



# HeartKids Impact Report

**FY25**

Making a lifelong impact for children, teens, adults and their families navigating childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD).



## Acknowledgement

HeartKids acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live and work. We acknowledge the continuing connections to land, sea, waters, and skies. HeartKids treads lightly on Country and works to collaborate with and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families and communities impacted by childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD) including rheumatic heart disease (RHD). We pay respects to all Elders past and present and thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who contributed to this document. HeartKids recognises the imperative for systemic changes to improve service accessibility and culturally responsive care. Aligned with this vision, we have in 2025 completed our first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Our RAP is instrumental in guiding us on our reconciliation journey, fostering meaningful engagement and collaboration and strengthening our presence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.





## Strong Hearts Strong Mob

Artwork (left): *Strong Hearts, Strong Mob*  
by Paul Constable Calcott

*Strong Hearts Strong Mob* reflects the diverse communities and cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The many nations are represented using colours and symbols, saltwater people in the blues and greens, mountain, urban and desert people in the browns and yellows, river people in the blue, rainforest people in the green. Central to the piece is the HeartKids logo and is reflected across the piece to demonstrate our links and relationships with communities across Australia. The horseshoe symbols and circles are significant to many Aboriginal cultures as they represent the marks left in the sand where people sit for gatherings and the many people in our reach and that we aim to meet. The circles represent HeartKids joining with communities in various settings to have discussions about heart disease and share the many ways in which we provide support. This artwork not only highlights the rich cultural heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples but also emphasises HeartKids' dedication to fostering strong, supportive communities across Australia.

## About the Artist

Paul Constable Calcott is a Wiradjuri artist living on Gubbi Gubbi Country. Paul is a gifted storyteller and through his artwork provides a personal connection and mutual respect between individuals and cultures. Paul is an honoured member of the local community who supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists with disability to connect to Community and culture. Using traditional art styles, Paul champions resilience via yarning and sharing stories.

***Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are warned this document may contain images and names of people who have passed.***

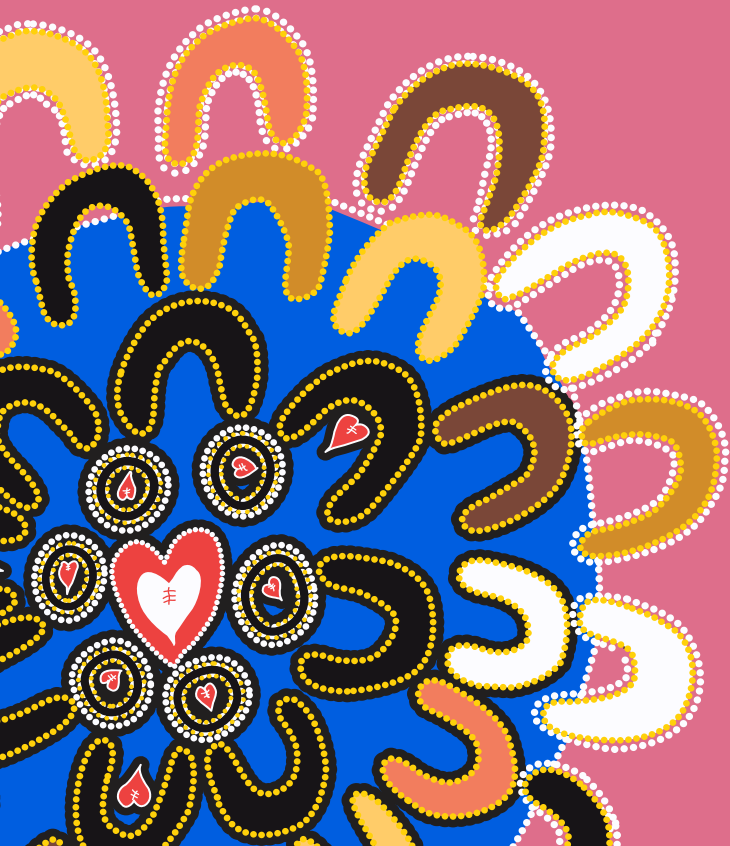


**HeartKids is the only national charity solely dedicated to supporting Australians living with childhood-onset heart disease**



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# About HeartKids

HeartKids is the only national charity solely dedicated to supporting Australians living with childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD), which encompasses more than 50 childhood heart conditions, both congenital and acquired. Every day in Australia, eight babies are born with a congenital heart defect. More than 250,000 Australians live with CoHD, while over one million parents, siblings and carers are directly impacted. For almost fifty years, HeartKids has been the trusted voice and support for families, standing beside them from diagnosis to adulthood, through grief and bereavement.

## We are led by our values:



### Courageously Kind

Compassion, trust, transparency, and care are at the heart of all we do.



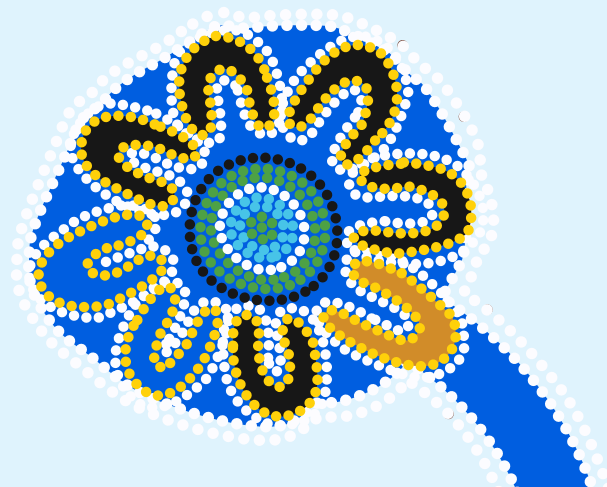
### Championing Change

Creating lasting impact through bold action, advocacy, and innovation.



### United Community

Connection, diversity, collaboration, and shared purpose, standing together on every journey.



## Support when and where we're needed



### In hospitals

Practical and emotional support at all major children's hospitals and clinics, for individuals and families during diagnosis, surgery and treatment.



### In the community

Personalised support, trusted information and guidance, along with peer programs, camps and family events that build connection and resilience, reaching families in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas.



### Online and digital

24/7 access to trusted information, webinars, podcasts and HeartKids Connect: a safe digital community for families, teens and adults.



### Mental health and early intervention (launched in 2024)

Specialist counselling, early childhood intervention programs and referral pathways to help children and families thrive.

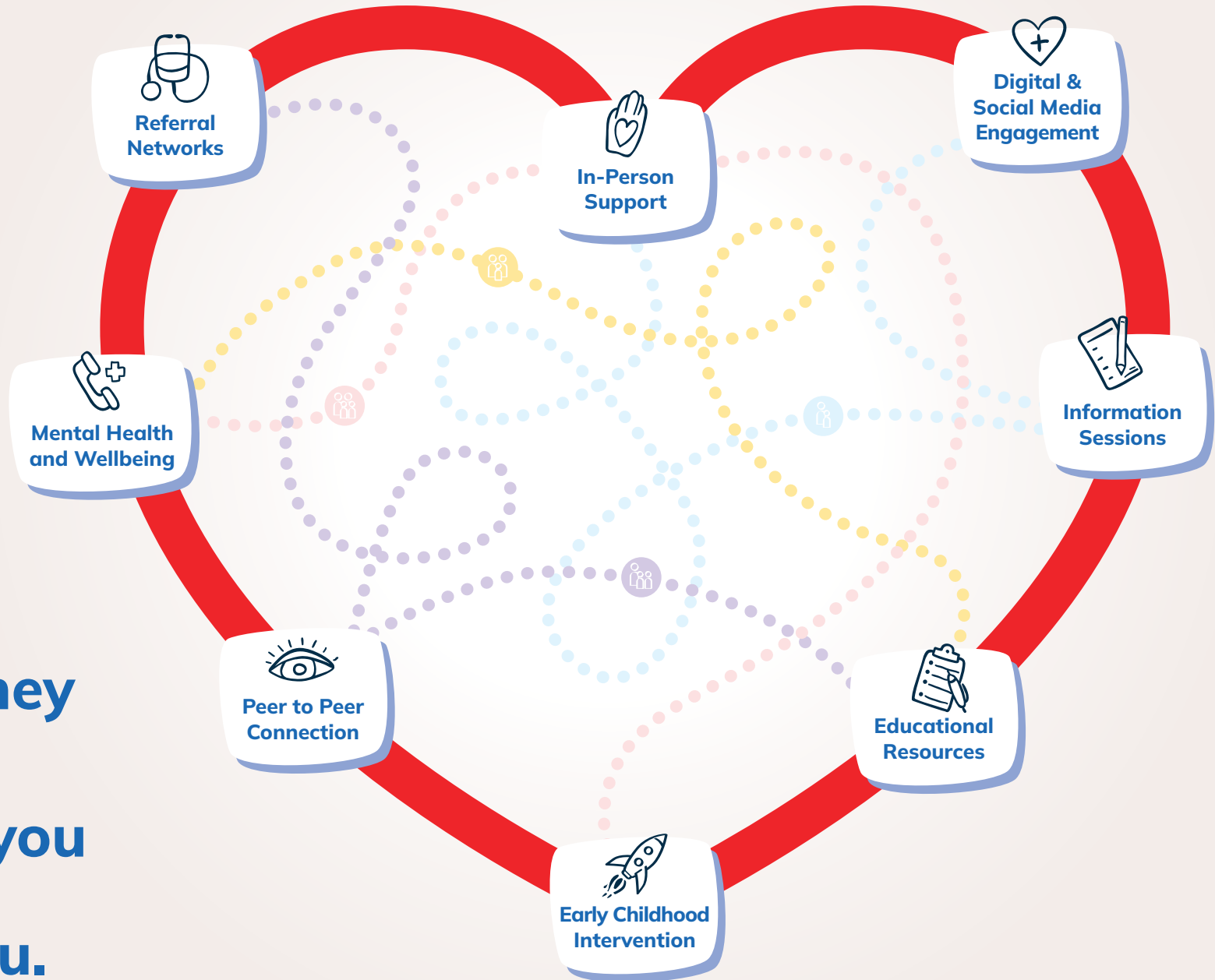


### Advocacy and education

Amplifying family voices, embedding lived experience in research, and delivering education for healthcare professionals to improve care across Australia.

Every journey  
is unique.

Wherever you  
are, we're  
here for you.



# CEO and Chair Introduction



FY25 was a year of momentum and new initiatives for HeartKids. We strengthened our presence across hospitals, communities, and digital platforms, through programs and advocacy, to meet the scale and impact of childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD). More than 250,000 Australians live with CoHD, with an estimated \$2.29 billion annual economic and social impact, a stark reminder of the importance of our mission.



This year marked the launch of our new HeartKids values: Courageously Kind, Championing Change, and United Community. These values guide every part of our work, from the hospital bedside to national advocacy, and from peer connection to digital innovation.

Digitisation and growing our reach remained a core focus in FY25, with the rollout of HeartKids Connect, significant growth in our website traffic and access to our digital resources, expansion of our resource library in digitally accessible formats, and the embedding of data-driven systems to ensure families can access support anytime, anywhere. We have also invested in the systems and compliance tools that will assist with the scale of our support through a peer and volunteer network across Australia. These changes are building a more responsive, sustainable model of support, while strengthening the way we measure and share impact.

A major milestone was the growth of our For Life service model. This model guides our lifelong support tailored to the unique needs of people with CoHD at every age and stage, with dedicated pathways for mental health, wellbeing, and early childhood programs. We are working to secure the funding that will allow us to resource and expand these services further, so individuals have access to the right support when they need them most.

This year was also one of significant progress and partnership. We continued the promotion and dissemination of the of the Australian National Standards of Care for Childhood-onset Heart Disease and welcomed productive new partnerships, including with the Heart Foundation. In Far North Queensland, our advocacy with families and clinicians contributed to the Queensland Government's commitment to fund an additional paediatric cardiologist and multidisciplinary team in Cairns. We launched Our Hearts, Our Future in Western Australia with the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, and in 2025 implemented our first Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), strengthening our commitment to reconciliation and guiding us to build respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities within our organisation and the wider community.

HeartKids is proud to stand as the trusted voice of families living with CoHD. For the first time, we are also led by a Chair with lived experience of CoHD, ensuring the strength and voice of our community guides our leadership. Guided by our Strategic Plan 2024–2027 and united by our values, we remain committed to building a future where every child, teenager and adult with CoHD, and their families, have access to the support, care and community they need, for life.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who make our work possible from the highest offices of the Federal Government to every single donor, supporter and partner who has contributed to HeartKids this year. Your generosity ensures that we can continue to deliver vital services for the more than one million Australians impacted by CoHD.

— **Rohan Geddes, Chair and heart kid**

— **Marcus Sandmann, CEO**

# Our Collective Impact

Families engaged with HeartKids more than ever in FY25, reflecting growth in both frontline services and digital reach. This snapshot captures the scale of our work across hospitals, communities and digital platforms.



## Over 12,000

**support occasions**, representing over 2,800 hours of personalised support

## 3,514

**families supported** across Australia

## 102

**adults supported**

## 303

**bereaved family support occasions**, providing tailored care during loss

## 412

**teenagers supported** through targeted programs and contact



## 2,514

**regional support occasions**, reaching families outside metropolitan areas



## 280

**clinic visits** across NSW, QLD, VIC and WA



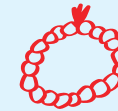
## 369

**instances of financial assistance** provided to over 204 families accounts, totalling \$22,000



## 659

**Care Bags distributed**



## 481

**families participated** in heart beads program



## Mental Health Support

**Program launched**, expanding access to emotional wellbeing care



## 275

**helpline** and webchat contacts



## 1,876

**healthcare professional education enrolments** across 32 modules



## 200+

**consumer resources accessed**, including animations with 123,000+ views



## 2,373

**podcast listens** to From the Heart



## 95.4 million

**media and digital reach** across campaigns and communications



## 4 webinars delivered

to 319 teens, siblings and adults with CoHD.

# Kayleigh's Story

Kayleigh is one of 250,000 Australians living with childhood-onset heart disease. Her story captures the daily reality for many families confronting repeated surgeries, long hospital stays, and the constant uncertainty of what the future will bring.

Diagnosed in utero with complex heart defects, Kayleigh was rushed to hospital immediately after birth. Since then she has undergone seven operations, including six open heart surgeries. Almost every planned procedure was followed by an emergency, and her parents recall the fear of not knowing if she would survive.

"Seeing her hooked up to all these machines and just the constant beeping and never knowing what's going on was overwhelming. It is terrifying putting her to sleep because you never know if she is going to wake up."

HeartKids have supported the Ball family since 2015, providing:

- **Constant support:** Through every surgery, catheter procedure and hospital stay, with consistent care and familiar faces.
- **Practical help:** Coffee and meal vouchers, daily check-ins, and gentle reassurance during long waits.
- **Care for the whole family:** Siblings and grandparents included through gifts, activities and small gestures that made them feel seen.
- **Emotional presence:** In difficult moments, the team listened, comforted and bridged gaps between medical updates and emotional needs.

- **Connection beyond hospital walls:** Events and gatherings that built friendships and a sense of community for life.

Now ten years old, Kayleigh is bright and bubbly. She still tires more easily than her peers and will require future surgeries, but her "superhero scars" remind her family of how far she has come – and HeartKids will be there for every step that follows.

*"It's the help we never knew we needed and the help we appreciate the most."*

**"HeartKids has been a wonderful light in dark times. Maree and Tash especially made us feel so welcome and have been there for us when we needed it most. They have given us strength we never knew we had, or even knew we needed. It is always such a family community, and the work they do for everybody is unbelievable."**

- Chantelle and Chris, Kayleigh's parents



# Leading the Way in CoHD Support, Education and Information

Childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD) is a lifelong journey, and so is HeartKids' support. Our For Life Model of Support provides emotional, practical and informational care across every stage of life: from diagnosis in infancy through to adulthood, we walk alongside individuals and families navigating CoHD.

In FY25 we strengthened our role as the national support organisation for CoHD, building on the strengths of lived experience, evidence-based programs and digital innovation. Our services reached thousands of families across Australia, with a focus on hospitals, community settings, and online spaces that ensure equity of access, especially for those in regional and remote areas.

## Hospitals

Hospital stays can be some of the most challenging times for families. HeartKids presence at the bedside and in clinics is central to our mission.

- 553 support occasions were delivered to individuals and families in hospital.
- 369 instances of practical assistance provided. Care Bags, meal vouchers, grocery support, and shopping discounts eased everyday pressures.
- Collaborated with 30+ organisations, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, to ensure culturally safe, relevant support.

## Regional Support

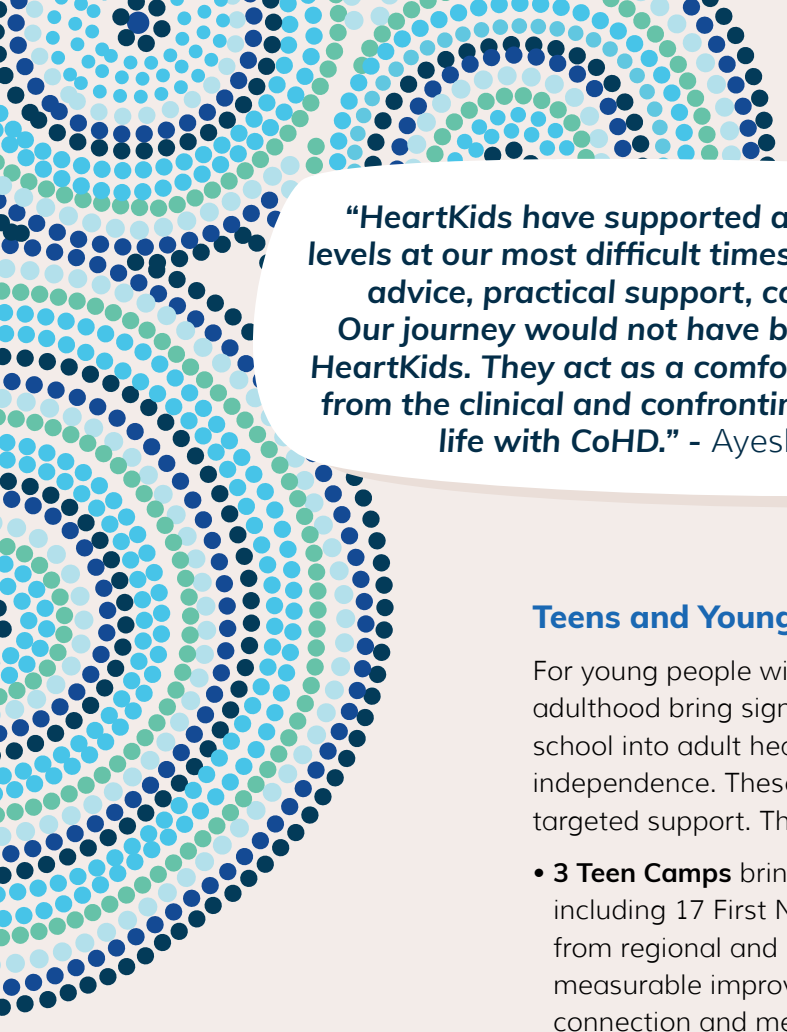


In FY25, HeartKids extended its reach beyond metropolitan hospitals, providing personalised support, outreach and digital connection to **2,514 regional and remote families across four states and through 280 clinic visits.**

## Early Childhood

Early years are critical for development. Up to 50% of children who undergo cardiac intervention experience neurodevelopmental delay, with the greatest risk in those operated on within the first 12 months of life.

- **HeartKids early intervention pilot programs**, Better Beginnings and Better Starts were launched to address neurodevelopmental delays that are common in children with CoHD.
- **3000 families** of young children accessed wraparound support, including hospital visits, digital resources and peer connection.



**“HeartKids have supported all our family on many levels at our most difficult times, providing information, advice, practical support, connection and hope. Our journey would not have been the same without HeartKids. They act as a comforting and human buffer from the clinical and confronting reality of navigating life with CoHD.” - Ayesha, heart mum.**

### Teens and Young Adults

For young people with CoHD, adolescence and young adulthood bring significant transitions - from high school into adult health care, from family-based care to independence. These stages can be challenging without targeted support. This year HeartKids provided:

- **3 Teen Camps** bringing together 123 young people, including 17 First Nations participants and 19 heart kids from regional and remote areas. Camps demonstrated measurable improvements in confidence, social connection and mental health.
- **4 Real Hearts, Real Talk** webinars were delivered for tweens, teens and adults, **engaging 319 participants** from across Australia.
- **Transition tours** at adult hospitals helped prepare teens for new care environments and supported connections with Adult Congenital Heart Disease (ACHD) specialists.
- **New resources** including podcast episodes, animations, factsheets and videos delivered to support young people.

### Mental Health and Wellbeing

CoHD can impact mental health across the whole family. Parents, carers, siblings and heart adults carry heavy emotional loads alongside navigating physical health challenges.

- **HeartKids launched new inhouse counselling services**, delivering phone and video counselling to parents, carers, siblings and adults with CoHD.
- **National webinars** featured healthcare professionals, mental health experts and peers, tackling issues from anxiety and resilience to navigating adulthood with CoHD.

### Connecting families with the right support

HeartKids partners with organisations such as Siblings Australia, MissingSchool, J&R Psychologists and Miracle Babies to strengthen referral pathways and ensure families impacted by childhood-onset heart disease can access holistic support. These collaborations connect families with specialist services that address the broader emotional, social and educational impacts of living with CoHD, supporting children and siblings to thrive beyond hospital care.



## Digital Access and Resources

For many families, especially in rural and remote areas, digital access to support is a lifeline, ensuring help and guidance is available anytime, anywhere. This year we:

- Launched **HeartKids Connect**, a secure online community owned and managed by HeartKids, designed for connection, peer support and resource sharing.
- Expanded the **national resource library**:

**11** podcast episodes  
with **2,373** downloads

**4** new animations  
with **123,000** views

**7** new factsheets

**200+** fact sheets, animations, podcasts and videos

**40+** resources converted to new digitally accessible formats

## Healthcare Professional Education

Health professionals are key partners in improving care and outcomes for families living with CoHD. HeartKids resources and initiatives are co-designed with the CoHD community and healthcare professionals, ensuring they reflect lived experience and clinical expertise. This approach aligns with the CoHD Standards of Care and brings health professionals on the journey with us to improve services and outcomes.

**1876** enrolments across **40+** online modules.

**New courses** added on trauma-informed care, mental health, family planning, antenatal support, and First Nations specific topics.





# From Diagnosis Through the Hardest Moments and Beyond

Every childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD) journey is unique, however they all begin with a diagnosis that changes everything. From that moment, families enter a world of uncertainty, one filled with hospital stays, and complex medical and life decisions. HeartKids walks beside these families through every stage, providing practical and emotional support from hospital to home, and continuing with specialised grief and bereavement support for families who experience the loss of their child.

## A letter from the Koch family, remembering their daughter Sierra

In March last year, my husband Reagan and I, along with our daughter Alora, welcomed our second beautiful baby girl into the world, our sweet Sierra. From the very beginning, Sierra's journey was different. She was born with a rare and complex combination of heart defects: Pulmonary Atresia with a Ventricular Septal Defect and MAPCAs.

We live in rural South Australia, and to give Sierra the best chance, we temporarily relocated to Melbourne so she could receive the specialised care she needed. The first three months of her life were spent mostly in hospital, with just a few short windows where we were able to be out together as a family.

When she was nine weeks old, Sierra underwent the first of multiple planned surgeries. A shunt was inserted to support the blood flow to her lungs. It was a success and after three long months, we were finally able to bring her home to Mundulla.

Those months at home were beautiful. But during a routine cardiology appointment in Adelaide, it became clear that something wasn't right. Within days, we were on urgent flight back to Melbourne for emergency surgery.

But this time, the surgery was not successful. She was placed on ECMO, life support, and we waited, hoping for a miracle.

After four agonising days, we were told by the head cardiologist at the Royal Children's Hospital that there was nothing more they could do.

On 2 October, 2024, surrounded by love, we released our beautiful Sierra from her earthly body. She was just six months old.

Sierra taught us so much in such a short time, about strength, about love, about how every single day is a gift. She may not be here in our arms, but she will forever live in our hearts.

HeartKids was with us every single step of the way. From our second day in hospital until even now, they not only provided us with support, information, and a safe place to just be. They've given us a deeply special connection that will always remind us of Sierra.

While my family was interstate, they gave me a friendly face to talk to. They shared their own beautiful, personal stories of the challenges they faced and overcame with their own heart kids. Through them, I found a sense of belonging, a connection to a community I wouldn't have otherwise known existed.

They offered small but significant moments of financial relief while we lived away from home, and they were fierce advocates for Sierra's care. No matter how uncertain or fast-changing our journey was, they were a constant presence.

Even after Sierra passed, Helen and Amy continued to check in, offering gentle, genuine care. Bonnie from HeartKids also reached out, gifting us with

**“HeartKids was with us every single step of the way. From our second day in hospital until even now, they not only provided us with support, information, and a safe place to just be...”**

Sierra's heart beads, a beautiful and deeply meaningful representation of her journey. She also helped connect us with a psychologist to support us through the grieving process.

We would never have known where to start when it came to seeking help. The weight of making decisions about who to see, whether we could afford it, and if it would even help, it was all too overwhelming. But HeartKids made it simple.

We are endlessly grateful for the ongoing support HeartKids has given us. And I truly hope that by sharing our small story, just one among so many heart families, we can shed light on the profound importance of ongoing support and funding. Families facing the most heartbreaking and uncertain times of their lives deserve to know they are not alone.

Thank you,

**Dana, Reagan and Alora Koch**

# Teen Camps: Building Connection, Confidence and Resilience

For teenagers living with CoHD, the transition to adult health care can feel isolating and uncertain. HeartKids Teen Camps provide a safe and supportive environment where young people can connect, build friendships, and build confidence. Since 2011 the program has been a cornerstone of HeartKids support, helping teens develop resilience and independence while reducing the risks of disengagement from health services.

In FY25, HeartKids delivered three Teen Camps including a National Camp in Victoria, bringing together 123 young people living with CoHD and 30 dedicated volunteers.

***“I now have a massive support team that isn’t just medical professionals... it helps mentally.”***

– Teen Camper

***“This camp really boosted my daughter’s confidence. Realising there are other kids out there with heart problems made her feel normal.”***

– Parent

*With federal government funding concluding, future Teen Camps are on pause for now. HeartKids is committed to securing new investment so this vital program can continue for future generations.*

## Confidence and Independence

**95% of campers reported increased confidence** in managing their heart condition. **92% said the camp improved their ability to manage mental health challenges.**

## Belonging and Peer Support

**80% of campers said Teen Camp gave them a lasting sense of community and friendships** that continued beyond camp. **90% of parents said their child felt less alone and more supported.**

## Connection to Health Information and Services

**Campers gained a stronger understanding of their heart condition and available health services.** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teens particularly valued the safe spaces, including RHD Yarning Circles.







**A lifeline for  
regional families  
– made possible  
by Telethon7**

## Creating Impact in Priority Communities

Families in regional and remote areas face unique challenges: long travel distances, disrupted work and schooling, and fewer local services. HeartKids is committed to bridging this gap so that care and support are accessible no matter where a family lives.

In FY25, we extended outreach in Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland and Northern Rivers NSW, delivering education, community events and support in regional clinics in partnership with local hospitals and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. Our regional CoHD community were also supported through HeartKids Connect, our new digital platform that ensures connection to peers and resources are available beyond metropolitan hospitals.

Regional highlights:

- Outreach in four states/territories
- Family events with local partners
- Stronger hospital referral pathways
- Digital access through HeartKids Connect.

# Regional Support Team: Ariana Potts

For families in regional WA, attending a cardiology clinic can mean long travel, unfamiliar settings and overwhelming uncertainty. Thanks to Telethon7, they are met by HeartKids Regional Family Support Coordinator, Ariana Potts. Ariana brings the rare combination of professional expertise and lived experience, as a mum of son Felix who has CoHD and complex medical needs, and has lived in regional WA. She understands the isolation and challenges families face.

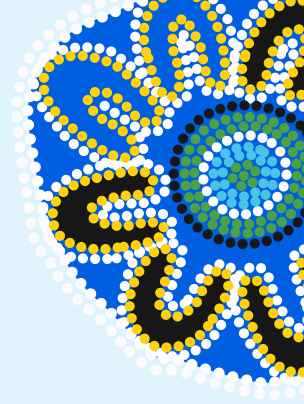
At clinics in Albany, Kalgoorlie, Geraldton and Broome, Ariana supports 20–25 children and their families at each visit. She provides information, practical tools and reassurance in the waiting room, helping reduce children’s anxiety before appointments and giving parents someone with lived experience who will take the time to listen. By introducing families to HeartKids from the outset, she helps ease worries and shows them they are not alone on the journey. The connection doesn’t stop there: when families must travel to Perth Children’s Hospital, they see the same familiar face, providing continuity and trust at a time when everything else can feel uncertain.

This Telethon7-funded service ensures children with childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD) across WA have the information, skills and community connection to live their best lives. It bridges the gap between regional and metro care, strengthens family confidence, and helps improve long-term health outcomes by connecting families to the support and pathways they need.



***“I just love my job and going up to regional areas. I want families to know they’re not alone – there are other people who have gone through this, and they can get through it.”*** - Ariana Potts, WA Regional Family Support Coordinator

# HeartKids Commitment to RHD and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities



Explore our newly released Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan

HeartKids is committed to culturally safe care and reducing inequities in access to care for children, young people and families living with CoHD, including rheumatic heart disease (RHD).

RHD is a largely preventable condition that continues to disproportionately impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, with over 7,000 people living with the condition in Australia today. In FY25 we delivered on the ground education, built partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, co-designed culturally relevant resources, and strengthened connections to healthcare by building networks of collaboration. This work is underpinned by the creation and launch of our Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which provides the foundation for deeper engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities into the future.

## This year we:

- Partnered with the Palm Island Community Company, Deadly Heart Trek, KAMS, and Children's Ground to co-create resources, including in local languages.
- Undertook the Northern Rivers Community Engagement Project, led by HeartKids Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Manager, Angela Webb, connecting with schools, preschools, families and Elders. This visit strengthened relationships, built trust, and shaped the development of culturally safe RHD resources.
- Strengthened practical and cultural support by distributing Bicillin information packs with pain-relief tools such as Buzzy Bees and releasing Gemma's Bicillin Day animation to help families manage regular injections.
- Launched a First Nations digital hub that provides information, education and on-the-ground guidance through strong community connections for families impacted by CoHD.
- With support from the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, commenced the Our Hearts, Our Future program in WA, embedding Aboriginal Support Coordinators in the Kimberley and Pilbara to provide information, education, support and guidance on the ground through deep community connection for families impacted by CoHD.
- Established a new partnership with the Bridging the Heart Gap project in QLD and WA, providing cultural expertise and support for families who must travel long distances for paediatric cardiac surgery.
- Built cultural capability across HeartKids through monthly Yarning Circles (a space to ask questions and learn from peers), Cultural Awareness Training, and new learning modules designed to strengthen understanding and respect.

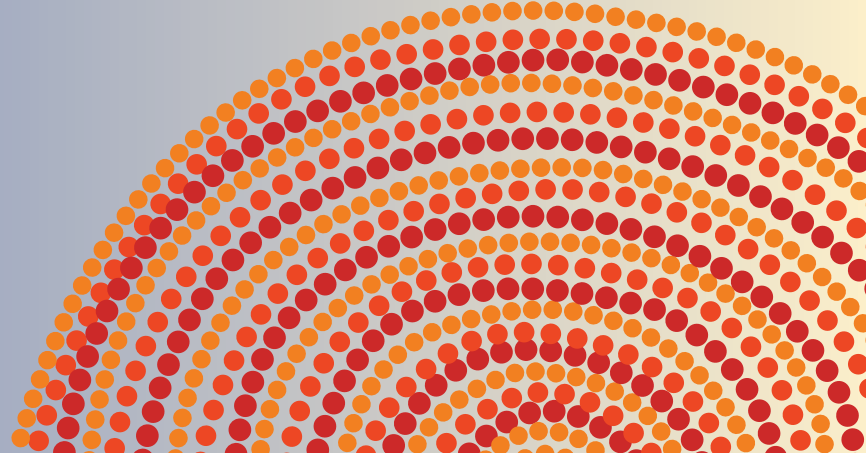


**“Working together has consolidated our shared interest in beating RHD, and has echoed the importance of community-led, culturally safe care and services for our little ones and their families. It goes without saying that RHD is a significant challenge in remote communities, we are so grateful for the support that HeartKids has shown to our team and to the community.”** — Vanessa Priday, Executive Manager Primary Health Services, Palm Island Community Company

**“HeartKids have been key partners in Bridging the Heart Gap, with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Manager providing cultural expertise and building genuine community connections to support equitable care for families needing paediatric cardiac surgery.”** — Jenny Orchard, Project Manager, Bridging the Heart Gap

**“HeartKids experience engaging with various communities has been instrumental in helping us gain a deeper understanding of RHD/RHF. This collaboration has not only opened doors for meaningful connections but has also encouraged us to explore culturally safe new ideas and to think outside the box. We look forward to continuing our collaboration in the future.”** – Children’s Ground





# Thriving with Care and Connection: Mackay Twins Living with Congenital and Rheumatic Heart Disease

Identical twins Benson and Albert were born in 2014 with congenital heart conditions and had open-heart surgery as newborns at Queensland Children's Hospital. In 2023 both were diagnosed with rheumatic heart disease (RHD) and now receive regular Bicillin injections every 21–28 days to prevent their RHD causing further damage to their hearts. Proud Torres Strait Islander and South Sea Islander boys, they stay active at school and in community sport with guidance from their cardiology team and local clinic.

*“The challenging thing was having the twins and being on two different wards. It was the separation. That and being away from home for over six months, renting at the time and not working and not having family close by was really hard. That’s where HeartKids came in, they were amazing. They would sit and have cuddles with the baby up on the ward while I could be down in with NICU. When the boys became a little bit better and a bit more mobile, they actually got our pram that we had here at home sent to us, all free of charge.”*

– Maria, Benson and Albert’s mother.

## HeartKids’ impact

- Practical help during long hospital stays: on-the-ward volunteer support so Mum could be with each twin across NICU and the ward.
- Consistent, trusted contact: relationships with our Queensland team provided check-ins, advocacy and a familiar face across multiple admissions.
- Information and connection: referral to RHD resources and community networks so the family knew what to expect from ongoing injections and follow-up care.
- Community and visibility: opportunities to take part in Two Feet & A Heartbeat and special experiences that celebrate strength, culture and belonging.

**With wrap-around support and strong clinical care, Benson and Albert are thriving - engaged in school and sport, keeping up with their RHD care, and helping raise awareness for other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.**



Hear Benson and Albert’s Story on HeartKids From the Heart Podcast

# Advocacy and Awareness

HeartKids advocates for equitable, high-quality care for every family impacted by childhood-onset heart disease (CoHD), no matter where they live. In FY25, our advocacy combined policy influence, regional action and nationwide awareness campaigns, ensuring families' voices were heard, services expanded, and CoHD remained visible on the national agenda.

In an election year, HeartKids amplified the voices of families through a national awareness campaign, cutting through a crowded media cycle to achieve 32.5 million in reach and 125 media mentions in just over a month. Across the full year, our advocacy and awareness efforts reached an estimated 95.4 million people, reinforcing our role as the trusted voice for the CoHD community.

HeartKids also held 19 meetings with Senators, Ministers, MPs and senior advisors, and facilitated consumer input into 10 research projects to ensure lived experience continues to shape national research priorities. We worked alongside clinicians, families and health services to embed the National Standards of Care for CoHD, advocating to governments for equitable CoHD care across Australia.

Regionally, our advocacy contributed to the Queensland Government's decision to appoint a second paediatric cardiologist and team in Cairns, addressing long-standing pressures on services in Far North Queensland. With support from the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, we launched Our Hearts, Our Future in Western Australia, embedding Aboriginal Support Coordinators in the Kimberley and Pilbara to provide culturally safe support.



## Campaign and event highlights

- **Sweethearts for HeartKids 2025:** Communities across Australia lit up in February, with families, schools and businesses uniting on International Congenital Heart Defect Awareness Day. The campaign achieved 47 media mentions and a reach of more than 60 million, raising significant awareness and funds to support children, teens and adults living with CoHD.
- **Hero for HeartKids:** In June, schools, workplaces and community groups dressed as superheroes to raise funds and awareness. With over 1,323 donors nationwide, the campaign raised critical funds and extended awareness through local media and community channels.
- **Two Feet & A Heartbeat Walk:** Held across more than 30 locations in October, the walk brought families, friends and supporters together in reflection and solidarity. The event generated 56 media mentions and a reach of 2.4 million, uniting communities in honour of children living with CoHD and remembering heart angels.
- **HeartKids Gala Ball, WA:** In May, more than 800 guests gathered for a night of celebration and community in Perth, enjoying entertainment, auctions and raffles, and raising vital funds to continue supporting families.
- **Hamilton Island Golf Day:** Now in its 10th year, this annual charity event led by Kerry and Troy Martin, to whom we are deeply grateful, brings together golfers, sponsors and supporters at the stunning Hamilton Island Golf Course on Dent Island to raise funds and awareness for children, teens and adults impacted by CoHD. In July 2025, the event raised over \$110,000, with community spirit and generosity shining through raffles, auctions and team participation.



**47** Sweethearts  
media  
mentions  
and a reach of more  
than 60 million

**56** Two Feet & A Heartbeat  
media mentions  
and a reach of more than 60 million

**1323**  
Hero for HeartKids  
donors nationwide

**800**  
guests gathered for the  
Gala Ball, WA

**\$110k+**  
raised at the Hamilton  
Island Golf Day

# Transforming Lives: The Impact of Our Partners and Supporters

HeartKids cannot achieve lasting impact alone. Our partnerships with aligned organisations ensure families have access to the widest possible range of care, connection and resources. These collaborations extend our reach beyond hospitals and clinics, into schools, communities and homes across Australia.

## Service and Advocacy Partnerships

This year we welcomed the Heart Foundation as a major new partner, strengthening national advocacy and awareness for children, young people and adults living with CoHD.

We also began new collaborations with Heartbeat of Football and Siblings Australia expanding support for heart health awareness, siblings of children with CoHD, and bereaved families.

Long-standing relationships continued with valued partners including Angel Flight, Children's Ground, Missing School, Murdoch Children's Research Institute and paediatric and adult hospitals nationally. Together, we broadened the practical and emotional supports available to families from transport and accommodation to peer connection, education and culturally safe resources.

***"This partnership represents a significant and collaborative step forward in addressing the needs of children and their families living with childhood-onset heart disease,"*** – Heart Foundation Chief Executive Officer, David Lloyd.

***"Our partnership with HeartKids reflects a shared commitment to supporting the whole family. When we recognise and respond to the needs of brothers and sisters, we strengthen every child's wellbeing. Together, we're ensuring that siblings of children with heart disease are acknowledged, connected, and resilient."***

– Siblings Australia Chief Executive,  
Dr Shannon Schedlich



# Corporate partnerships

Our corporate and community partners make nationwide impact possible, turning generosity and collaboration into real outcomes for families living with CoHD.

## Supercheap Auto



Supercheap Auto has been a proud partner of HeartKids since 2022. In FY25, their point-of-sale and online round-up donations made it easy for customers to give, while staff enthusiastically joined Hero for HeartKids, dressing as superheroes and creating memorable in-store activations.

## Drakes Supermarkets

With 67 stores across South Australia and Queensland, Drakes Supermarkets has been a committed HeartKids partner for over seven years. Their involvement has grown from early participation in Hero for HeartKids to a full partnership that engages staff and customers across all locations. Through point-of-sale heart token fundraising and annual campaign support, Drakes has significantly boosted donations and expanded HeartKids' reach. In 2024, their efforts helped drive the success of Hero for HeartKids and marked a \$1,000,000 partnership milestone - every dollar of which supports families living with CoHD. HeartKids is proud to celebrate this milestone and grateful for Drakes' ongoing commitment to building a compassionate community.



## Roche Australia

For more than 20 years, Roche Australia has donated hundreds of CoaguChek meters and strips annually, easing cost-of-living burdens and giving families practical independence. For many children and adults living with childhood-onset heart disease, regular INR (International Normalized Ratio) testing is essential to safely manage blood-thinning medication. The cost of home testing machines and consumable strips can be significant, particularly for families in regional and rural areas where access to pharmacies or pathology services may be limited. Roche Australia's ongoing support helps reduce these challenges, enabling families to monitor safely from home and avoid frequent hospital visits.

## Community Support Highlight: Northern Beaches Social Riders

The Northern Beaches Social Riders have been proud supporters of HeartKids since 2004, dedicating their time and energy to helping children, teens and adults impacted by CoHD. Each week, the club's members host a community meat-tray raffle at Terrey Hills Tavern, with products generously donated by the Tavern, raising vital funds for HeartKids programs and services.

Over the years, their contributions have helped sustain initiatives such as the Heart Beads program, while their hands-on involvement at events like Two Feet & A Heartbeat Manly, where members volunteer to cook the community BBQ, reflects their enduring commitment and generosity. HeartKids was delighted to visit the group this year to accept their annual donation and thank them for more than two decades of loyal support.



## Our valued Corporate Partners



# Foundations, Trusts and Government

- **SA Labor Government, Kiwanis Australia District** and the **Walker Family** continued to fund our *Better Beginnings* (0–4 years) and *Better Starts* (4–6 years) early childhood programs. These pioneering interventions equip parents and improve developmental outcomes for children at risk of neurodevelopmental delays.
- We also sincerely thank the many foundations and trusts whose generosity sustained our work in FY25. Significant contributions came from the McCusker Charitable Foundation, Medtronic Foundation, the Lyone Foundation, Edward C. Dunn Foundation, Kinghorn Foundation, Edwards Lifesciences, The Lin Huddleston Charitable Foundation and the Marian and E.H. Flack Trust. Each has played a vital role in helping HeartKids deliver essential programs and support to families nationwide.



## Stan Perron Charitable Foundation Support New WA Program

*With generous support from the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation, HeartKids launched Our Hearts, Our Future in Western Australia. This new program embeds Aboriginal Support Coordinators in the Kimberley and Pilbara, standing alongside families to provide culturally safe guidance, strengthen links to healthcare, and build community-led networks of support for children and young people living with CoHD and RHD.*

### Partner Services

#### Workplace and matched giving

- Platforms such as **GoodCompany**, **Good2Give** and **Benevity** enabled staff giving direct from payroll.
- **The Good Guys** “Doing Good” program continued to match every dollar donated by employees, doubling the impact of their generosity.

### In-Kind and Creative Support

- **Corporate Challenge** provided in-kind gifts such as toys and bikes, presented directly to HeartKids at events.
- **Media partners** Progressive PR and Starcom amplified awareness through national media campaigns.

# Our Volunteer Community

Across Australia, 256 volunteers gave their time, energy and skills to HeartKids in the past year. This figure does not include the many regional family and friends who generously step in to help at Two Feet & A Heartbeat each year.

Our volunteers come from families, corporates and community members, all committed to making a difference. They supported events including Two Feet & A Heartbeat, Christmas wrapping, Christmas parties, Heroes for HeartKids, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Golf Days, big lunches and the WA Gala Ball, as well as advisory committees and independent fundraising events.

Volunteer contributions included:

- Supporting family events and national campaigns
- Packing and distributing Care Bags and resources
- Donating professional skills and expertise
- Administration and office support across Australia.

## Volunteer Highlight – Erica Howell

HeartKids events rely on the generosity and enthusiasm of volunteers like Erica, who continue to show up year after year to support families and build community.

Erica first joined through a university volunteering program and has returned every year since.

**256**  
volunteers  
across  
Australia



“Now that I’ve graduated, I still come back each year to help with the Two Feet & A Heartbeat event. I love seeing the connection and support within the HeartKids community, it’s always such a fantastic day.”

Over time, Erica discovered that volunteering isn’t about having all the right skills from the start, it’s about being willing to help.

“I used to think I didn’t have the right skills to be a good volunteer, but I’ve learned that simply showing up for the community makes a real difference.”

From helping set up and running a kids’ plant-potting activity in her first year to leading the event and guiding other volunteers in her second, Erica has become an integral part of the Two Feet & A Heartbeat volunteering team.

“As I come back for my third year, I’m so excited to see everyone come together again for the walk — enjoying the sunshine, a picnic, and each other’s company.”

HeartKids extends a huge thank you to all our volunteers who bring energy, compassion, and commitment to every event. Your continued support helps us create spaces where families can connect, share, and celebrate together.

**“Now that I’ve graduated, I still come back each year to help with the Two Feet & A Heartbeat event. I love seeing the connection and support within the HeartKids community, it’s always such a fantastic day.”** – Erica Howell.

# Thank you

HeartKids' work is possible only through the generosity of partners, donors and volunteers. We thank our corporate partners, foundations, governments, individuals and workplace givers for their ongoing support.

## Corporate and Principal Partners

- Australian Federal Government
- Government of Western Australia
- Child and Adolescent Health Service WA
- Government of South Australia
- South Australian Department of Health
- Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
- Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
- Winslow Construction
- BigginScott Real Estate
- Drakes Supermarkets
- Telethon7
- Supercheap Auto
- Roche Australia
- Lyndale Football and Netball Club
- Northern Beaches Social Riders
- Castle Hill RSL Group

- In Awe Australia
- Mitsubishi Heavy Industries
- Edwards Lifesciences
- Crown Relocations
- Grimbos Building Surveyors
- Australia Post
- Heart Foundation Australia
- Allens
- Bentley Recruitment
- Dedes Waterfront Group
- Hughes Mining Labour Hire
- Cowell Clarke

## Foundations and Trusts

- Kinghorn Foundation
- Kiwanis Australia District
- The Elston Giving Foundation
- Marian and EH Flack Trust
- The James and Jutta Lauf Foundation
- The Lin Huddleston Charitable Foundation
- McCusker Charitable Foundation
- Medtronic Foundation
- Edward C Dunn Foundation

- GoodCompany Foundation
- Dimmick Charitable Trust
- Tasmania Police Charity Trust

## Bequest

- Merrell Davis OAM Household
- The Estate of the Late Elizabeth Mihic

## Major Supporters and Gifts in Memory

- Walker Family Fund
- Coca-Cola Europacific Partners Australia Pty Limited (CCEP)
- Zero 95
- Hancock Prospecting and Hancock Iron Ore
- Mortgage Choice Mt Lawley
- TAG Financial Group
- Brightside Live
- Roy Hill
- ARG
- Capita Finance
- Big Yellow Mining
- Earthmover Mechanical
- Innes Air and Electrical
- J&PC Consulting
- KC Australia
- WA Specialised
- Westonia Aviation
- MM Electrical
- Shadforth Financial Group
- Crown Perth
- Crown Resorts Foundation
- Koro Fine Australian Jewellery
- Rogue Rider MSC South West

- Rio Tinto
- South Australian Produce Market
- Riding Free Brothers Motorcycle Club
- Somerset Hotel
- Turley Property Advocates
- AFL Players Association
- Coca-Cola Australia
- Parramatta Leagues Club
- North Capital Finance Credit
- Precious Time Fabric and Quilts

## Media and Communication

- Starcom
- Progressive PR & Communications
- Splitpants Productions
- Sunny Advertising
- CocoGun
- oOh! Media
- Seven Network
- Tanck

## To access the FY2025 HeartKids Limited financial report, please go to the ACNC website.

We extend our sincerest thanks to all those who have contributed their time and resources to support our organisation and help us achieve our purpose and goals this year.

We look forward to working with Australian Federal, State and Territory Governments, clinicians, researchers, corporate partners, heart kids, heart teens and adults, heart angel families and the broader CoHD community as we strive to make a real and lasting impact for everyone impacted by childhood-onset heart disease.

## Households

- Nguyen Household
- Pitt Household
- 28 Wagg Household
- Radeski Household
- Sharman Household
- Merrell Davis OAM Household
- The Estate of the Late Elizabeth Mihic
- Archibald Household
- Berger Household
- Bignell Household
- Buchanan Household
- Iliopoulos Household
- Dixon Household
- Edwards Household
- Williams Household
- Yager Household
- Prenter Household



**HeartKids**

[heartkids.org.au](http://heartkids.org.au) | HeartKids Helpline: 1800 432 785