



Media Release

7th April 2020

RMHC® New Zealand ‘essential’, remains operational *Children, families to receive ongoing care and support during COVID-19 outbreak*

RMHC New Zealand has been recognised as an essential social service by the Ministry of Social Development and partnering DHB's amid the COVID-19 outbreak, meaning they are able to continue to provide accommodation for families with children receiving treatment in hospital away from home.

But like other organisations, they have had to dramatically change the way they deliver their services at this time. In spite of this, their commitment to never turn a referred family in need away remains as important as ever.

Ensuring families have a safe place to stay with close proximity to hospitals but with reduced social contact is critical. Due to self-isolation requirements, families whose children who are undergoing emergency medical treatment, are neonatal, or who are receiving ongoing treatment at the National Children's hospital are to be housed off-site in self-contained accommodation. The cost of this accommodation will be covered solely by RMHC New Zealand.

The majority of those already checked in to RMHC Houses are able to remain there for as long as their medical journey requires, however, there are restrictions on access to shared spaces including kitchens, dining spaces, laundry and learning facilities.

“As an essential social service, now more than ever we need to keep families together during these troubling times, but we need to do it in a different way. There have been substantial changes in the operations of the Houses for everyone's safety, from the exclusion of non-essential volunteers, to no community cooking. Instead, RMHC New Zealand has funded all offsite accommodation, food and delivery requirements over the past two weeks,” says Chief Executive Officer of RMHC New Zealand Wayne Howett.

Last year, RMHC New Zealand provided over 44,000 nights of accommodation to more than 4,600 families of unwell children nationwide. This saved families over \$11 million in accommodation, meals and parking costs. They also provide families with ancillary services such as schooling. Delivering to this level in 2020 is becoming harder and harder.

Fundraising events and the majority of volunteer work has been halted to ensure safety remains a top priority. Despite a big increase in additional costs driven from external suppliers of accommodation, and individualised food funding and delivery, RMHC New Zealand is not receiving any additional government funding allocated to NGOs due to Covid-19 at this time.

“Health and safety of our families is the number one priority, but it comes at a cost,” says Howett.

“With all our fundraising events cancelled for the foreseeable future we have a significant financial deficit in RMHC New Zealand's annual budget. Yet as an essential social service, we still have a great deal of families to support. We have launched an emergency campaign to help cover the costs aligned with continuing to support our families during the COVID-19 outbreak.”

“A gift of just \$25 can provide a family with essential cleaning supplies to ensure their space is kept safe and sanitised, a donation of \$50 provides a family with nutritious meals. We ask Kiwis to donate



today to help us continue to provide the \$11 million of accommodation and support to families when they need it most,” continues Howett.

You can donate and help keep families together through these unprecedented times at <https://rmhc.org.nz/support/donate/>.

\$25 provides a family with cleaning products, a crucial supply during these times. Additionally, a gift of \$50 can ensure that no family goes without nutritious meals during this period, while a special emergency gift of \$140 can help give a family one night of free accommodation near the hospital.

-ENDS-

If you would like further information on RMHC New Zealand operations during the Covid-19 emergency or information on the 2020 RMHC New Zealand Emergency campaign, please contact:
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About RMHC New Zealand

RMHC New Zealand is a charity that supports families when their child is in a hospital away from home.

The Ronald McDonald House® and Ronald McDonald Family Room® programmes take care of the practical things in life so families can focus on their child staying in a hospital away from home.

Each year we offer more than 4,600 families across New Zealand accommodation and support free of charge. This helps to relieve stresses like paying for a place to sleep near the hospital, organising family meals and needing a friendly ear to listen on tough days.

Simply, we give families with a hospitalised child what they need most — each other.