



MEDIA RELEASE

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Help 'Fight Fear with Fun' for sick kids this Starlight Day

Australia's broadest-reaching children's charity, [Starlight Children's Foundation](#) (Starlight) hopes to raise \$1.1 million by the end of June to help make hospital a happy place for sick kids and their families. The fundraising appeal launches on Starlight Day (Tuesday 23 May) and money raised will help grow Starlight's vital hospital programs nationally.

Every minute of every day, a child is admitted to hospital in Australia. In that moment, they often receive a diagnosis which turns their world upside down. Suddenly, smiles disappear, and life is filled with hospitals, doctors, needles and pain. That's why Starlight exists – to bring happiness to sick kids when they need it most.

Funds raised will help support more than 28,000 sick kids across the country through Starlight's vital hospital programs, including [Captain Starlight](#), the [Starlight Express Rooms](#), and the newly launched digital platform [Planet Starlight](#).

These programs see Starlight partner with healthcare professionals to transform the hospital experience for sick kids to help them thrive, as well as also bringing sick kids and their families together to enjoy social connections and a sense of belonging within the hospital environment.

In the year ahead, Starlight expects just over 500 daily visits to Starlight Express Rooms and Captain Starlight will visit nearly 400 seriously ill children on wards every single day. Compared to just one year ago, this is more than twice the number of sick kids needing the fun, joy and laughter of Starlight.

Since its launch last November, Planet Starlight has provided sick kids in every hospital across Australia the opportunity to experience the fun of Captain Starlight anywhere, anytime through the click of a button! Planet Starlight is an interactive virtual platform designed to deliver engaging, positive distraction for sick kids in hospital, especially those being treated in general or regional hospitals where children's support services can be limited. The platform is accessible on any internet-connected device and has already been rolled out to 19 metro and regional hospitals, with another 20 nationwide planned by June.

Thea Smith and her family know firsthand how essential Starlight's programs are to sick kids and their families, having experienced them since her very first hospital admission.

Four-year-old Thea (pictured) has faced more scary procedures and invasive tests than most young kids. Her world was turned upside down when she was diagnosed with unilateral retinoblastoma (eye cancer) at just two-and-a-half years old and 10 days later, underwent surgery to remove her right eye.

"We were broken, fearful and overwhelmed when we first learned of Thea's diagnosis and I would hate to think what this experience would have been like without Captain Starlight."

"The Captains took on Thea's cancer just as fiercely as her treating medical team. They made what should have been a scary and traumatic time something fun that Thea looked forward to everyday. There is no price that can be put on that," said Thea's Mum, Maree Smith.



After 20 years at Starlight, CEO, Louise Baxter, understands the life-long impact of Starlight's programs on sick children like Thea.

"Starlight creates experiences to transform the healthcare experience to provide all important social connections for sick kids and their families who are often isolated due to their treatment and support the hospital teams who care for them.

"All this is only possible thanks to the generosity of the community. On Starlight Day we ask you to dig deep so we can continue to make hospitals a happy place for sick kids and their families. Because happiness in childhood truly matters."

To allow people to make an even greater impact this year, Starlight is re-introducing its "Double your Impact for Sick Kids" initiative" where donations made on Starlight Day (23 May) will be matched by its generous partners and philanthropists including Mineral Resources and the Tate Family Foundation.

Additionally, Starlight partners Cashrewards, Chevron and Repco Authorised Service will also be supporting the campaign nationally with fundraising across May.

For more information on Starlight Day or to donate, please visit www.starlight.org.au

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About Starlight Children's Foundation

Starlight Children's Foundation brightens the lives of seriously ill and hospitalised children and young people by replacing pain, fear and stress with fun, joy and laughter. Since its establishment in 1988, Starlight has expanded to become the broadest reaching children's charity in Australia and was awarded the number one most reputable children's charity in Reprtrak's 2022 Charity Reputation Index. There is a Starlight Express Room in every children's hospital across Australia and over 140 Captain Starlight's nationwide, who made 186 trips to remote communities in 2022. Starlight created over 1,303, 775 positive Starlight experiences for children, teenagers and their families in 2022. Last year, Starlight granted 507 wishes and this year, Starlight will grant its 13,000th Starlight Wish. www.starlight.org.au

