



**Date** 25 July 2012

**Subject** New hope for seriously ill teenagers in Melbourne with launch of *Livewire* hospital program

On Tuesday 25 July, the Starlight Children's Foundation's innovative adolescent program, *Livewire*, will be launched at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Hospital staff will join a number of teenagers to celebrate the launch of this unique program, which has been made possible thanks to a \$1.5 million grant from the nib foundation to support Livewire for 3 years.

Livewire aims to provide long-term benefits for hospitalised adolescents with a serious illness or chronic health condition, by providing a safe environment of peer support to support their wellbeing and resilience.

Starlight's CEO, Louise Baxter, said "In 2011, the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne supported around 34,970 total inpatient admissions. Adolescents are a growing group with special requirements and represented 28% of admissions."

"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 to allow 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, Keith Lynch, said supporting health and wellbeing programs in Australia, 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," he added.

"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 9.30am on Tuesday 31 July 2012 at the Starlight Express Room, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Starlight CEO, Louise Baxter and nib foundation Chairman, Keith Lynch will be available for interview.

**For more information contact:**

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