



Jeff McCloy (from McCloy Group) and Bill McDonald (from McDonald Jones Homes) at The Bower Estate.

SCOTT CAM LENDS A HAND

To Build for a Cure!

➔ WORDS MICHELLE MEEHAN - Features Writer

No one knows the pressures of building to a deadline better than Scott Cam.

Week in, week out for the past 12 seasons, the reality TV host and former chippy has watched contestants work feverishly against the clock to deliver fully renovated, and styled rooms on the Channel 9 smash hit series *The Block*.

But Scott will be overseeing an even bigger construction challenge in Medowie this month as a host of professional tradies attempt to build a house from scratch in 21 days. And while winning *The Block* can have a life-changing impact on the lives of one lucky couple, achieving a good outcome on auction day with this build will potentially help save the lives of countless children with cancer.

A fundraising initiative of the Children's Cancer Institute, Austral Bricks and McDonald Jones Homes, **Build for a Cure** sees a host of tradesmen, corporate partners and community groups join forces to build, landscape and furnish the new home over the three-week period before it is put under the hammer, with 100 per cent of the proceeds going to help fund research into childhood cancer.

Every inch of the house is generously donated by those involved, including the land, all materials, labour and furnishings.

The first Build for a Cure was held in the Sydney suburb of Glenmore Park in 2014, with the four-bedroom home selling for an impressive \$783,000. Subsequent builds have been completed in the Lake Macquarie suburb of Teralba (2016) as well as at Appin (2017) in western Sydney, with the proceeds of all three, and various related initiatives, raising more than \$2 million for the Children's Cancer Institute to date.

Scott has been the official Build for a Cure Ambassador since the beginning and said he was proud to be able to lend his support to a cause dedicated to reducing the impact of this insidious disease.

"It would be rare to find a family in Australia that has not been touched by cancer," he said.

"In my own family I have lost five loved ones to the disease, and I have seen firsthand the suffering caused by cancer and its treatment.

"As a father, it's hard to imagine a child facing that path so early in their life, and yet every year over 950 Australian children and their families get this terrible news. In the Hunter Region alone, 50 children on average each year are diagnosed with cancer.

"Bill McDonald (founder of McDonald Jones Homes) asked me to join the first Build for a Cure project back in 2014. I only then learned about Children's Cancer Institute and the fact that they are the one and only independent medical research institute wholly dedicated to childhood cancer.

"Over their 30 years, the Institute has seen dire mortality rates improve significantly, but we are still losing nearly three Aussie kids every week from cancer. The Institute not only want to take the figure to zero, but they are confident they will get it to zero in the foreseeable future.

"I am thrilled to again be joining the team for Build for a Cure, and this year we are back in the Hunter Region.

"I really enjoy spending time on site with all of the tradies, who generously donate their personal time to get this house built in 21 days. Everyone truly works as a team to sell the house for as much as possible."

"Children's Cancer Institute's determination is infectious, and I encourage all Aussies to give generously."

The build kicked off on Monday, August 27 with the erection of the framework and roof trusses on the already poured slab.

The house will be built in **The Bower Estate in Medowie**, with the 700sqm block of land donated by the **McCloy Group**. It is the second time the Newcastle-based developers have lent their support to Build for a Cure, having previously donated the land at Billy's Lookout in Teralba for the 2016 campaign.

Also showing their support for the cause will be **McDonald Jones Homes**, with the Hunter-based home builders among ►

the first companies to jump on board when the initiative was dreamt up by David Fitzharris from **Austral Bricks** in 2014.

McDonald Jones Homes have built each of the three luxury houses completed to date and are back again this year with support from a host of volunteer tradespeople, as well as the countless suppliers who donate the construction materials needed for the project.

The Cambridge design home will include four bedrooms, two bathrooms and a double garage and will be luxuriously fitted out and fully furnished before being unveiled by Scott at the official "reveal" on **Sunday, September 16**.

He will be joined at the site on the day by Newcastle Knights star and McCloy Ambassador Mitchell Pearce, with other special guests to include past contestants from *The Block*, medical researchers, architects, builders and interior designers.

Children's cancer survivors and their families will also take part in the reveal, including the honorary "site foreman" for this build, Nixon Ball.

The plucky three-and-a-half-year-old has experienced more pain than most people go through in a lifetime after being diagnosed with a rare type of tumour in 2015, just days after he was born.

Brodie Doneghan was 36 weeks pregnant with Nixon when a sonographer noticed a growth on the unborn baby's head during a routine scan. After monitoring it for a week, doctors admitted Brodie to Sydney's Westmead Hospital, where she underwent a caesarean section.

Biopsies revealed the growth on Nixon's scalp, which was now the size of a fist, was actually a rhabdoid tumour, with a second tumour also discovered on one of his legs.

When he was just two-and-a-half weeks old, Nixon underwent the first of what would ultimately be ten rounds of

chemotherapy to shrink the tumours, with surgery after the first and fourth rounds used to remove the tumour from his leg and scalp respectively.

Since then Nixon has undergone upwards of six other surgeries, 25 blood and platelet transfusions, scans every three months and countless trips to see a variety of medical specialists.

It has been a long, hard journey for Nixon and a tough time for Brodie and her partner Nick Ball, as well as their other two children Ashlee and Lachie. But the family, who live in the small suburb of Mardi just near Tuggerah on the Central Coast, know that despite the pain and anguish they have all endured, Nixon is one of the lucky ones.

Three children and adolescents (on average) die each week in Australia from cancer. While advances in treatment discovered through research by organisations such as the Children's Cancer Institute have helped lower mortality rates significantly, there is still a long way to go.

Brodie said while Nixon has been in remission for some time, they remain passionate about supporting the Children's Cancer Institute's work to provide more targeted treatments, and their goal of one day being able to cure 100 per cent of children with cancer.

"We've been lucky in a sense," Brodie said.

"It's been horrible and crappy, but Nixon has kind of come through everything fairly unscathed.

"He's been in remission for a while, but we've seen either little kids that haven't come through, or that have had relapses, or that have had quite significant disabilities and ongoing issues because of treatment.

"I'm just so motivated to help other families because I just know how isolating it is and how horrible it is. Your life is pretty much forever changed, so I just think that we've come through



Nixon Ball

fairly unscathed and I feel like we owe it to the kids that didn't come through it, to help fundraise."

By sharing their story through the media, Nixon and his family were among those who helped raise the profile of Build for a Cure the last time it was held in the Hunter, with his dad Nick, who works for Mojo Homes (a McDonald Jones Homes company), also among the tradies on site helping with the actual build.

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Nick will be back on the tools again in Medowie, while Nixon and Brodie are in the media spotlight once more, with the cause even closer to their hearts this time around.

“One of the girls (who had cancer) that did it with us two years ago at Teralba passed away last year – she was only 18,” Brodie said.

“I feel like we owe it to her. I think it’s really important to give back and help out where we can.

“It’s good community spirit, and I think the Hunter and regional places, in particular, are really good like that.”

The Children’s Cancer Institute’s Chief Marketing and Fundraising Officer Anne Johnston said she has also been “blown away” by the response from the community in support of the initiative each year.

“My heart is moved by the way the community responds,” she said.

“To see the tradies giving up their time and willingly giving up their skills, to see the families who come to the site, to see companies like McDonald Jones Homes and McCloy get involved – they’re more than just supporters to us, they’re family.

“We’ve never experienced that groundswell of people, of support, anywhere else we’ve been (outside of the Hunter) – it’s just a phenomenal feeling, and I just can’t thank the community enough.”

Originally founded by two fathers of children with cancer in 1976, the Children’s Cancer Institute is the only independent medical research institute in Australia wholly dedicated to research into the causes, prevention and cure of childhood cancer.

Forty years on from its establishment, its vision remains unchanged – to save the lives of all children with cancer and to eliminate their suffering.

The Children’s Cancer Institute has grown to now employ more than 200 researchers, operational staff and students, and has established a national and international reputation for scientific excellence.

Their focus is on translational research, with an integrated team of laboratory researchers and clinician scientists who work together in partnership to discover new treatments that can be progressed from the lab bench to the beds of children onwards in hospitals as quickly as possible.

These new treatments are specifically targeting childhood cancers, so safer and more effective drugs and drug combinations can be developed that will minimise side-effects and ultimately give children with cancer the best chance of a cure with the highest possible quality of life.

Anne said the Institute was leading the establishment of the Zero Childhood Cancer national child cancer personalised medicine program for children with the most aggressive cancers, in partnership with the Sydney Children’s Hospitals Network.

The program will revolutionise the way treatment decisions are made, with the aim of improving survivorship for those children at highest risk of treatment failure from their disease.

Money raised from initiatives such as Build for a Cure will be used for research programs such as this.

“Build for a Cure is a significant campaign for us and we count ourselves as really fortunate that partners like McDonald Jones and the McCloy Group and the Hunter region are so supportive of our research,” she said.

“The reason that the research is important is that even though survival rates have grown significantly to 80 per cent of children surviving from their cancer, the outcomes for many remain devastating.

“The difficulty, I guess, in curing every child of cancer is that every child’s cancer is unique and different and that’s why some children don’t respond to standard cancer treatment. Our work is very focused on trying to find new targeted therapies, particularly for aggressive and rare cancers, so that we can get every child surviving.

“And though we do receive government funding, usually that government funding focuses on capital equipment and infrastructure.

“It’s only with the support of campaigns like this that we can enjoy the brilliant minds, the researchers that will actually use all of our technology to be able to find new treatments that will treat children more efficiently, but will also cause less damage than current therapies do.”

The completed Build for a Cure home will be put under the hammer by celebrity auctioneer Damien Cooley on Sunday, October 21. ■

To follow the build, find out how you can visit the finished house before it goes up for auction, or make a donation, visit www.buildforacure.org.au



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Kooragang Island

► Applications now open

The second round of funding for Orica’s 2018 Community Investment Program is now open, with up to \$65,000 in grants available to local community groups.

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Applications for this round of funding will close on **30 September**, with successful recipients notified in October.

