

Date 4 June 2012

Subject New hope for seriously ill youth in the Hunter with launch of *Livewire* hospital program

On Wednesday 6 June, The Starlight Children's Foundation's innovative adolescent program, *Livewire*, will be launched at the John Hunter Children's Hospital.

The Voice finalists, Taga Paa and Ben Bennett, rugby league legend, Paul Harragon and Newcastle Knights stars will join a number of Hunter-based local teenagers that will benefit from the program to celebrate the launch of the new unique program, which has been made possible thanks to a \$1.5 million grant from nib foundation to support *Livewire* for three years.

Developed in Perth, *Livewire* is a unique program that aims to provide long-term benefits for hospitalised adolescents with a serious illness or chronic health condition by supporting their well being and resilience.

Starlight's CEO, Louise Baxter, said Newcastle's John Hunter Children's Hospital was selected to launch the national rollout due to the important role it plays in providing health services to adolescents across the Hunter, New England and Mid North Coast.

"In 2011, the John Hunter Children's Hospital supported around 8,000 paediatric admissions. Adolescents are a growing group with special requirements and represented 30% of paediatric admissions," Mrs Baxter said.

"Bringing *Livewire* to this hospital, as well as the other five major paediatric hospitals, ensures we will reach the most seriously ill young people in Australia," she added.

Livewire utilises creative activities and peer support that allows adolescents to find a balance in their lives, despite time in hospital or time away from school, and encourages social connection, friendship and community.

"Being a teenager is a challenging time, even more so for seriously ill young people who face very different issues. They are often the most socially isolated youths," Mrs Baxter said.

"By transforming their experience of hospitalisation and treatment into a more positive one, our aim is that they can successfully transition to become more resilient young 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.

nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler, said as a Hunter-based charitable organisation, supporting health and wellbeing programs in the Hunter, such as *Livewire* is at the heart of nib foundation's charter.

"With survival rates among seriously ill adolescents increasing for most conditions, programs such as *Livewire* are becoming increasingly important," Mr Lawler said.

"We are delighted to partner with Starlight to help deliver such an important program that will assist seriously ill teenagers get through what is a difficult time in their lives," he added.

-ENDS-

Photo/Film Opportunity:

Livewire will be launched at 11.30am on Wednesday 6 June 2012 at the Starlight Room, John Hunter Children's Hospital.

The Voice finalists, Taga Paa and Ben Bennett, Paul Harragon and current Newcastle Knights stars will take part in fun, creative activities with *Livewire* teenagers.

Starlight CEO, Louise Baxter and nib foundation Chairman, Terry Lawler will be available for interview.



For more information contact:

Christine Lion
Starlight Children's Foundation
E: christine.lion@starlight.org.au
P: 02 8425 5913
M: 0431 503 326
livewire.org.au

Renea Jaeger
nib foundation
E: r.jaeger@nib.com.au
P: 02 4914 1739
M: 0402 376 835
nibfoundation.com.au