

'We'll never forget her'

Kate touched our hearts

Parents of children at Bear Cottage hospice are in awe of the Duchess's compassion

'They really empathised with us as parents'

For the Hannay family, Bear Cottage is a lifeline like no other. "It's the one place we can come and actually get some rest," says mum-of-three Lynne, whose 12-year-old daughter Isabella suffers from an extremely rare genetic disorder that causes her to have constant seizures. Isabella is unable to walk or talk or feed orally, and she has a profound intellectual disability, so she's completely dependent on Lynne and her husband Ethan. The Blue Mountains couple have two younger children - Caius, 10, and Owen, 3. They say the compassion and help from the staff at the purely donation-funded Bear Cottage is invaluable. When they heard Kate and William were paying them a visit, Lynne and Ethan were absolutely thrilled.

"Any publicity for Bear Cottage is just fantastic but the royals are the biggest visitors you could hope for," Ethan says. Mixing with other parents at the hospice provides special support for the couple and they sensed that Kate and William also related to the Bear Cottage mums and dads on that deeper level. Anyone would be touched by seeing sick children and, as new parents, the royal couple were particularly emotional during their visit - no doubt thinking about Prince George.



Kate was all smiles and grace with Isabella and her mum Lynne.

'The royals are the biggest visitors to Bear Cottage you could hope for'

"You got a real sense of compassion coming from both Kate and William," Lynne says. "They're lovely people and you could tell they actually wanted to be here." It was a visit the Hannay family will always cherish: "It was so exciting - a lovely day for us all."



The Hannays are grateful for the publicity the pair have brought to their godsend, Bear Cottage.

'It's something we'll cherish forever'

As a solo dad to three girls and the full-time carer for his 12-year-old daughter Maddison, Richard Lloyd barely gets any sleep. The inspirational Newcastle dad brings Maddison and her little sisters Courtney, 10, and Chloe, 8, to their "second home" twice a year for some rest and quality family time. Bear Cottage will always be a special place for the Lloyd family but meeting Kate and William was an experience they will remember forever. "The way they spoke to Maddison and the girls was so lovely," Richard says. "Their presence made everyone's faces light up."

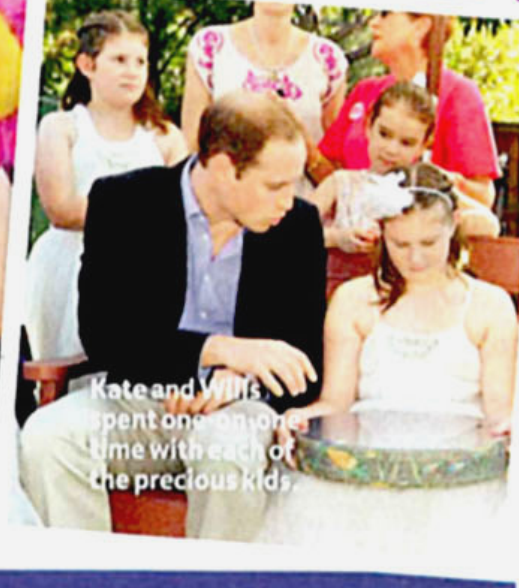
Richard was touched by how much time the couple took to inquire about Maddison, who suffers a brain defect that causes seizures. "William said the visit was completely Kate's idea and that the Duchess wanted to take over Diana's legacy." As he watched his kids cuddle up to the royals, Richard was struck by just how down to earth they were - and William even greeted him with a "g'day, mate". Richard hopes the royal visit to Bear Cottage will draw publicity to the facility. "We need to make people aware of Bear Cottage and the generosity it offers these children," he says.



The Duchess with Maddison's sister Courtney.



Maddison's dad Richard says Wills and Kate's presence "made everyone's faces light up".



Kate and William spent one-on-one time with each of the precious kids.

Bear Cottage

- Opened in 2001, the hospice has always been funded completely by community donations
 - Patients range from newborns to 19 years
 - More than \$3 million is needed to run the facility each year
 - Donated funds cover the cost of food and accommodation for kids and their parents, respite and end-of-life care, camps, and music and art therapy
 - In the past year, 220 kids and their families have been cared for at Bear Cottage
 - It's estimated that 5000 Aussie children are in need of palliative care
- To make a donation, go to bearcottage.chw.edu.au



Kate's rapport at Bear Cottage echoed Diana's affinity with children.

Kate's legacy

Like Princess Diana, Kate is incredibly compassionate - especially to kids. In fact, in her very first address as a member of the royal family, she highlighted the work of children's hospices. She's since become the patron of East Anglia's Children's Hospice in the UK and visited facilities in Malaysia and New Zealand. At Bear Cottage, Kate was noticeably moved by the children and their families she met. Yet the Duchess was at ease and her dedication to the cause was evident. In her speech to the staff and families at Bear Cottage, Kate emphasised the importance of hospices in Australia. "The needs of families requiring children's palliative care across the world are varied," she said. "Circumstances and environment can differ but the aim of those supporting them is the same - to offer the best and most loving care possible." Kate praised Bear Cottage for its contribution to the community. "The haven you have created here is inspirational, and there is so much that you can share with each other as you continue to support and nurture those in your care."

Words: Erin Holohan. Pictures: Yanni Aspadakis, Joe Stanoch, Getty Images.