



For immediate release
8 May 2009

New England families find mutual support at first Cure Our Kids *Family Group Gathering*

Parents of children who have experienced the rollercoaster ride of childhood cancer travelled from across the region to Tamworth on Saturday 2 May to Belle Epoque restaurant for the inaugural New England *Family Group Gathering* organised by the NSW charity, **Cure Our Kids**.

The initiative, which has been successfully run in metropolitan Sydney and the Central Coast for the past three years, has been extended this year across NSW with dinners held in the regional areas of Shoalhaven, Canberra, Carbone and the Mid-West, Hastings and now New England.

The *Family Group Gatherings* bring together in an informal restaurant setting parents of children with cancer. Over a free dinner and social activities facilitated by **Cure Our Kids**, families get to know each other and have the opportunity to form supportive friendships. The program has been highly successful with more than 15 external support groups formed by parents brought together by the Gatherings.

According to one parent who recently attended a Gathering: "To share your thoughts about your journey, your loss, your problems with procedures, with drugs, and not have to explain everything first is very therapeutic and a huge relief. We share an amazing and frightening bond that enables us to completely empathise with each other."

Founded in 2001, **Cure Our Kids** is a non-profit charity dedicated to the cancer unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead. Its mission is to improve the quality of life for children with cancer and the families who love them. The *Family Group Gatherings* is one of many services **Cure Our Kids** offers to families treated at Westmead.

When a child is diagnosed with cancer, it affects the entire family. Many parents of children with cancer experience depression, anxiety and difficulties managing day-to-day affairs and while formal counselling can be extremely beneficial, the support of other parents who are going through the same experience can provide enormous comfort.

Several hundred families across NSW are currently battling the huge challenges that childhood cancer presents. Figures are on the rise with more than 150 children annually diagnosed with cancer at The Children's Hospital at Westmead alone with some 40 percent coming from regional NSW.

Cure Our Kids is currently seeking sponsorship from local businesses to ensure these dinners are held at least three times each year in each centre. The next dinner for the New England group will be held in August. Families who are currently in treatment or have been treated at the Oncology Unit of the Children's Hospital at Westmead will be warmly welcomed. Please contact Cure Our Kids, ph 02 9938 3499 to register your interest in attending the dinner.

Media contact:
Loretta Busby, Cure Our Kids
Phone 02 9938 3499, email loretta@cureourkids.com.au
www.cureourkids.com.au