

Katie, aka, Dr Saurus Rex (right) and me, clowning around

# THE BEST MEDICINE

## I keep smiles on the faces of young patients

**Libby Dobson, 39, Burnie, Tas.**

**R**eading the audition notice, I turned to my husband, Geoff.

"They're bringing Clown Doctors to Northern Tasmania," I said excitedly. "You'd be great at that," he replied.

While studying performing arts at university, I'd written a research paper on the Clown Doctors of Hobart.

I loved the work they did to raise the spirits of patients.

Now, The Humour Foundation were looking for a team to work at Burnie and Launceston hospitals.

I'd worked in radio and TV, but I loved the idea of using my performance skills to help others. So, in 2018, I went to the group audition.

They wanted to see how joyful and funny we were. I

had a few tricks up my sleeve. I juggled, played the ukulele, and did some magic tricks.

Passing with flying colours, I was selected to shadow some trained clown doctors in Launceston.

"With this job, you need to throw out the rule book," one of them said. "Be prepared for the unexpected!"

As I followed her around, I saw what she meant. In every room, there was a different energy. Some kids



I love bringing smiles to kids' faces

were anxiously waiting for procedures, and we would tell

jokes or sing a silly song to distract them.

In other rooms, the patients were babies, and it was the parents that needed cheering up.

For my 'clown-ternship' I did 50 rounds at Launceston hospital with trained clown doctors before I was finally qualified alongside a friend from uni named Katie.

We formed a duo and I took the name Dr Wing It, while Katie went with Dr Saurus Rex.

Every Thursday was Clown Day. Katie and I would bump into each other as we tried to enter one of the hospital rooms before blowing bubbles or serenading the patients with a funny duet.

I found the work incredibly rewarding.

In 2020, COVID restrictions meant we couldn't blow bubbles anymore and had to wear masks, so we had to think outside the box.

Standing at the kids'

windows, we performed skits with hand puppets and drew funny pictures on the glass.

Recently, there was a young boy, around seven, who had to go for surgery, and he was terribly anxious.

When they put his hospital gown on, he started crying.

As they wheeled him down the corridor to theatre, Katie and I followed blowing bubbles and playing music.

"Take this," I said, handing him a fly swat. "See how many bubbles you can hit."

He began to giggle as he swatted away. It was like a video game, and he had soon forgotten his worries.

"I can't thank you enough," his teary mum said to us.

"That's what we're here for," I replied.

My own children, Vera, nine, and Wendy, six, love that their mum is a clown, and I often try out my material with them first.

I'm very proud of my work as a clown doctor.

Being silly can make a big difference to someone just when they need it.

For more info visit, [humourfoundation.org.au](http://humourfoundation.org.au)



Me as Dr Wing It on the wards