravado of youth, Hilda, with the blessing of her sympathetic mother, embarked on an ill-considered first attempt for freedom at the age of 18.

Hilda and her 17-year- old friend naively thought that they could simply walk over the border under the guise that they were going to a dance.

"I still recall the sound of the bullet that narrowly missed her left ear, as this plan was thwarted by Slovenian officials" Hilda recalls.

After being captured, the girls spent two harrowing weeks in isolation, while officials ascertained that the pair were not spies. Then followed eight months in prison. However, oddly enough, this time proved to be one of the happiest periods of Hilda's life.

Her prison sentence served, Hilda faced the prospect of returning to her home town. She managed to avoid this by securing a job as a housekeeper with a wealthy property owner. Work was hard and pay was little.

A successful escape from Slovenia followed. While close surveillance thwarted her initial plan to walk across the border, others in the group were successful. Hilda was too heavily scrutinised to make her own escape. Two days later, however, Hilda managed to avoid the authorities and bicycled to her aunt's place, from where she travelled on foot accompanied by a guide to the Austrian border.

Now on her own, Hilda walked for two days through the forest until she reached a farmhouse.

"Once here, the Austrian police were contacted and I was transported to a nearby pub and served one of the best meals I had ever eaten." Hilda said.

Hilda then boarded a bus to Gratz where the resilient girl learnt to speak fluent Austrian. The final leg of Hilda's journey was to Australia.

Faced with overwork imposed by her father's aunt, Hilda migrated to Australia and headed to Tenterfield where an uncle resided.

"It was here that I met Gordon and we have been married for 54 years, enjoying the country," said Hilda.

"I found out about Our House as all my friends have stayed here during their treatment. They told me about this great facility and the care given here, and they were right. My stay has been wonderful, Ruth and the girls have been great, this has been my home," she said.

Hilda is a guest who has been receiving help through the IPTAAS scheme.

Chair of the Our House Board, Dr Chris Ingall, said that Hilda was a great example of the guests that Our House is here to help and care for during their treatment.

"We want to ensure we can ~~continue our unique service to people like Hilda for years to come. Our House is confident the Government will come to a solution with the IPTASS issue to allow us to continue to provide our services to guests like Hilda," Dr Chris said.~~

Yes I want to help Our House

I enclose cheque/money order for $
made payable to: **Our House**, or please charge my credit card.

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Card No. ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐

Expiry date / Signature

Name

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Send to: Our House
145 Laurel Avenue, Lismore, NSW 2480

Donations of $2 and over are tax deductible.
We will post a receipt to you.

our house

Our House is a development by Northern Rivers Community Cancer Foundation and Our Kids. Funded by the Australian Government through the Health and Hospitals Fund, NSW State Government, NSW Cancer Council and the Northern Rivers Community.

Australian Government
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OUR KIDS