



**2019-2020 Federal Budget Submission**

# **Healthier Futures Initiative**



**Healthier  
Futures  
Initiative**



**Starlight**  
children's foundation



# Starlight Children's Foundation

Starlight's mission is to brighten the lives of seriously ill children.

Established in 1988, Starlight works closely with health professionals to develop programs that have a positive impact on seriously ill children and adolescents. Originally a wishgranting organisation, Starlight is now recognised as an integral part of the Australian paediatric healthcare system. Starlight is Australia's broadest reaching children's charity, creating over 575,000 Starlight experiences last year.

Starlight's hospital and community programs are founded in positive psychology, where factors such as social connection, play, fun and resilience are recognised for the vital role they play in wellbeing, both in childhood and for life.

Starlight has a permanent physical presence in every children's hospital in Australia. In 2018 Starlight funded the delivery of \$20.5M of programs into the public paediatric health system and another \$1.958M into Starlight's Healthier Futures Initiative supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities.

**235**  
DAYS IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES

ZZ

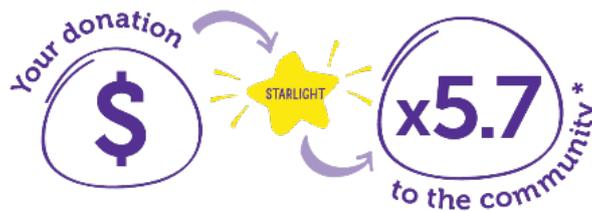


**161**  
CAPTAIN STARLIGHTS

**145** trips made by Captain Starlight  
TO 86 REMOTE COMMUNITIES

**The 5<sup>th</sup> MOST REPUTABLE BRAND IN AUSTRALIA**  
Annual Australian Reputation Index (RepTrak®)

**14,916**  
EXPERIENCES PROVIDED TO CHILDREN IN REMOTE COMMUNITIES



\* the SROI was updated in 2018 by Starlight and reviewed by PWC





## Recommendation

To invest in the expansion of Starlight's Healthier Futures Initiative, an innovative partnership with clinical teams that improves health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by increasing participation in health care and improving the treatment experience.

## Context

The gap between health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is a sad reality. The greatest opportunity to close this gap is to improve child health and well-being, as what happens in childhood lasts a lifetime.

Early treatment and detection help to avoid the development of chronic health conditions that have a significant and life-long impact on health, education and employment.

Access to healthcare plays a vital role in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Access, however, is more than just holding clinics. To be effective access needs to ensure children attend clinics *and* have a positive healthcare experience when they are there.

That's where the Healthier Futures Initiative steps in. Working in partnership with clinicians, this innovative model ensures clinics are child friendly and positive experiences. Creating more positive experiences increases attendance, participation and ensures a child-friendly environment that positively influences attitudes to healthcare.

The Healthier Futures Initiative sees professional performers, trained in positive distraction in healthcare, accompany clinical teams. The inclusion of these skilled performers creates child-friendly environments through play, fun, music and other engaging activities.

Independent research by the Lowitja Institute found the impact of the Healthier Futures Initiative to include:

- Improved attendance at clinics;
- Parents and children staying longer at clinics;
- Easier management of clinics;
- The creation of a more welcoming environment which is less institutional and more family-centred; and
- Support of existing health promotion programs.



## Case Study: Starlight and Earbus Partnership

### The Partnership

The Earbus Foundation of Western Australia provides comprehensive ear health screening and treatment to Aboriginal children in schools, day-cares, kindergartens and playgroups. The Earbus outreach team consists of Nurses, GPs, Audiologists and ENTs who work to reduce the incidence and impact of middle ear disease in Aboriginal children and young people.

Since 2015 Captain Starlight has joined Earbus outreach ear health clinics. Captain Starlight entertains children one-on-one while they are undergoing treatment, organise group activities for children who are waiting to be seen by the healthcare team and put on whole-of-school shows.

### The Impact

Since the launch of the partnership, Earbus has reported a reduction in referrals for Otitis Media (54% to 22.4%, Goldfields; 52% to 15.4%, Pilbara). In both regions, hearing loss has decreased (17% to 11.6%, Goldfields; 22% to 7.96%, Pilbara) and **the level of Chronic Ear Disease fell below the WHO benchmark for the first time.**

### Additional Benefits

A 2018 evaluation of the partnership found further benefits to include:

#### Reduced anxiety

Children who have initially been anxious and concerned about procedures feel comfortable and safe with Captain Starlight present.

*"When Starlight started coming with us, we noticed a massive difference in our ease of seeing the children. The children were calm, and that was a relief for us because Starlight could fetch and entertain them while we concentrated on doing a procedure as quickly and comfortably as we could."*

#### Increased trust in the healthcare system

With risk of transgenerational distrust of the healthcare system, the consistent and safe presence of Captain Starlight has been credited with improved relationships.

#### Increased operational efficiency

This was reported consistently by both Earbus and the schools and communities visited. Being able to utilise the Captains to gather, entertain and return the children to class, ensures a smooth flow to the clinic, freeing the Earbus team to focus on their clinical activities.

*"The Captains provide excellent support, particularly if we have to do prolonged treatments, such as a 20-minute wax softening process where they need to sit still. If the Captains aren't there it means we must sit with the child for 20 minutes, but with Starlight they read a book to the child, do magic tricks or just chat. They fill those gaps and allow our team to continue working flat out."*



*"I remember one time we went to a playgroup where there were usually three or four children. But this day 17 kids turned up because Starlight was there. I didn't even know there were that many kids in the community! We definitely see more engagement when the Captains are there."*

One team member noted that when Earbus first began offering services, they would see an average of 35-40 children a day:

*"But with Starlight Captains we are able to double those numbers. Our record, set in November 2017, was 85 children in one day. That's with audiology, a GP nurse practitioner, admin support and myself screening and triaging, doing the treatments and the Captains filling in the gaps, making sure the kids are not lost in the treatment pathway, keeping them entertained and taking them back to class."*

### Connecting community and hospital

The relationship and connection between the Captains and the children extended beyond their regional communities. When children travelled for medical treatment to Perth, their familiarity with Starlight and the Captains was viewed as a positive connection that reduced stress and anxiety in the unfamiliar hospital environment.





## Healthier Futures Initiative

To meet growing national demand for the Healthier Futures Initiative, Starlight requires \$9.97 million funding over the next three years to:

- Reach additional communities in the Northern Territory, particularly in Central Australia;
- Expand reach in Western Australia;
- Establish the Healthier Futures Initiative in Queensland and South Australia;
- Attend specialist health initiatives, such as the School of Menzies Rheumatic Heart Disease screening project; and
- Increase employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Healthier Futures Initiative.

### Program Funding 2019 – 2021

The total funding required is \$9.79 million over 3 years (2019 \$2.338M; 2020 \$3.201M; 2021 \$4.252M), which will deliver in excess of \$55M of value to the community.<sup>1</sup>

Region	Commencing 2019	Required in 2021
Western Australia	\$168,076	\$351,279
Northern Territory	\$1,648,578	\$1,796,950
Queensland	\$54,027	\$1,177,605
South Australia	\$26,077	\$52,155
Health Collaborations <i>e.g. Pedrino Study undertaken by Menzies School of Health Research into Rheumatic Heart Disease</i>	\$147,173	\$241,519
Capacity building initiatives	\$294,000	\$632,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2.338M</b>	<b>\$4.252M</b>

<sup>1</sup> Based on the 2018 SROI undertaken by PWC which found Starlight programs returned \$5.70 in community value for every \$1 invested.