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13,000 reasons to celebrate! Starlight and Virgin Australia take flight to "Happiness Island" to celebrate Wishgranting milestone

[Starlight Children's Foundation](#) (Starlight) and [Virgin Australia](#) have transformed the heart of the Great Barrier Reef, [Hamilton Island](#), into "Happiness Island" to celebrate their monumental 13,000th Starlight Wish milestone.

To mark the special occasion, Starlight, Virgin Australia and Hamilton Island have brought together 10 sick kids and their families from across Australia for an unforgettable VIP weekend full of fun, laughter and special memories in one of Australia's most sought-after holiday destinations.

To kick off the festivities, families will be welcomed into the Virgin Australia lounge by Starlight Ambassadors, media personality Darryl Brohman and singer-songwriter Timomatic, before taking a fun-filled flight up to the picturesque Hamilton Island, where they will be warmly welcomed by the kids of Hamilton Island Community School.

The celebrations will continue with an official welcome dinner emceed by TV personality, Matty J, a surprise intimate performance from Kita Alexander and a spectacular fireworks display. The families will also be wowed by a personal video message from none other than Sir Richard Branson – Founder of Virgin Australia.

Throughout the weekend the Hamilton Island Community will provide the kids and families unforgettable experiences, including a thrilling Whitehaven cruise, a bowling and pizza night, and a sunny beach BBQ!

Enjoying the festivities will be [Starlight Wish recipients](#):

- 9y/o [Tyson](#) from Sydney with chronic granulomatous disease
- 9y/o [Xavier](#) from Brisbane who is in remission from stage 3 bladder cancer
- 11y/o [Talan](#) from Cairns who has rare perthes disease
- 11y/o [Abigail](#) from Adelaide with a congenital heart defect
- 12y/o [Landon](#) from Sydney who has chronic kidney disease
- 14y/o [Lorelei](#) from Southern Highlands NSW who had a life-saving kidney transplant
- 15y/o [Jack](#) from Sydney who was diagnosed with brain cancer
- 21y/o [Xander](#) from Hobart who has rare genetic disorder joubert syndrome
- 21y/o [Chyma](#) from Mt Isa who has rheumatic fever

Also receiving her wish for the very first time, is 15y/o [Lara](#) from Canberra, who was diagnosed with Osteosarcoma. Lara wished for a relaxing family holiday to Hamilton Island – which will be granted at "Happiness Island" as Starlight's official 13,000th Wish!



When sick kids' worlds are filled with hospital and treatment, a Starlight Wish is an incredible gift of happiness, giving sick kids something fun to look forward to and creating new memories to treasure forever.

With wishes ranging from theme park adventures, and celebrity meet and greets, to zookeeper experiences and performing at the Sydney Opera House, each family attending the weekend has been positively impacted by Starlight's Wishgranting program over the last ten years.

Starlight CEO Louise Baxter said: "At Starlight we recognise being sick shouldn't mean missing out on the happiness of childhood. Happiness is one of the strongest determinants to how we perform in education, employment and long-term healthy life behaviours."

"For 35 years, Starlight has been granting children their life-changing Starlight Wish. Since Virgin Australia came on-board, we have seen these important moments of happiness and connection truly soar – taking children and their families on holidays they couldn't otherwise experience. These adventures create lasting memories and provide a sense of hope when it is needed most" Louise Baxter said.

Travel and holiday wishes are the most popular wish choice, with almost half of Starlight Wishes involving air travel with official Wishgranting partner, Virgin Australia.

Virgin Australia Chief Marketing Officer, Libby Minogue said: "Since our partnership began in 2010, Virgin Australia has helped Starlight grant almost 3,000 wishes, flying kids to unforgettable experiences and holidays across the country," they said.

"Set against the incredible backdrop of Hamilton Island, the 13,000th Starlight Wish milestone will be one to remember. From a pre-flight experience in our Lounge, to games onboard and surprise mid-flight entertainment, it is an incredible privilege to make the journey even more wonderful for Starlight kids and their families."

Over the last decade, Hamilton Island has welcomed over 250 sick kids for their Starlight Wish. This year alone, 12 sick kids have travelled to Hamilton Island for their Starlight Wish, with at least 12 more booked to travel before the end of the year.

Hamilton Island CEO, Pete Brulisauer said: "We are delighted to see Hamilton Island play a role in the celebration of 13,000 Starlight Wishes. We are grateful for the opportunity to partner with Starlight and Virgin Australia to make a meaningful difference in the lives of these deserving kids. I'm also pleased to see the Hamilton Island Community come together to support this event, from our school and local fire brigade to the various businesses that operate on the island. A big thank you to AV Partners and Skylighter Fireworks for the services they provided in kind to make this a truly special event."

Starlight relies on corporate partnerships and the community to help fulfill life-changing Starlight Wishes. With over 700 sick kids still waiting for their Starlight Wish this year, the need for ongoing support continues.

To help fulfil more life-changing Starlight Wishes, 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 Reptrak's 2022 Charity Reputation Index. Starlight was also recently endorsed as a 2023 Great Place to Work. 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

About Virgin Australia Group

Founded in the Year 2000 by Sir Richard Branson, Virgin Australia is now one of the largest Australian airlines operating an extensive domestic network as well as short-haul international services, charter and cargo operations. The airline flies over a quarter of a million travellers to Hamilton Island every year, significantly more than any other airline, with 18 flights a week. It is also the only airline to fly to Hamilton Island direct from all three eastern seaboard ports: Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Virgin Australia is incredibly focused on providing wonderful travel experiences through award-winning service, optionality to fly the way you want to, and value with competitive airfare pricing. Three seating choices are offered when flying with Virgin Australia; Business Class, Economy X (extra leg room Economy) and Economy.

Virgin Australia's award-winning loyalty program, Velocity Frequent Flyer, boast more than 11.5 million members who can use their Points to redeem flights to over 500 destinations around the world through Virgin Australia and the airline's extensive list of international partner carriers, including Virgin Atlantic, Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, United Airlines and more. The program is also partnered with Flybuys (Coles, Coles Express, Bunnings and more), Myer and most recently Luxury Escapes, giving members more choice than ever before when earning and redeeming Points. www.virginaustralia.com

About Hamilton Island

Hamilton Island is one of Australia's most sought-after holiday destinations. Hamilton Island is the largest tourism operator in the Whitsundays and the only island in the Great Barrier Reef with its own commercial jet airport. Access to Hamilton Island is easy with direct flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane. On Hamilton Island, visitors can experience everything that is great about Australia –natural landscapes, calm turquoise waters, secluded beaches, beautiful weather, fascinating coral reefs and diverse flora and fauna. \$600M has been invested in creating a world-class experience on Hamilton Island which offers a range of hotel and self-catering accommodation options from modest to luxury, including the internationally acclaimed qualia resort, 20 casual and fine dining restaurant options, over 65 tours and activities, 2 spas and a 300+ berth marina. • Media contacts and image library: www.hamiltonisland.com.au/media-centre/

