

Ryan Family Testimonial

Our son Jack was diagnosed with leukaemia in late 2007 when he was seven years old. Our family lives on a remote cattle property in far north QLD and the diagnosis had huge implications for us. I relocated to Brisbane for 11 months with our three children for Jack to have daily treatment at the Royal Children's hospital while my husband had to stay and work as it was our only income and there was no family support.

The separation was difficult. Leukaemia treatment takes 3.5 years so after we returned home there was still 2.5 years of long trips to Townsville (every two weeks) and Brisbane (every three months) for treatment. Townsville alone was an eleven hour round trip and Brisbane even longer. All the children came as I couldn't leave them at home so they have all done regular and exhausting trips through rain, flood and shine for Jack to get the treatment he needs.

A lovely nurse at the hospital put our name forward to Paradise Kids and we were delighted to have a phone call from Theresa to say we had been sponsored a week on the Gold Coast at their Holiday House. Nothing prepared us for the quality of the accommodation, it was fantastic and the children loved the big living area with games and a cubby house; even a playground outside.

For me, it was extra special not to have to cook or clean for a week. We were so well looked after by Sara and Iva. The children enjoyed their morning counselling sessions with Theresa, Penny and Sky. George and I had a much needed couple of sessions with Mireille, as our marriage had come under strain during the past couple of years. She helped us put some strategies in place to cope with the difficult times.

Due to the nature of farming and also the numerous trips for Jack's treatment combined with home schooling, we never had any good family time anymore. So, this holiday was wonderful, we loved going to Dream World and other special places while we were there. George and I even managed to go out to dinner while Sara and Iva babysat.

It allowed us to have time together doing fun things. It was stress free and everyone that we met at Paradise Kids was so understanding, kind and compassionate that we immediately felt very comfortable in the environment of the Holiday House.

It made us feel that people *did* care and that we were not alone in all of this. It can be hard on other siblings when one child is sick, so that was why we had so much enjoyment from this holiday because it was equally for everyone and not just for Jack. Also, the fact that it combined a holiday with counselling made it unique. We cannot thank the sponsors and Paradise Kids staff enough for the memorable week we spent at the Holiday House.

