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## Innovative Livewire program transforms hospital experience for seriously ill youth across Australia



The Starlight Children's Foundation and nib foundation today announced the roll out across the country of Livewire, Starlight's unique adolescent program, to six major paediatric hospitals.

Livewire is an innovative program that aims to have a long-term impact on the lives of hospitalised adolescents. By supporting wellbeing and resilience, it provides young people with a serious illness or chronic health condition a safe environment for social interaction, developing their creative interests and peer support.

Thanks to a \$1.5 million partnership with nib foundation, the program will be implemented at the following locations:

- Princess Margaret Hospital (WA)
- Royal Children's Hospital (VIC)
- The Children's Hospital at Westmead (NSW)
- Sydney Children's Hospital (NSW)
- Queensland Children's Hospital (QLD)
- John Hunter Hospital (NSW)

Starlight Children's Foundation CEO, Louise Baxter, said the Livewire program utilises creative activities and peer support to connect and empower this high need group.

*"Being a teenager is a challenging time when kids want to be just like everyone else. Seriously ill young people are very different to others their age with unique issues and challenges. They are often the most socially isolated youth," Mrs Baxter said.*

*"By transforming their experience of hospitalisation and treatment into a more positive experience, our aim is that they can move through their adolescence and become more resilient adults," she added.*

Led by professional facilitators during special adolescent-only evening sessions, the program features a range of creative activities including music, film-making and art. The activities also allow young people to leave the ward environment, connect with their peers, explore new interests and enhance their skills.

The expanded delivery of the innovative in-hospital program, which was successfully trialled at the Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth, will also help to address a growing demand for age-appropriate health and wellbeing programs.

*“Teenagers represent almost one in three of all admissions to paediatric hospitals, yet there are very few targeted programs that are designed to meet their needs,” Mrs Baxter said.*

*“With survival rates for most conditions increasing and the majority of young people with a serious or chronic health condition now surviving into adulthood, programs such as Livewire are becoming increasingly important,” she added.*

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler, said the foundation funded the rollout of Livewire due to its ability to positively impact the majority of Australia’s seriously ill youth.

*“These paediatric hospitals cover 90% of the Australian population and have more than 38,000 adolescent admissions every year,” Mr Lawler said.*

*“We are proud to be able to assist Starlight in delivering such an important program that will provide seriously ill youth with the opportunity to connect with others their own age and retain their sense of identity and individuality as they transition into adulthood.”*

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**Starlight CEO, Louise Baxter and nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler are available for interview.**

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