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2023

Programs Highlights



“**She associates the hospital, her treatment, her checkups, everything, as a super fun and positive experience that she would do all over again as long as Captain Starlight is there”**

Maree
Thea's mum

Thank you!

Thank you for your ongoing support. It is truly needed and very much appreciated. I am thrilled to share this update of what has been achieved.

2023 has been a year of continued growth. In fact, Starlight created over 1.9 million positive Starlight experiences, which is an increase of +48% compared to the previous year.

What we do is simple yet so powerful. Starlight brightens the lives of seriously ill children and young people in the darkest of times, bringing moments of fun, laughter, and joy when and where it is needed.

Starlight's recognition as a trusted partner in creating a more positive health care experience continues to grow as clinicians consider new and innovative ways to improve health outcomes.

It seems the more we do, the more we need to do.

Starlight's presence in hospitals continues to positively transform the hospital experience for sick kids, teens, and their families, as well as the healthcare professionals.

We have seen increased demand from clinicians for Starlight's Captains on Call program, where the joy of Captain Starlight is a powerful distraction from the pain of treatment. And our Livewire program continues to transform the lives of teens in hospital, including in mental health units where we provide social connection and create opportunities for peer support.

Starlight's Healthier Futures Initiative continues to play a key role in positively engaging children with healthcare in remote communities. Increasing healthcare participation rates is incredibly important for a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can experience improved health outcomes and be able to flourish.

A Starlight Wish is an important source of hope and positivity for sick kids, teens and their families. A Starlight Wish is granted every day, bringing much needed happiness and lasting memories for the entire family.

Our Starlight Express Rooms, in every children's hospital, could not be more different from the clinical nature of the wards. They provide a much-needed haven for sick kids and their families to connect and have fun. To forget where they are and why. This year we created some amazing interactive experiences in these spaces and welcomed celebrity guests such as Ed Sheeran, the Matildas and Bluey.



Planet Starlight is a virtual way for all sick kids to connect with Captain Starlight for fun, laughter and joy. This wonderful innovation is rolling out across Australia with kids able to join in anytime, anywhere.

Starlight Moments creates experiences to lift the spirits of families with children who are in at home in palliative care. Recognising the challenges faced by families in this situation, Starlight partners with Palliative Care teams creating moments of connection and joy which are unique for each child and family.

None of this is possible without the generosity of the community and people like you. We thank all who have supported Starlight in so many ways this year.

You may also like to know this year we launched our third Reconciliation Action Plan, which is a Stretch RAP. Starlight's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion is an important part of who we are and is entrenched in how we work every day. Separately we continue to be one of the few organisations accredited for Safeguarding Children & Young People.

We believe both of these achievements to be very important.

I hope you enjoy reading this year's highlights and the positive impact Starlight has created for sick kids in 2023.

Thank you for helping Starlight to brighten the lives of sick kids and teens, and for believing happiness in childhood truly matters.

Warmest wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Louise Baxter".

Louise Baxter, Starlight CEO



Six-year old Elijah is his Grandad Graham's best little mate. Living next door to each other, they've always shared a love of cricket and spend hours working on their Women's Big Bash fantasy cricket team.

When Elijah was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia just prior to starting school, the family's lives were turned upside down.

As they noticed him becoming unwell, his mum Kylie and dad Edan had taken Elijah to a series of GP appointments with an array of different symptoms, but had struggled to find a diagnosis. With further investigation needed, Elijah was sent for a blood test.

Edan recalls "I'd taken him in for a blood test, and the nurse asked me to call my wife and get her to come in. She wasn't making eye contact, so I said 'does my little boy have cancer' and she just put her hand on my shoulder and said 'I'm so sorry'. That was probably the hardest day of my life."

Elijah was admitted to hospital immediately, and suddenly his world was consumed by surgery, needles and chemotherapy.

Unable to have any visitors, Elijah was left isolated from family and friends at a time he should have been building new friendships and having fun at school. Besides his mum and dad, Elijah's only contact with the outside world was his FaceTime calls with Grandad. They would spend hours chatting about the Women's Big Bash and Elijah's favourite team, the Adelaide Strikers, and analysing cricket statistics together to build their fantasy cricket team.

Inside of the hospital, Elijah was super excited to discover the fun and joy of Captain Starlight.

"I was at my wits ends one day, and exhausted," recalls Kylie "and then we turned on the hospital TV and Starlight TV came on! He just instantly loved it!".

As soon as he was well enough Elijah would visit the Starlight Express Room as often as he could! The Captains could send Elijah into fits of laughter and he loved the silliness of their jokes.

"These kids are going through the

worst times of their lives, so just to be silly, to be a normal kid again, that's priceless" says Kylie.

While in hospital, Elijah learned he'd be able to plan his very own Starlight Wish. Immediately he told his mum "I want to see Tahlia McGrath play with the Adelaide Strikers!". When Elijah found out his Starlight Wish was going to come true, he said "don't joke now Mum, don't be tricking me..." He was so excited that his dreams were going to come true.

The whole family, including Grandad, was able to fly to Sydney to see the Strikers play. Elijah was the guest of honour of his hero Tahlia McGrath. Decked out in the team gear, his dreams came true as he hung out with the team, and even took home the coveted match ball!

SEEING ELIJAH SO EXCITED WAS SUCH A CIRCUIT BREAKER FOR US. IT REALLY LIFTED HIM. STARLIGHT BECAME A LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE. AND IT MADE AN ENORMOUS DIFFERENCE!

Graham, Elijah's Grandad



Elijah playing fantasy cricket with grandad

For Elijah, the incredible memories he made while spending a day with his cricketing heroes, together with his beloved Grandad, will last a lifetime.

Kylie and Edan are so thankful for the difference Starlight has made to their son's happiness. "This going to be with us for the rest of our lives", says Edan.

Captain Starlight sees an amazing transformation!

Captain Starlight was asked to visit the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), to see a four-year-old girl who was being woken from a coma. They visited several times during this period to sing a gentle lullaby or leave a message by the door for her.

A month later, Captain Starlight was visiting a different ward, and came across the same little girl! As soon as Captain Starlight walked in she jumped out of bed with joy, much to the shock of her parents! Her dad shared that every time his daughter had regained consciousness in the ICU over the last few weeks, she would ask for the "purple people" to come back, and all her drawings were always of the same two purple and yellow figures.

Discovering it was Captain Starlight his daughter had been asking for, he thanked them profusely for being a 'consistent positive presence in her life'. The girl then visited the Starlight Express Room every day as she recovered over the next couple of months in hospital. Each day Captain Starlight would give her a new mission, to which she would reply "challenge accepted!". The most amazing mission was when she re-learned to walk and took her first few steps in the Starlight Express Room!

On Starlight Day, Captain Starlight hosted a disco where she had her first dance with her mother and grandmother. Arm in arm she yelled,

**Look Captain Starlight
I'm STANDING,
I'm STANDING,
I'm DANCING,
I'm DANCING!"**

It was an amazing transformation from a very brave little girl.



Captain Mars reporting for duty!

Meet Captain Mars! The goodest of all good boys, Mars is a therapy dog who regularly accompanies Captain Starlight around the hospital, visiting kids too unwell to leave their room. With his very own cape and a neat bag of tricks, Captain Mars brightens the day for so many, none more so than the dedicated nurses who love when Mars visits to provide some much-needed positive distraction for kids on the hospital ward.



Oncology ward dances up a storm

Life for kids on the Oncology ward can be filled with painful and scary treatments. To help create some fun and happiness, Captain Starlight has come up with 'Dance Minute' - an opportunity for kids, families, nurses and doctors to let loose and laugh. Each day kids from the ward choose a different song and Captain Starlight hosts a dance off, to help everyone boogie their worries away. Guaranteed to bring out the biggest smiles, Dance Minute transforms the hospital experience to a more positive one for everyone on the ward.



Captains On Call enables specially trained Captain Starlights to partner with health care professionals and be on hand to support kids through scary and traumatic medical procedures. Operating in selected clinics around Australia, Captains on Call plays a vital role in keeping a child entertained, distracted and calm while the clinical team performs the procedure.

We partner with:

★ **Royal Children's Hospital Melbourne:**

- Retinoblastoma Clinic
- Cystic Fibrosis Clinic
- Fracture Clinic

★ **Centenary Hospital Canberra:**

- Fracture Clinic

★ **Queensland Children's Hospital:**

- Retinoblastoma Clinic
- Bone Marrow Transplant Clinic

★ **Perth Children's Hospital**

- Burns Clinic

★ **Women's & Children's Hospital SA**

- Burns Clinic
- Cystic Fibrosis Clinic

"Once again, having Captain Starlight in the Retinoblastoma Clinic there has a big positive impact on her. The eye drops are crucial, but are the one thing she still really worries about. If Captain Starlight is there it helps to keep her calm, and it all goes pretty smoothly."

- Mum

"I have never seen Luke smile in this clinic before, until Captain Starlight came to this clinic" - Doctor



"The Captains attending our Burns Clinic provide a positive distraction from the pain and made the hospital a positive place to be. The Captains provide important emotional support to caregivers which helps them to better cope with the procedure and be more present for their child. The nurses also consistently commented that the presence of the Captains made their job a lot easier, while also building a sense of community between families and staff."

- Linda Quinn,
Burns Advanced Nurse Consultant, Women & Children's Hospital

"Normally it's prods and pokes, and it's still that, but having Captain Starlight there really adds an additional element. It's great! She enjoys the songs and the mucking around. It's a challenging day for us parents also and I think as much as it helps our child, it helps us too. Not having to stress about entertaining her for those periods really helps to relax." - Mum

"Thanks for being here, you really are the difference between a good and bad clinic" - Mum

Captain Starlight goes on Rocket Rounds to reach out to children unable to leave their beds, in emergency departments, and waiting for outpatient appointments or surgery.

A new family tradition for Mary

Ten-year-old Mary was so excited to catch up with Captain Starlight during her visit to an Outpatients clinic.

It had been six months since she had been in hospital for an extended stay, but when asked what makes her happy, Mary still answered "Captain Starlight".

Mary excitedly told the Captains that ever since she first played a game of 'Fruit Charades' with them months earlier, it had become a cherished family tradition! Mary told Captain Starlight that having fun and learning new games with them had made a hugely positive impact on her spirits during a challenging time in hospital.

You guys are truly amazing. You have made a horrible and painful week really fun and enjoyable. I can't thank you enough!

★ -Mum-

I don't know what we would do if we didn't have the Starlight Express Room

-Mum-

100% of parents would recommend the Starlight Express Room to another family

Through our Healthier Futures Initiative, Starlight partners with healthcare teams to visit remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Through fun and games, Captain Starlight entertains and distracts kids during their health clinic visits, ensuring more kids access the vital health checks they need.



**Positive
distraction
creates
Captain
Strong**



One little girl was feeling particularly nervous, so Captain Starlight jumped straight in, playing fun games with her beforehand, and distracting her from her fear of needles. After playing with puppets and playdoh, the needle was the last thing on the girl's mind, as she confidently led Captain Starlight down the hospital corridor, talking about all the fun she'd just had.

The little girl soon shared that she'd 'hardly felt a thing'! Afterwards she played some more, and were thrilled to receive a Captain Starlight cape, naming herself 'Captain Strong'! With a Captain Starlight 'salute' and a wave, the girl left the clinic happy and smiling.

When Captain Starlight landed on Thursday Island to work with Dr Ben Reeves in the Rheumatic Heart clinic, a brand-new Captain was crowned.

Captain Starlight helps bring kids out of their shell

Captain Starlight was visiting a clinic in the community of Ali Curung, located in the heart of the Northern Territory, when a group of children from a nearby community arrived to see the doctors.

Two of the children were brothers, aged 10 and 8. The younger brother was usually very quiet, and his mum and school principal had both expressed concerns about his language development.

With the Allied Health team also visiting that day, the wait time to see a doctor was longer than expected. To keep the waiting kids engaged and entertained, Captain Starlight began playing a series of games that filled the waiting room with laughter! At one point, during a game of 'Zombie', the younger brother suddenly exclaimed to Captain Starlight, "You can't catch me!" with a cheeky grin on his face. The adults were shocked to hear such joy and enthusiasm!

This continued throughout the day, and when the two brothers were seen by the doctors, they were surprised to find the younger of the two was actually very chatty!

"Thanks so much Captains: in the years I've known this young fella that's the most I've ever heard him talk!" – School Principal



Growing the 3rd Birthday Party Fun

Following the success of Captain Starlight's 3rd Birthday Party event in Cherbourg in 2022, the rural health team from Charleville Queensland reached out to see if we could hold a similar event for them.

With the aim of focusing on the early detection of illness in children in remote communities, the day was an enormous success, and a true collaboration between the health services caring for Charleville and surrounding districts.

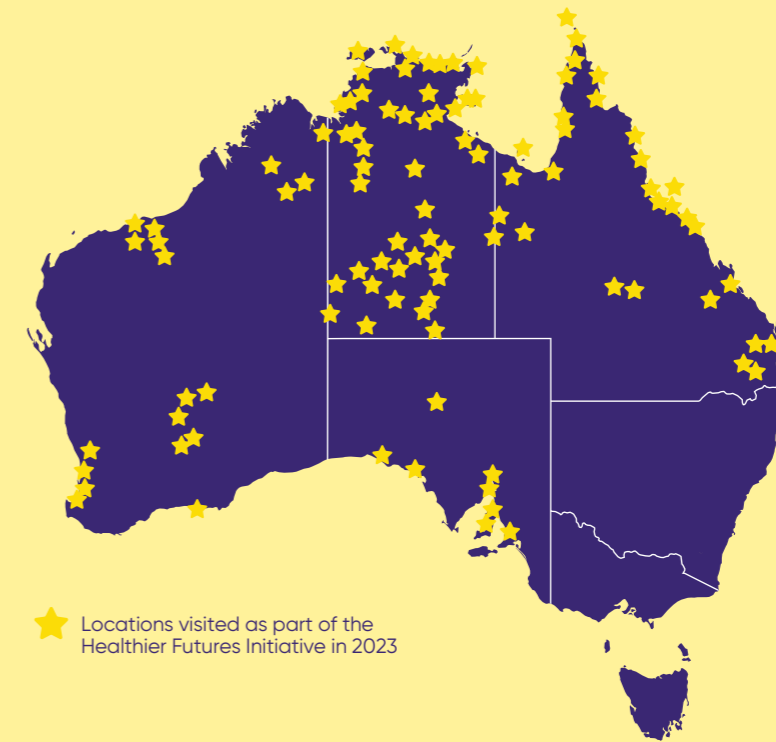


Each health discipline set up creative stalls, with the dental team turning an outdoor chair into a dental chair, and creating plenty of fun with balloons, toy animals suspended from the ceiling, and puppets! Captain Starlight was of course on hand to show the kids how easy it is to have a dental check!

The whole community pitched in to make the day a success. A visit from Captain Starlight's friend the Mayor, and a mini ambulance from the local ambulance team added to the fun of the day.



Starlight's Healthier Futures Initiative



★ Locations visited as part of the Healthier Futures Initiative in 2023

As clinical visits to remote communities can be infrequent it's vital the children needing care attend each time, otherwise it could be a long wait before doctors can see them again. Having Captain Starlight there to attract and entertain the kids means doctors know their patients in remote communities are getting the care they need.

A clinician shares just how great the impact of having Captain Starlight there to support kids in community really is, transforming and adding value to their healthcare experiences.

"It felt like, for the first time, we were giving to the children instead of taking something away from them. Taking their time, taking their samples, taking their attention, taking them out of class. This time, we felt like we were giving them something"

- Clinician, Telethon Kids Institute -



COOL CREATIVE PROJECTS

- led by Livewire.

Introducing Banksia 'Lane', a creative outlet designed for young people to express themselves in the Mental Health ward. Brought to life by our Livewire program, this project was inspired by Melbourne's many cool laneways, covered in wild and colourful graffiti artwork.

Specifically designed for young people, Livewire in hospital runs a range of skill-based workshops, one on one sessions and ward-based activities, providing opportunities for creativity, entertainment and fun.

"All of my experiences with Livewire have been incredibly fun, including collaborating with other peers to decorate the graffiti wall."

- Zoe, Patient

"Livewire is a program all young people look forward to from the beginning of their day. The graffiti wall on Banksia was super popular. The adolescents were able to express their creative self in a safe and structured way. This graffiti poster is displayed on the ward bringing positivity and a welcoming environment. From canvas drawings to Mario Kart and slime making, the young people are able to explore their interests. We constantly hear 'when are Livewire coming?' which is a testament to the amazing work the team does with all the young people on the ward."

- Claudia and Ellissa, Nurses

Lasting Connections made with Livewire

Livewire Facilitators met a young girl named Sienna on the wards and told her about the clay making workshops. That night she came down and with the clay the team had, started making rings. She made many sizes and ensured everyone at the workshop had one. She even asked Livewire if she could donate the smaller rings to the Starlight Express Room for Captain Starlight to hand out. Through the workshops Sienna met another patient named Mia. They formed a strong friendship as they learned they both had the same rare diagnosis. Now their parents have also exchanged contact details, all thanks to the connection of the evening workshops.



Team work makes the dream work at Livewire.

When Jen arrived in the Starlight Express Room one day with a brand-new addition to her beloved soft toy collection, there was only one thing missing...a name! The Livewire team jumped into action and asked Jen if she would like to seek the help of Livewire teens in the hospital to help name the new plush pup.

Jen excitedly agreed, so Livewire created a flyer and distributed it during ward rounds offering a seriously cool prize for the perfect name suggestion. Everyone was encouraged to tune into the Kahoot quiz to find out who had won. There was a flurry of activity! Patients worked together, and in some cases even included the thoughts of their families and friends, to submit their collective thoughts on a new name for the pup.

The Livewire team worked with Jen to help her sort through them all to find the perfect name. It was a difficult process but, in the end, the perfect name was found. The prize-winning name was...Bandit!

Jen's mum thanked Livewire for providing such a special way to name her toy, and Livewire thanked Jen for allowing everyone to be involved. Naming Jen's toy was such a special way to provide some much-needed positive distraction to other kids like her, and enable young people of all abilities to come together to focus on achieving a common goal.

Livewire teens channel their inner Banksy

"Reframed" is an upcoming exhibition, by Livewire

Inspired by a Banksy work – Show Me The Monet (a Monet painting altered to include a discarded shopping trolley), the Livewire team have been sourcing vintage paintings for Livewire patients in hospital to remix via collage, drawing and painting. There are no rules and no blank canvases!

Appealing to both long- and short-term patients, Livewire teens have been working hard to produce a series of reimagined artworks over the last six months. Importantly, the project has provided a vital sense of agency and achievement for the teens, which research shows is often missing for kids spending time in hospital.

“Livewire is honestly the best part of my day, as I can't leave my room...their visits are the best!”

– Liana, Patient



“Amazing! You guys are always so nice. It's nice to have people who make hospital feel more normal and chill. I have learnt a lot of new games and I find it to be the best part of my day, especially the evening workshop is something I look forward to.”

– Momina, Patient



Livewire teams up for an epic day

A collaboration between Livewire and the hospitals' Chronic Illness Peer Support program (ChIPS) created an amazing event featuring a feast of pizza and funny break-the-ice games. Group art activities resulted in some fabulous dinosaur-alien creations before Mario Kart Live. So much fun was had on a real live track built around the room with all the thrills and spills of a Mario tournament. Livewire also set up a 'Shrinky' art station for those wanting to get more creative, and the day finished off with a high energy match of Boomerang Fu! The day was a huge success, creating much needed peer connections that are often lacking for teens spending time in hospital.

“We were SO lucky to have our first in-person social event in almost 3 years with the help of the Livewire team. Livewire went above and beyond to ensure that every young person felt supported and included in the fun!”

– Rachel, ChIPS Coordinator

“Before this, I thought I couldn't do art because of my disability. I can't wait to do it more”

– Young person, ChIPS program



Positive distraction with Livewire Activity Packs

Special activity packs introduce Livewire to new adolescent patients and provide much needed distraction whilst in hospital. From art to sensory activities, and puzzles to summer fashion – there was certainly an activity for everyone to enjoy!



Travel Wish: A Sunshine Coast Holiday for Tom

18 years old

Eighteen-year-old Tom and his family hadn't been on a holiday together in over 15 years. Confined to a wheelchair with Cerebral Palsy and Epilepsy, arranging a holiday that suited Tom's needs was an overwhelming prospect for Tom's parents. More than anything, they wanted to take him to the beach for the very first time, to see the sand and sea, and splash about in the water like other kids his age. Luckily, our Wishgranting team knew just how to make that happen! With a purpose-built wheelchair accessible beach, featuring a path leading wheelchair users right down to the water, Noosa Beach on the beautiful Sunshine Coast was the perfect destination. Tom absolutely LOVED the water, as his mum knew he would. Their time on the beach made for an incredibly special time for the family, finally able to holiday and create some wonderful happy memories together. Tom also enjoyed the freedom of dining out in the wheelchair friendly cafes of Noosa, and his VIP experience at Australia Zoo was the icing on the cake of a truly unforgettable getaway.

"He was so happy the whole trip, enjoyed lots of milkshakes and juice, and it was just great to know we can take him away and things will go smoothly if we decide to do another holiday." - Tom's Mum, Sarah

Holy cow! A special wish for Sarah

16 years old

Coming from a cattle grazing family, Sarah hopes to one day become a rural vet and has always dreamed of owning a cow of her very own. So when Sarah was offered a Starlight Wish, having been treated for bone cancer since she was 9 years old, she chose just that! Sarah is now the proud owner of one of our more unique wish choices...a very adorable Highland Cow she can love and care for as her own!

"We are sure this is an unprecedented gift and is certain to bring much excitement and joy. We are so thankful for the generosity and support Starlight have extended to Sarah and our family!" - Jon, Sarah's Dad.



Cleo shops up a storm with celebrity Bec Harding

9 years old

Cleo and her older sisters are in love with all things fashion and beauty. The girls bonded while Cleo was having treatment for Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia by watching model and influencer Bec Harding's zoom workshops on fashion and make up. Bec became an inspiring figure for Cleo, the kind of person she would like to become as she gets older. For her Starlight wish, Cleo spent an amazing day with Bec soaking up styling and fashion tips while shopping up a storm at Chadstone the Fashion Capital. "Oh my gosh she had the most wonderful couple of days ever!!! We all did! Everyone was so lovely and absolutely made Cleo feel like a superstar! Bec and her whole team were so down to earth and absolutely spoilt Cleo!!"

"Thank you so much again everything was perfect"

Jordie, Cleo's mum



A 'Chopper' wish come true for Jaxon

7 years old

Jaxon has been a big fan of helicopters for many years. He knows more about how they work, and different flying techniques than any seven-year-old we know. He has downloaded every simulator app possible, has watched almost every "how to fly" YouTube video, and has even invented his very own rescue game where he is the pilot and rescues people to safety from the end



of his bed!! When Jaxon was admitted to hospital with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia he spent many months undergoing scary and painful treatments. One of the main things that helped Jaxon through was watching the rescue choppers coming in and taking off from the hospital helipad. Of course, his absolute dream Starlight Wish was always going to be helicopter related. Not only did he want a ride in a helicopter with his family, his wish included being able to help fly one himself!

"A real highlight was landing on the helipad at the hospital. Having the opportunity to fly the chopper himself, that is something he will never forget." - Mum

HAPPINESS *Island*



In July, we celebrated granting our 13,000th Starlight Wish! In partnership with Virgin Australia and Hamilton Island, the incredible Whitsundays haven was transformed into "Happiness Island" over one amazing weekend for ten Starlight families. From the moment the families arrived at the airport, they were treated as VIPs!

Whilst at Happiness Island, our families were treated to a trip to beautiful Whitehaven Beach where families could swim, join beach games, and help Captain Starlight build sandcastles.

“I really enjoyed connecting with the other families and sharing stories. That was very precious. So many beautiful new memories close in our hearts”
- Mum

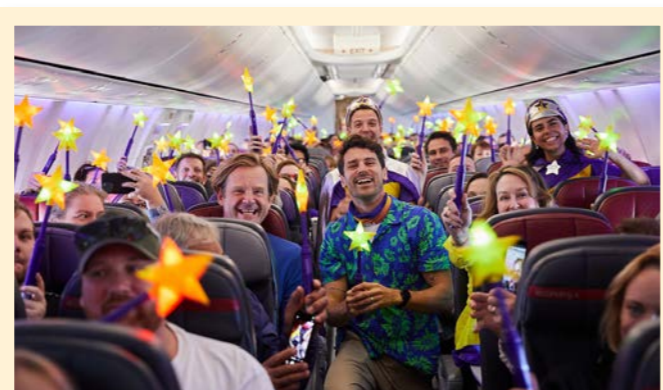
“This was the first time I've seen him dance... This is the first time my kids have seen fireworks, because they were close enough!”
- Mum



“I'm not really good at this stuff, but thank you so much. This was the best holiday of my life!”
-Wish Child

There was a highly competitive bowling and pizza night, complete with lots of laughter and cheering, and another night dedicated to connection, with special guests, dancing and surprise fireworks.

During their down time families could choose their own adventures. Many families chose to spend time together go-karting, playing mini-golf and even snorkelling for turtles!



“I'm so excited I can hardly speak! We are really honoured to be a part of this amazing once in a lifetime experience”
- Mum

“Our memories are simply magical”
- Mum

“Happiness Island was and will always be remembered by an amazing and memorable time. Surrounded by love and happiness what more can one ask for...A huge Thank you will never be enough, for you will never truly know how much this meant for all of us”
- Mum



Wish Week Gold Coast

We had double the fun with not one but two amazing Wish Weeks on the Gold Coast.



With each Wish Week trip made up of seven big days of activities, our fabulous families came together to take in all the wonder and excitement of Australia's favourite theme parks, Movie World, Sea World, and Dreamworld. Our families also gave surfing a go during the week, followed by a luxury picnic in the park.

Captain Starlight even landed their rocket ship on the Gold Coast for group games and activities for kids during the Welcome and Final Night Dinners!

Eight-year-old Jaxon chose Wish Week because he was excited about meeting everyone and having the opportunity to go to the Gold Coast. His parents were nervous about whether a group holiday was the right choice for them, fearing Jaxon's sister, Asta, might feel left out, but they had absolutely nothing to worry about! Right

from the first night Jaxon, Asta and their parents connected with other families at the Welcome Dinner and the whole family had a blast!

Jaxon's biggest smile of the week was reserved for when his parents completed a super important part of his Wish...and worked up the courage to go on a scary roller coaster (which he expertly filmed on Mums phone!)

At the final night dinner, Jaxon's family had made a card for every family with their contact details on them so they can stay in touch with their new friends.

After Wish Week, we received the following thank you from a parent:

“Thank you so much again for bringing so many smiles, laughter, and memories to our family and everyone. After everything all the families have been through... we can't put into words how much this has helped us... please send our thanks to everyone involved.”

And from Jaxon's mum, we received the following:

“To everyone involved in our wish week, thank you all so much! Words aren't enough. I'm so glad we decided to do wish week and the other families and children all having each other and making great friends.”

- Leonie, Jaxon's Mum

Starlight Moments create magic for the Chignell family

Starlight child Eadweard is 15, and the big brother to four younger siblings. They are a close family who enjoy spending time together, either out of the house when time and health permits, or at home engaging in family activities, with board games being a favourite family past time.

With the complexities of Eadweard's medical needs, it's often difficult to make plans with the entire family, and that's where Starlight Moments has stepped in to help create some lasting, special, memories.

Starlight Moments creates joyful and meaningful experiences for families with a child in palliative care. These experiences offer opportunities to come together as a

family, and help individual family members feel recognised and celebrated.

"The kids all love waiting for the package to arrive to see what has been planned. They know now that they can expect something special when they have a birthday coming up and it creates a sense of excitement leading up to their special day!"

– Sarah, Mum

Sarah said the arrival of their "Picnic Under the Stars" package is at the top of the list as one of their favourite Starlight Moments to date!

This pack included a beautiful picnic blanket, a gift card to their closest grocer, a bluetooth speaker (with a specially curated playlist!), playing cards and card game booklet. Of course there were fairy lights included and a star projector to really set the mood. Each member of the family also received a tote bag they could decorate with the enclosed fabric markers, and carry their favourite picnic items in.

At Home Library

An 'At Home Library' For a Mum and son who could no longer venture out to the library together.

Birthday in a Box

A 'Birthday in a Box' including party hats, party poppers, banners, games and cupcakes for a family with 3 birthdays in one week!

Smores Kit

A personalised 'Smores Kit' for a rural family who treasure family time around the campfire, roasting marshmallows.

Hug in a Box

A 'Hug in a Box' craft activity for siblings to 'draw a hug' and get one in return, for their brother who was spending a significant amount of time in hospital.

"I love how personal and creative this was for this family, thank you."

– Health Professional

"Thank you for creating a positive experience for this family during a really difficult time"

– Health Professional

D-MAN Cares for kids, even when he's sick.

Eight-year-old Daniel (or D-Man for short!) has a rare brain tumour. His life is filled with ongoing testing, treatment and hospitalisations.

When Daniel saw a poster promoting Starlight Super Swim at the hospital, he asked his dad Ray to help him take on the challenge.



Despite needing fluid drained from his tumour part-way through the challenge, after 28 days of swimming laps at 5am, Daniel and Ray absolutely smashed their goals!

Between them they swam over 54.5km, and raised an incredible \$17,570 for Starlight!!

A huge thank you to this amazing young man for thinking of others, even when he is sick.

"I want to raise money so that many other kids can feel happy when they go and visit the Starlight Express Rooms as well"

– Daniel



Signing up for the challenge, they picked \$2023 as their fundraising goal, and 40km combined for their distance.

Glowing interactive light show



This year, a magical piece of Planet Starlight landed in Adelaide!

The Sea of Light installation transformed the Starlight Express Room into an amazing interactive light show depicting the surface of Planet Starlight..

Our first inter-planetary traveller, ten-year-old Bailey, arrived with the intention of playing video games but couldn't resist the intrigue of Sea of Light. Equipped with a specially designed space torch to use while in his wheelchair, Bailey spent a solid 30 mins exploring, drawing, and tracing stencils before exclaiming it was "The coolest thing ever!"

This perfect piece of positive distraction ran for 7 days, and delivered over 200 immersive experiences for sick kids and their families.

Build-a-Bear fun for all

The team at 'Build-A-Bear' held a 'Bear Making Workshop' in hospital. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring kids and families together to enjoy social connections and feel a sense of belonging.

Each child was given a tiny soft red heart. They were asked to whisper a secret wish to the heart before putting it inside their bear, ready to be stitched up. One boy asked his Gran to kiss the heart, so it could be inside his bear forever!

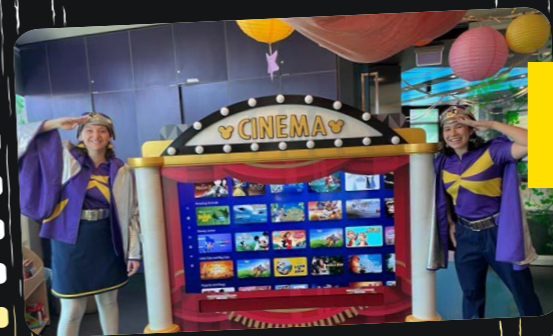
Next, the kids decorated a white shirt for their bear, and could choose to create a matching shirt for themselves, or to have a Captain's cape and hat for their bear.

Shirt decorations included drawings of families, sports teams, and messages of hope and resilience from kids supporting their siblings going through treatment. One boy

proudly showed us the shirt his older sister had created. It said, "I am super tough and I can beat anything, even cancer, because I am Lachy and I am awesome!"



At the end of the day the hospital was filled with new connections, and lots of smiling children holding their new best friends!



Disney Collaboration: Movie Moments Theatre

Starlight and Disney have rolled out the red carpet in Starlight Express Rooms around the country as a part of the Australian launch of Disney Movie Moments, which provides children's hospitals with special access to new movie titles from The Walt Disney Studios. This unique program offers opportunities for kids and their families to enjoy movies during a time they may not be able to visit movie theatres. This year Starlight Express Rooms have enjoyed special screenings including The Little Mermaid, Elementals, The Haunted Mansion, the 10-year anniversary of Frozen and Wish.

An amazing year of awesome activities!

We've had an action packed 2023 with 60 workshops running and many special guests visiting our Starlight Express Rooms across the country.

We had Dinosaur Puppets from 'Erth' visit almost every Starlight Express Room across the country, creating a magical experience for sick kids and families.



Also on a national level, Toonworld ran their fantastic cartooning and Claymation workshops, where kids were able to make their own movie scenes.

There were interactive science shows across the country with Mad about Science and Fizzics Education. We had Bricks4Kids workshops, where kids got to build rollercoasters and remote-control Lego trains, and 'Bear with Us' visited to help kids design their very own bear using fluid art techniques!



So many special opportunities for kids to have fun, participate in something new, and create some wonderful memories.

LEGO BUILD TO GIVE

Every Starlight Express Room across the country was transformed into a super fun LEGO construction site, as part of the 'LEGO Build to Give' initiative.

Children were greeted with high vis vests and hard hats on arrival to the Starlight Express Room, where they were gifted their own sets of LEGO or DUPLO to build with the help of Captain Starlight. The builds were epic! Kids created hearts, snowmen, whales, and all sorts of creative constructions.

The day was filled with incredible experiences, with Lego Santa making an appearance too. To top it all off, each room tuned into Planet Starlight LIVE to show off their builds, test their skills in build challenges and even receive a special message from BRICKMAN and HAMISH BLAKE themselves!



Sebastian working on his Lego build in the Starlight Express Room

It was the first time I've been able to leave Seb alone whilst he was in the hospital. This not only gave him back a little independence, it gave me a few hours to myself after weeks in hospital."

- Sebastian's Mum

Celebration

Starlight celebrated NAIDOC and National Reconciliation Weeks in hospitals around the country, honouring Indigenous culture, stories, artwork, and activities.

Captain Starlight hosted some great "Fun with Captain Starlight" livestreams involving:

- Australia's Deadliest Scientist Corey Tutt, who joined Captain Starlight with a reading from his latest hit "This Book Thinks Ya Deadly" in celebration of our Elders and NAIDOC Week, and
- 'Clothing the Gaps' who joined Captain Starlight live during National Reconciliation Week to talk about voicing our values through fashion. Kids and families then had fun designing their own t-shirt!

Indigenous artist Mali Isabel also dropped in to spend time with children and families in the hospital in celebration of NAIDOC week, and helped the community paint a huge mural for the hospital.

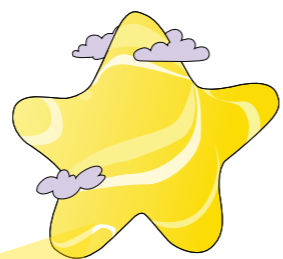


Nyumbar did a 'show and tell', sharing a variety of hunting and survival tools including boomerangs, coolamon, an Emu caller, Possum and Kangaroo skins. Nyumbar also demonstrated how ochre is made, with kids getting to join in on the process. Once prepared, the ochre was then used to paint kids' faces with dots, representing the ocean, and a straight line symbolising the mountains.



Kids and families in hospital had a visit from Blakdoll Sport and Fitness Mob, with one of the representatives sharing some wicked didgeridoo playing. All the kids enjoyed guessing what animal sounds the instrument was making, and one lucky child even had a turn playing!

Each day during National Reconciliation Week, Captain Starlight hosted story time in hospital, sharing lots of learning with kids and families about language, culture, and different Indigenous perspectives.



Captain Starlight beams live from Planet Starlight

We launched our brand new program - Planet Starlight! As a fully interactive online platform, Planet Starlight connects sick kids with Captain Starlight when they can't be there in person.

Planet Starlight reaches kids, wherever they are, with a fantastic 23 Livestreams a week. What's more, Captain Starlight is live and in the chat room all day, ready to entertain and play whenever a child wants to visit Planet Starlight.



"Weeeellll, Good Morning, Good Morning, Wake up from the bed, It's time for Rise and Shine.

With Captain Comet, what will we do, what will we do today?

Who knows? Maybe a book, or an activity, anything really! On Rise and Shine with Captain Comeeeettttt!!!!!!



"I was walking through the hospital yesterday and we had a very sick bored child. I had my handy QR code on my swipe card and it was great to get his parents to use the device and the live show was on, we then had a happy and entertained child."

- Tracie Coultie, Paediatric Nurse Consultant at Shoalhaven LHD (Wollongong)

"Planet Starlight has given rural children access to much needed distraction and child friendly play in a bland, yucky, boring, hospital setting. Planet starlight has allowed nursing staff to provide children with a valuable resource that is changing the way rural children can access services that are available to children in major children hospitals. Thank you Captain's, keep up the awesome work."

- Grady McNee, Paediatric Clinical Nurse Educator from Port Macquarie

OUR SHOWS



RISE AND SHINE

Created for younger children (5 and under). Join Captain Starlight for stories, songs, playtime, and some very silly jokes.



LAUGHTERNOON

Jokes and dares are daily activities on Planet Starlight! Tune in to make the crafty play of the day with Captain Starlight.



THE BIG GAME SHOW

Get your game face on because Captain Starlight has some truly awesome games to play. It's a different game every day, with games broadcasting both from Planet Starlight and from Starlight Express Rooms on Earth!



LUNAR LOUNGE

It's time for some super chill-axing fun in the Lunar Lounge. Unboxing, gameplay, reviews and so much more!

Surprise Packs are a special delivery designed for kids and teens most in need of positive distraction. Brightening the lives of seriously ill kids when they least expect it, our surprise “Starlight in a Pack” deliveries include items specially selected to bring a healthy dose of happiness directly to the home of the recipient. Each pack is fully customised, and designed to delight and entertain long after the surprise has been delivered.

Wishgranting & Moments Surprise Packs

Over 300 packs filled with amazing toys from Mattel were sent out to children in our Wishgranting and Moments programs just in time for the September school holidays. Filled with toys like Hot Wheels and Barbie, and games like Uno and Kerplunk for the whole family to enjoy, these packs were the perfect boredom busters for sick kids and their families.

Livewire Online Surprise Packs

Ready for another year of Livewire’s Big Build, over 300 Lego lighthouse packs were delivered to the homes of Livewire Online Members. Teens were invited to build this immense project together through a series of livestreams on the Livewire Online website. Once created, teens were invited to tell us more about the world they created. As a special surprise we used AI technology to send a mysterious letter to each participant from the characters in their lighthouse!

Planet Starlight Surprise Packs

150 packs of Lego were sent out by Amazon to regional hospitals to entertain kids staying on the hospital wards. With their Lego packs in front of them, kids could log on to Planet Starlight to join in the Lego building fun with other kids just like them. On Planet Starlight kids discovered a special Lego specific message from Captain Starlight inviting them to join in and sharing some other fun activities to keep them entertained.



“My daughter just received the most insanely amazing Lego set we have ever seen! She is beyond blown away – we all are – and I just wanted to say a huge thank you! I’m sure a number of people were involved. What an incredible moment, even the packaging was amazing. She is going to build this with her friend and it will be a highlight of the holidays.”

– Parent



Member feedback drives exciting updates

Livewire Online is a safe, supportive community supporting young people living with serious illness, disability or chronic health conditions.

After consulting with our current Livewire members, the new and improved Livewire Online Community Site is almost here!

Our members told us:

- They join Livewire to connect with other young people and make new friends
- They love how safe Livewire Online is compared to other ‘social media’ – they felt accepted and could be themselves
- They want an ‘instant and live interaction’ (they love Livestreams, chat, and live gaming!)
- They felt the ‘barrier to entry’ was too high: it took too long to join the community and felt too ‘mysterious’.

So, we’re keeping all the great things our Livewire members love, such as live chat, livestreaming, and live gaming, but we’re enhancing their capabilities and making them easier to use. The new website will also feature a brand-new experience, allowing members to interact with Livewire instantly before becoming a member, while still maintaining the safety and security of our Livewire community. We’re excited to share this new and improved experience early in 2024!

Summer Vibewire



Livewire members were invited to join us on a virtual road trip around Australia, creating a shared experience for those who can’t travel, are isolated, living remotely, or for a myriad of other reasons wished to explore and talk about the places they’ve already been to (or hope to visit) one day.

There were activities at every stop on the journey, and for our most committed virtual travellers, anyone who completed at least 12 of the 16 stops by the end of January received a portable projector!

This was put to VERY good use by a member who used their projector to access Livewire in a whole new way! “Last night I put chat on my ceiling – can’t wait to chill and watch TikTok on the roof this arvo” – Sophie, Livewire Online Member

Music played a huge part with members co-creating and co-hosting Summer Vibefest, Livewire’s very own music festival featuring musical performances and compositions.

As Summer Vibewire came to a close, we also said farewell to one of our long-term graduate mentors with a chat party celebration. It was a wonderful evening of reminiscing and merriment but also, the real talk that speaks to the value of Livewire.

“I will definitely miss the chats as well, LW got me through some really tough times with my health.”

Fiona, Livewire Mentor

Fun with Captain Starlight creates fun and engaging entertainment designed to positively distract kids in hospital, at home, or on the go! You can find them on popular online community platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, TikTok and more.



Australian Reptile Park Livestream

Captain Starlight travelled to the Australian Reptile Park to meet all creatures furry and scaly, hosted by Australian Geographic Australian Conservationist of the Year (2015), the incredible Tim Faulkner.

"Glad you can't smell this show!" (when playing a game about who's poo in the zoo?)

- Child



Eddie Perfect

International Broadway music star and local TV celebrity, Eddie Perfect joined Captain Starlight for some musical fun to sing songs and test their knowledge in some tricky quizzes.



Sticky Australia

Captain Starlight travelled to Sydney's Circular Quay to learn how to make lollies! We had a blast with David and the team at Sticky as we learnt how to put a star in a lolly.



Directed by Kids on the Tok

The latest trend on Tik Tok is Captain Starlight being directed by kids! With kids in hospital directing and choreographing routines for Captains to dance, it's a whole heap of fun for everyone.



Kids Movie Reviews

Captain Starlight creates movie reviews, sharing some fun facts about the latest and coolest movies! They also let you know if there are any scary bits that are coming up so kids can maybe close their eyes for that part!



Joss and Henry Lego Masters

Lego Master Winners Joss and Henry joined us for a Lego livestream, where kids sent in their own creations and had the Lego masters themselves judge them! Finn from Newcastle sent in the winning submission with this impressive Vampire Dog creation.



Jane Bunn

Jane Bunn read her new book "Storm" to a captivated audience on Fun with Captain Starlight. Jane also answered some tricky weather questions from the kids, and helped Captain Starlight and all the kids watching create their very own weather report, complete with witches and raining dogs!

A New Starlight Connection Space in the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children

After months of planning, it was time to transform the Starlight Connection Space at the Centenary Hospital for Women and Children ACT.

This new space provides flexibility for multiple uses including quiet zones for younger children and their families, art and creative activities, play therapy, gaming experiences, a parent's area and upgrades to the outdoor terrace.

"This is so exciting!! Everything looks incredible!"

Play therapist Larah Nicholls in ACT



A New Starlight Express Room at Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick



Starlight is thrilled to be part of the planning and delivery of the Sydney Children's Hospital / Minderoo Children's Comprehensive Cancer Centre (Project), an integrated facility at the Randwick Campus opening in 2025!

We are excited to confirm our commitment to building a brand new Starlight Express Room which will overlook the main public entrance and gathering space. Our new Starlight Express Room will be filled with an abundance of natural light and will boast a fabulous balcony complete with outdoor kitchen and discovery play area.

Emeritus Professor Leslie White AM
MBBS FRACP DSc MHA AFACHSM DUniv
President

Professor Michael Brydon,
OAM, MBBS, FRACP, M Paeds, Masters of Health Admin.
A/Dean, Rural Clinical School, University of Notre Dame Australia

Ms Sara Burrett
Executive Director Allied Health and Rehabilitation Services at Gold Coast Health.
BA, BSW, Grad Cert HSM.

Professor Trish Davidson AM
Paediatric Surgeon (ret'd) MB., ChB., FRCP, FRCS, FRACS, MD
Professor (Hon.) Paediatric Surgery University of Newcastle

Professor Valsamma Eapen MBBS., PhD., FRCPsych., FRANZCP
Chair, Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Discipline of Psychiatry & Mental Health/School of Clinical Medicine, UNSW Medicine & Health & Head, Academic Unit of Infant Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Services (AUCS) and Clinical Academic, South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD)

Associated Professor Joshua Francis BAppSc(MedSc) MBBS FRACP
Paediatric infectious diseases specialist, Royal Darwin Hospital; Principal Research Fellow, Menzies School of Health Research

Professor Harriet Hiscock MB BS, FRACP, MD, FAAHMS, GAICD
Group Leader, Health Services and Economics, Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital

Professor Tracey O'Brien (FRACP, MBA, LL.M, MBChB, BSc, GAICD)
NSW Chief Cancer Officer, CEO Cancer Institute NSW

Dr Matthew O'Meara MBBS FRACP
Paediatric Emergency Physician, Sydney Children's Hospital, Randwick

Professor Susan M Sawyer AM MBBS MD FRACP
Geoff and Helen Handbury Chair of Adolescent Health
Department of Paediatrics, The University of Melbourne;
Director, Centre for Adolescent Health
Royal Children's Hospital;
Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Adjunct Professor Frank Tracey
Health Service Chief Executive, Children's Health Queensland HHS

Dr Barbara Vernon BA Hons, PhD
CEO at Women's & Children's Healthcare Australasia

Professor Claire Wakefield PhD, MPH, BPsych (hons)
Discipline of Paediatrics, School of Clinical Medicine, UNSW Sydney

Dr Simon Wood MBBS (Syd) DipPaed (NSW) FACEM
Executive Director of Medical Services at WA Child and Adolescent Health Service

Safeguarding Children & Young People

Safeguarding Children and Young People is our most important responsibility to ensure we continue to provide a safe environment for children and young people

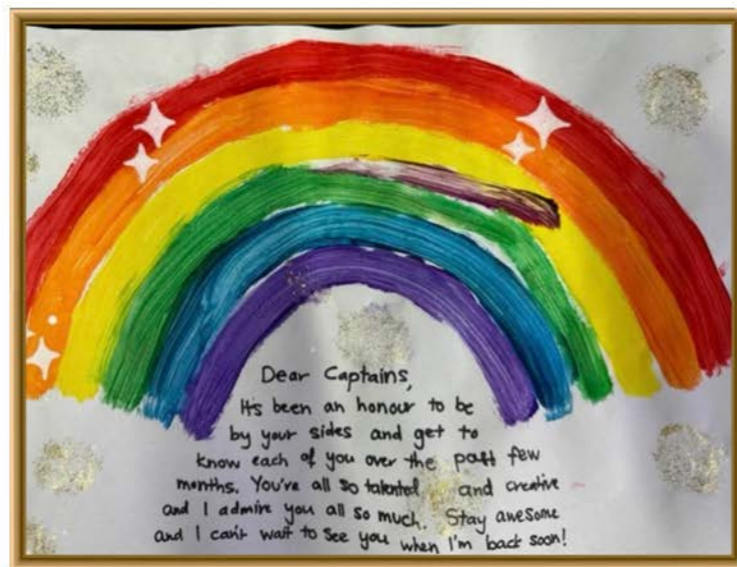




Kids Have Their Say In Healthcare

Starlight is involved in a research partnership with Children's Healthcare Australasia and UNSW's Sydney Partnership for Health, Education, Research and Enterprise (SPHERE). The "What Matters To You?" project aims to develop a set of feedback questions that can be used by children and young people to help develop a Patient Reported Experience Measure, or "PREM"). Our research methodology has the Captains making the child the 'expert' and getting them to share what is important to them when admitted to hospital in fun and child centred ways.

The initial findings from this multi-year project have already been presented internationally and are generating lots of excitement in the research world.



Thought Leadership

Conference Presentations

AES23: International Evaluation Conference

- 'Do as the young people do': Challenges and strategies to best listen to young people.

Australian Association for Adolescent Health Youth Health Conference

- Listening to learn – embedding the voice of young people in evaluation.
- Role-Playing Resilience: A Positive Action Framework for Youth-led Empowerment.
- Co-designing an online community – how listening to young people helped to rebuild the Livewire site.

World Congress of Positive Psychology

- Applying positive psychology in paediatric palliative care: Aligning PERMA principles with the Starlight Moments program.

Australasian Association for Theatre, Drama and Performance Studies Conference

- Positive Disruption and Performer Development: The Manifold Impact of the Starlight Children's Foundation.

Conference Posters

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Conference

- A Child's Identity Beyond their Illness: Supporting Children to have More Positive Healthcare Experiences.

ANZCHOG ASM (The Australian and New Zealand Children's Haematology/Oncology Group Annual Scientific Meeting)

- Captains on Call: Reducing pain and distress in children with retinoblastoma undergoing perioperative procedures.

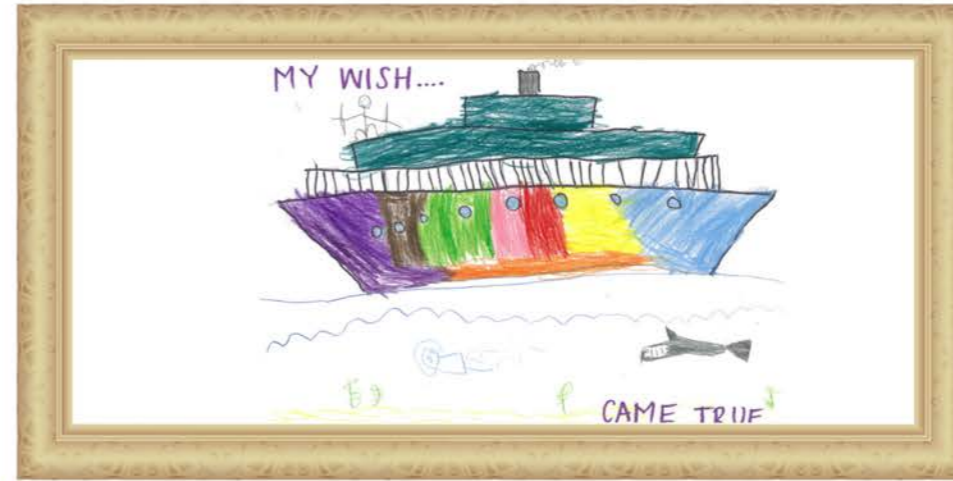
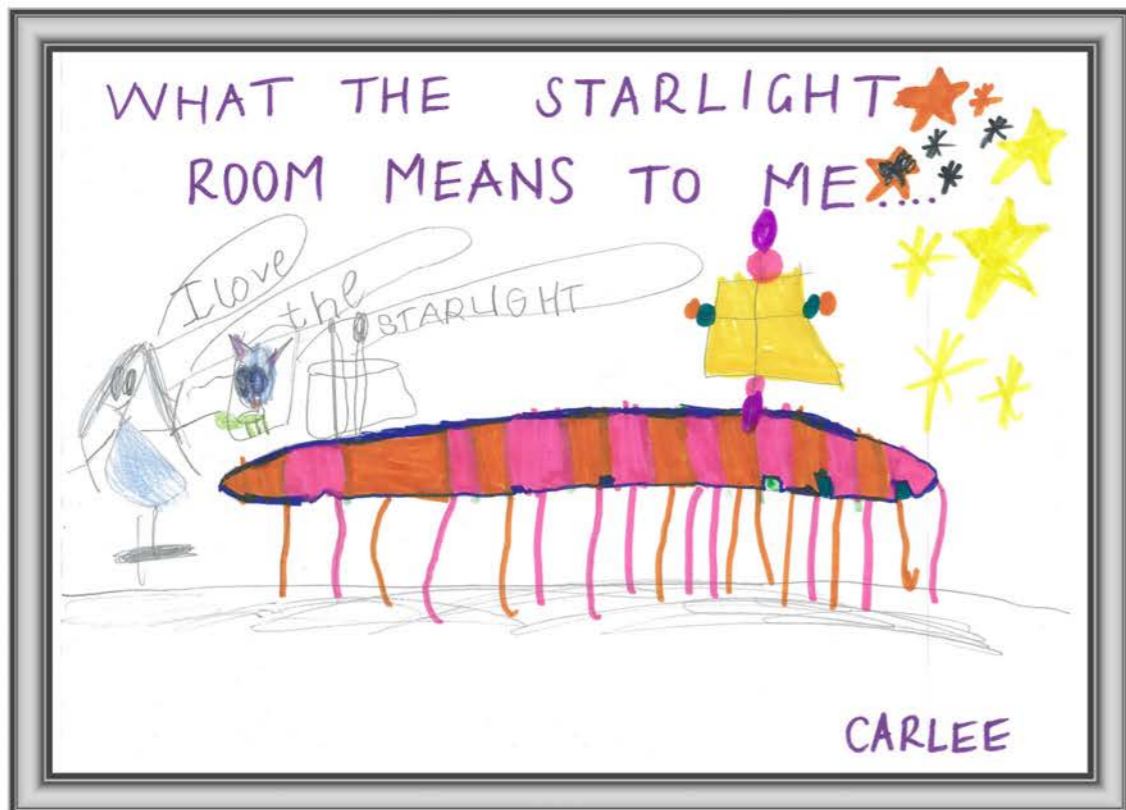
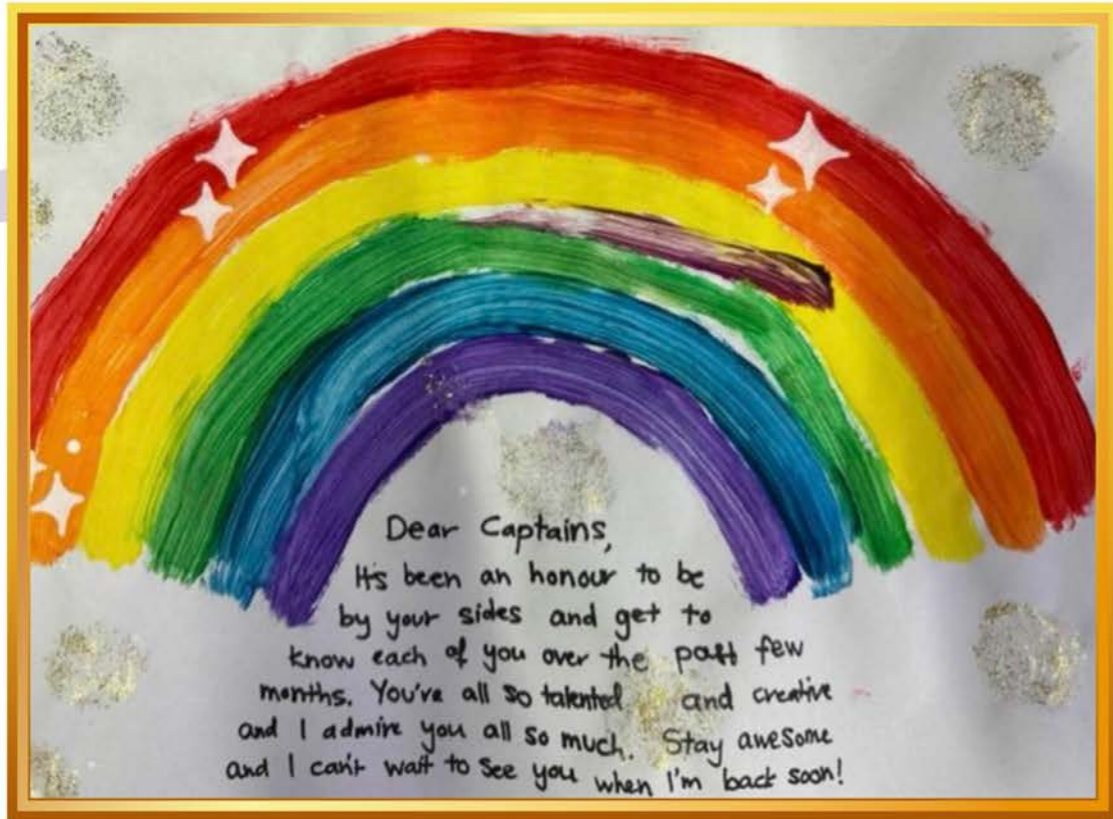
Oceanic Palliative Care Conference

- Investigating the role of positively psychology in a paediatric palliative care program.
- Moments that matter: Evaluating creative support and connection for paediatric palliative care families.

SPANZA (Society for Paediatric Anaesthesia in New Zealand and Australia)

- Thematic analysis of the impact of a pilot positive distraction intervention to support children with Retinoblastoma undergoing regular perioperative procedures at a tertiary children's hospital.

THANK YOU



Thank you so much for the work you do to make us all smile. For me the highlight of everyday was to have a smile and laugh with Livewire and enjoy the activities they bring. I honestly don't know what I would do without Livewire. You guys always cheered me up and always did/facilitated activities we want to do. I hope to see you guys again



Journal Publications

Signorelli, C., Robertson, E. G., Valentin, C., Alchin, J. E., & Treadgold, C. (2023). 'A Review of Creative Play Interventions to Improve Children's Hospital Experience and Wellbeing'. *Hospital pediatrics*, e2022006994. Advance online publication.

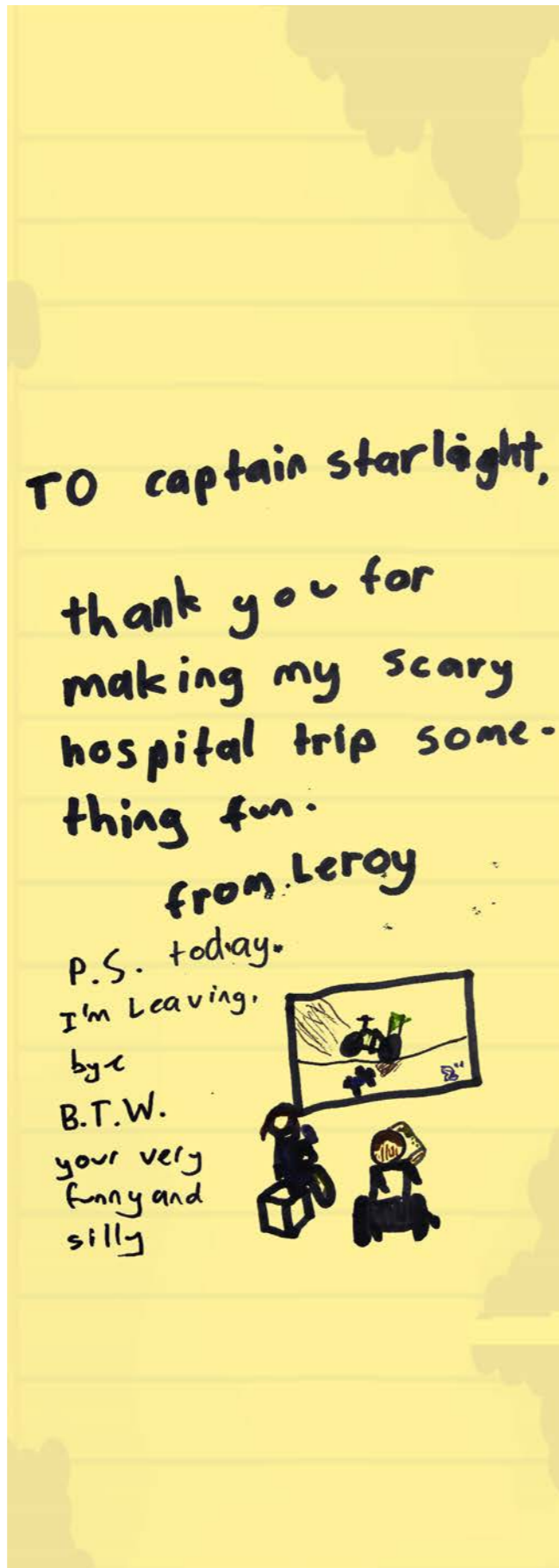
The review looked at 25 studies on non-medical, creative and play-based programs in hospitals. The findings supported the value of play-based interventions on children's wellbeing in hospital, particularly for reducing anxiety and pain.

Finlay-Jones, A., Sampson, R., Parkinson, A., Prentice, K., Bebbington, K., Treadgold, C., Frank, B., Bates, A., Freeman, J., Lucas, J., Dart, J., Davis, E., Lingam, Raghu., McKenzie, A. (2023). 'Priority setting for children and young people with chronic conditions and disabilities'. *Health Expectations*, 26: 1562-1574.

Priority setting for children and young people with chronic conditions and disabilities, published in *Health Expectations*, is a study using the perspectives of chronically ill and disabled children and young people, their caregivers, and professionals to identify the top 10 priorities for chronic conditions and disability research.

Parkinson, A., Mullan, B., Bebbington, K., Davis, E., Treadgold, C. & Finlay-Jones, A. (2023). 'Wellbeing and distress in young people with chronic conditions: how do positive psychology variables relate to mental health outcomes?' *Health Psychology and Behavioral Medicine*, 11(1).

This study aimed to determine the effects of positive psychology principles on wellbeing and distress outcomes in young people living with chronic health conditions. It found that optimism and self-efficacy were significant in shaping wellbeing, and optimism, self-compassion, and emotion regulation were significant in combating distress.



Celebrity spotting in the SERs!

So many celebrities and special guests visited our Starlight Express Rooms.

The one and only Ed Sheeran visited not one, but three of our Starlight Express Rooms and, thanks to the launch of Planet Starlight, we were able to beam his in-hospital concert live to sick kids all around the country.

We had sports stars galore too, with the likes of Olympian Emma Jeffcoat, surfing champion and Starlight Ambassador Mick Fanning, retired Sydney Swan Michael O'Loughlin, and members of the Fremantle Dockers, Brisbane Broncos and Melbourne Storm all making appearances.

Stars of the stage and screen were also keen to visit with 2023 Australian Idol winner Royston, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the lifeguards from Bondi Rescue, super smiley Emma Memma and everyone's favourite Aussie pups Bluey and Bingo all stopping by to say hello and entertain the kids!



1,942,695
Total Positive Experiences

253,061 **+** **416,346** **+** **1,273,288**
Transform Connect Entertain

120
Hospitals
visited by
**Captain
Starlight**

107,126
Starlight Express Room
Visits

187,568
Rocket Round
Experiences

384
Captain
Starlight
In Clinic Experiences

125,536
Planet
Starlight
Sessions

530
New
Livewire Members

47,754
Livewire
Experiences
In Hospital

38,983
Livewire Online
Login-ins

134
Remote
Communities
Visited by Captain Starlight

236
Days in
Remote
Communities

5,538
Healthier
Futures Initiative
Experiences

474
Wishes
Granted

100%
of Families Recommend a
Starlight Wish

451
Wish
Referrals
by Health Professionals

121
Moments
Families

200
Livewire
Mental Health
Unit Visits

10,832
Program
Volunteers
Hours



Starlight

Children's Foundation

starlight.org.au ✦ 1300 727 827