



Starlight
Children's
Foundation
Australia

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Mr Sean Triner
Mr
447 Ridgewood Rd
ROSEBANK NSW 2480



002962

99999904

Mr Sean Triner
Mr
447 Ridgewood Rd
ROSEBANK NSW 2480

7 May 2009

Dear Mr Triner

This is the most important letter I have ever written.

Starlight is facing an unprecedented financial crisis which is forcing me and my team to make decisions I never imagined we would face just twelve months ago. Decisions that will impact the lives of thousands of sick Australian children this year.

Even when I wrote to supporters at the end of March, I was not sure what action we would need to take to keep the essential core of Starlight's work going. I knew I might have to cut services, but things are tougher than I imagined.

Without your help, the cuts I will be forced to make will need to be even more drastic than they are already.

Thank you for your commitment and support in the past. But I need your help right now.

By making your most generous gift ever, you can help me to keep essential services open. You have been there for Starlight before, and I would like to thank you again. But this time I need to ask for an extra special gift of \$25, \$50 or even \$100 by 25 May.

I need to raise a further \$2,000,000 this financial year just to cover the shortfall. It sounds a lot, but my experience shows that it

Brightening the lives of seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families across Australia.

Address Level 3, 80 Chandos Street Naremburn NSW 2065 PO Box 101 St Leonards NSW 1590

Phone 02 9437 4311 OR 1300 727 827 **Fax** 02 9437 4634 **Web** starlight.org.au

Luminaries Kieren Perkins AO Neil Perry

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ACN 003 627 183 ABN 80 931 522 157



2
can be met by you, and people like you, making donations of around \$25, \$50 or even \$100.

I am dedicated to doing everything within my power to raise this money, but I need your help too.

You may well have seen various media coverage about the problems we are facing. The last ten years has been a great period of growth for Starlight. The impact this has had on Australian kids in hospital has been phenomenal.

Back in 1999 our resources allowed us to help only 60,000 children per year with Wishes and our Captain Starlight program in four Starlight Express Rooms. Within 10 years, thanks to you and people like you, this grew to nearly 500,000 children, young people and their families with more Wishes, a new Starlight Escapes program, more Captain Starlights in seven Starlight Express Rooms and 10 Starlight Express Vans.

David and his mum, Michelle, kindly offered to share their story. I still don't know how I would cope if one of my children looked up at me and told me 'Mummy, I can't do this any more.'

"It is my very firm belief that Starlight helped save the life of my then 13 year old son David, who was being treated for Burkitts Lymphoma. It is the fastest growing tumour and to treat it required particularly aggressive chemotherapy over many long turbulent months.

"David was a hero with the courageous way he handled a cocktail of drugs that would have killed any adult. But after several months where we watched him decline, his resolve to keep on toughing it out wilted, and he cried and cried for a whole day.

"There was nothing that I could do to encourage or cajole him on. Finally, he declared 'Mummy, I can't do this any more. All they keep doing is giving me drugs that are making me sicker and sicker. I feel so sick I want to die. I want you to take me home to die.'

"I was desperate. We had to somehow get him through this. The doctor suggested David take a shower and think about his decision for five minutes.

"We arranged for Captain Starlight to miraculously appear and she suggested David watch her play the in-house bingo game on Starlight TV. He did that for five minutes. And then one of the Fun Centres was wheeled to his bedside and he spent ten minutes looking at a game. And little by little he got through the worst moments of his life."

Those fifteen minutes enabled David to rethink his decision and David's mum is quite sure these important fifteen minutes saved his life.

David successfully completed his chemotherapy under the expertise of the fabulous team at the hospital, and just as importantly, with

Starlight's support.

3

He has now overcome his illness.

The growth since 1999 has allowed us to reach eight times the number of children like David. But a big part of our growth was made possible by the generosity of many companies and events. It is these sources of funding that have been hit hard already by the global financial crisis.

I don't want Starlight to have to drastically reduce services and turn away nearly 200,000 little Australian children like David.

I am sure that you, as someone who has already shown how much you care about helping these children, don't want Starlight to be turning them away either.

Although we are not alone in facing a decline in income - many other charities are feeling the pinch - Starlight is being hit especially hard.

Partly because of our reliance upon certain sources of funding that have been particularly vulnerable to the current economic climate, like companies and events, and because we don't receive Government funding for our core services.

But also because of the desire of our supporters, staff, volunteers and hospital colleagues to help as many Australian children and their families as possible. Whilst other charities have invested income, there are so many more children we need to reach and providing programs for them has been our immediate focus.

Please help me to keep services up and running right now with a donation of \$25, \$50 or even \$100 by 25 May.

Working with my team in fundraising and marketing we have pulled together a five point plan to ensure a steady stream of income with less vulnerability to world events.

This plan requires us to diversify our funding sources - at the moment we have too high a proportion from a small number of events, companies and activities.

This does not mean we will give any less commitment to these vital sources - but it does mean we need to put more resources and effort into other fundraising programs such as membership, monthly giving and bequests.

But to get there I don't want to have to turn away nearly 200,000 children in 2009 who can't get access to the services they deserve.

Which is why I need your help, right now.

I don't want to turn away children like Amelia, who you may recall was only four years old when her life was turned upside-down by a rare auto-immune condition.

Each day saw her tiny body being injected with high dose steroids and each month a ten hour infusion of antibodies to stop her immune system attacking her brain, leaving her with little energy. You can

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imagine how seriously ill the condition made her.

Starlight gave the family a reprieve from the pain and heartache by granting Amelia a Starlight Wish. Amelia is a keen painter and wanted to work with a famous Australian artist and have her artwork hung in the State Gallery! Amelia was very excited about her wish and became animated, friendly and outgoing - a far cry from how she felt during treatment.

Amelia's mum Kara said of the experience, "She had the most wonderful day of her life. The whole Starlight experience has restored her confidence, and brought joy back to her life. All of our lives."

There are many success stories like this, thanks to your support. I couldn't bear it if we were not able to make these children's dreams come true.

I have an important meeting with the board of Starlight and key staff on 25 May. In that meeting we are going to have a good, hard look at our income, our funding strategy and our financial position.

In that meeting we must make decisions that will directly affect our ability to help children like David and Amelia.

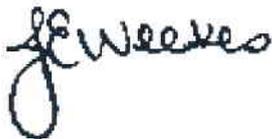
If you are able to make an extra special donation right now, thank you. But if you intend to make a gift but won't be able to meet that deadline, then please call me directly on (02) 8425 5905 or email me, j.weekes@starlight.org.au so that I can take your pledge into account in our meeting.

I won't know which services I can save for 2009 until I know how much extra I can raise from my crisis appeal - of which this letter is a fundamental part.

But I promise you I will do everything in my power to save as many as possible. And I promise to make your donation count, and commit to updating you on how we spend any extra funds raised as well as keeping you informed on what is happening as Starlight pulls through this crisis.

Thank you very much for reading this letter. Please, help Starlight to help seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families through what is going to be a tough year for all.

Sincerely,



Jill Weekes
Chief Executive - Starlight Children's Foundation

PS. At the 25 May meeting my colleagues and I may have to make the toughest decisions of our lives. But with your help, those decisions could be much easier, and the outcome much rosier for the thousands of Australian children and their families depending on us. Please help me to keep services up and running right now by grabbing a pen, filling in the enclosed form and posting it along with a donation of \$25, \$50, even an extra special gift of \$100, by 25 May.

Child charity forced to cut back

CATHY O'LEARY
MEDICAL EDITOR

A major charity that helps seriously ill children has blamed the economic downturn for a decision to slash its services, including cutting the hours of a respite room at Princess Margaret Hospital and halving the number of wishes it grants to sick children.

Source: The Western Australian

Charity hit by fall in funding

by denise s. cahill

THE Starlight Children's Foundation will attempt to cut costs in various areas before it considers reducing hours at the Starlight Express and Club Adelaide rooms at Princess Margaret Hospital in Subiaco.

and value of donations received. "This is particularly as these families are more than ever already suffering because one parent has their job to care for during treatment.

"We know our program is a significant difference to the

Kids' wish cuts

THE Starlight Children's Foundation will slash the number of wishes it grants to seriously ill children this year by more than half as the economic crisis takes its toll. Participating a drop of at least \$2 million this year, the foundation says service cuts may be avoided. The charity usually grants wishes to more than 400 children each year.

Source: The Mercury

Starlight to cut hospital services

By MIRIAM STEFFENS

THE Starlight Children's Foundation has been forced to cut services to seriously ill children as charities across Australia brace for a shortfall in corporate funding.

Source: The Age

DOWNTURN Charities hit

FEWER sick children will have their wishes granted as the global economic downturn hits charities. The Starlight Children's Foundation, which helps seriously ill children, has been forced to halve the number of wishes it grants.

State manager Cathy Murphree said the charity has started cutting hours at seven of its 10 entertainment rooms in pediatric hospitals across Australia, as well as ending a program of visiting children in regional hospitals. It said it would also have to scale back its wish-granting program and offer fewer escape events for young

Source: The Advertiser

Finance woes a blow to sick kids

Dying wishes denied

Janelle Miles
MEDICAL REPORTER

THE Starlight Children's Foundation will slash the number of wishes it grants to seriously ill children this year by more than half as the economic crisis takes its toll on charities.

Source: Courier Mail

months of the year. "It's been a complete turnaround," Ms Dart said. "I think the economic crisis is affecting everyday people. I think it has

Charity tries to keep rooms

THE Starlight Children's Foundation will slash the number of wishes it grants to seriously ill children this year by more than half as the economic crisis takes its toll on charities.

Source: Stirling Times

Donate and help sick kids

Source: Wellington Times

Starlight cuts kid visits

By NICOLE FERRIE

THE economic downturn has prompted one of Australia's best-loved children's charities to cancel its trips to Bendigo.

As a result, Starlight had no option but to withdraw most Starlight Express Van trips in Victoria.

Bendigo Health fund-raising manager Glona Turner said it was unfortunate for children in the Loddon Mallee region that Starlight visits would not continue.

Source: Bendigo Advertiser

Source: North Coast Times Community



My public statement

Having to close essential services that have such a big impact on children and their families is the worst possible decision someone in my position has to face. I wanted to make sure that Starlight supporters knew what was happening so I issued a public statement. Here is a shorter version.

How has the economic downturn impacted Starlight?

At the end of last year Starlight saw a tightening of community investment budgets with business partners as a result of the global economic crisis. We have also seen a decline in the average donation value from individuals as people become more nervous about the Australian economy. This has continued into the first three months of 2009 and we have been forced to reduce overheads by 24% year on year.

If current trends continue we anticipate Starlight's income may decline by \$2 million or more during 2009. As a result we now have no choice but to reduce or withdraw some of our services currently supporting seriously ill children and their families.

What services will be affected?

If we cannot generate sufficient funds Starlight will be forced to:

Cut the opening hours of Starlight Express Rooms in seven major paediatric hospitals throughout Australia. Hosted by Captain Starlight these rooms provide a haven for 37,000 hospitalised children and their families every month.

Withdraw the Starlight Express Van program from New South Wales, Victoria, ACT and South Australia, meaning **Captain Starlight cannot bring relief and laughter** to 26,445 children living with serious illness or disability in hospitals in many metro and regional areas.

Reduce the number of Starlight Wishes that can be granted each year. Currently 439 wishes are waiting to be granted and the decline in funding means at this stage only 200 of these can be completed in 2009.

Scale back the Starlight Escapes Program that support families by providing respite activities from the pressures of living with serious illness and disability. Last year 1,182 families were given the opportunity to enjoy Starlight Escapes and this cut back will mean reducing Escape activities by 38%.

This is particularly concerning as these families need our support at this time more than ever before. Many families in this situation already suffer financial hardship, as often one parent has to leave their job to care for the sick child during treatment. This means their partner is juggling the other siblings, organising the home and managing their work, putting

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enormous pressure on the whole family. The economic downturn means that Starlight's support for these families is more essential than ever before.

Why has Starlight been impacted?

Most charities have been affected.

We have been particularly impacted because we rely solely on the generosity of individuals, community groups, corporate sponsors and volunteers to exist. We don't receive government funding for our core services so if our fundraising declines we feel the effect immediately. Some charities receive as much as 80% of their funds from the government so in that sense tax payers have already contributed their support to those causes.

As soon as we saw the recession was affecting our donations to such a level, the Board took the sound decision to make significant cuts to overall costs, including staff and services. These cutbacks have been planned to keep the maximum number of services running.

How has the Victorian Bushfire Appeal affected Starlight?

Well this has been a really terrible tragedy which has naturally attracted the compassionate support of many Australians and companies - and deservedly so.

We don't actually think the Victorian Bushfire Appeal will mean our loyal donors stop giving to Starlight, but we have seen some corporate donations and community fundraising being diverted to the appeal so we think this, coupled with the economy, will impact our income in the short term.

Our real fear is the global recession because it seems unlikely to ease in the near or medium future.

Does the impact of the economy mean Starlight's future is Jeopardised?

No, that's not the case.

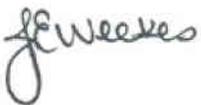
We have acted responsibly by looking at which services we need to cut in order to ensure Starlight can continue, so that we can protect this cause for the long term.

How can I help as a Starlight supporter?

I need you to help by please donating to this appeal. It will make a huge impact on our ability to provide services right now.

Thank you for all your support for Starlight children and families. Please be assured of the team's continued commitment for the future.

Sincerely,



Jill Weekes
Chief Executive, Starlight Children's Foundation



Starlight Express Rooms

Jasmina's Story

The Starlight Express Room is a haven for hospitalised children and their families where Captain Starlight shares lots of fun and magic.

Six years ago, a three year old girl named Jasmina had a serious stroke as a result of complications after surgery to remove a brain tumour - one of the youngest children in Australia to do so. Over the next few months, as Jasmina recovered, she became a regular visitor to the Starlight Express Room. Over the past six years Jasmina has undergone numerous major brain operations. When Jasmina is told that she has to undergo another operation her response is, "Yes! That means I get to go to Starlight again!"

Each time Jasmina undergoes surgery she stays in hospital for many weeks. On one occasion she had to learn to walk again. Last time Jasmina was in hospital her mother Gini told us that Jasmina's recovery goal was to be able to walk to the Starlight Express Room by the end of the week.

Later that week, we got a big surprise when Jasmina walked herself through the Starlight Express Room's door. She spent the rest of the day enjoying the craft, games and playing with Captain Starlight. She said, "You guys can call me Captain Wobbly!"

Last year Captain Starlight entertained over 480,000 visitors across Starlight's seven Starlight Express Rooms.

As a result of the \$2 million shortfall, Starlight Express Room opening hours will be slashed. It means that this year over 100,000 children may not be able to visit the Starlight Express Room during their time in hospital.

Starlight Express Vans



Hope's Story

Captain Starlight hits the road in Starlight Express Vans lifting the spirits of children in remote, regional and smaller metropolitan hospitals.

Hope had been in the children's ward for two weeks. She hadn't spoken with anyone and wasn't responding to the normal activities that the play therapist was putting forward to her. She was only six years old and no one had seen a smile from her since she had been admitted.

A visit from Captain Starlight changed all of that - it took quite a bit of effort and ingenuity but Captain Starlight didn't give up until she had brought a smile to the face of this little girl who had forgotten how or why to use one.

Within no time Hope was chatting to Captain Starlight about her brothers and her favourite animals, and about how she likes to search for frogs in the garden at her cousin's house. She was starting to once again sound just like a happy six-year-old girl.

Last year Captain Starlight made over 1,750 hospital visits, travelling over 200,000km to entertain more than 30,190 children like Hope.

Cuts to Starlight Express Van services in the next year mean that more than 26,000 children will miss out due to services being withdrawn from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia and ACT.

Starlight Escapes

Jordan's Story

By providing simple, unexpected entertainment, Starlight Escapes bring families together.

12 year old Jordan spends weeks at a time away from his family and friends at Princess Margaret Hospital in Perth, receiving treatment for his severely burnt arms and legs in a painful process that stretches and re-grows his skin as his bones grow. These visits become more frequent as he hits a growth spurt and will continue for years to come. It has been a difficult time for Jordan recently as other boys at school are making him increasingly aware of his scars and he is getting very self-conscious around girls.

When Jordan and his family attended a Dolphin Watching Starlight Escape in his home town of Bunbury, the Captain Starlights included him in their show, asking him to tell them what to do and what's cool in Bunbury. Soon his confidence was brimming over.

The impact this had for Jordan was one thing but the experience was equally as powerful for his parents. They were able to see their son come out of his shell in a social environment like the normal happy 12 year old they have with them at home, who usually disappears when they are out in public.

Last year we provided 1,167 families with escape experiences.



Now, we face a 38% cutback in the number of Starlight Escapes held - meaning that hundreds of families may miss out on the opportunity to step away from the pressures of day to day life and enjoy their time together.

Starlight Wishgranting

Tyran's Story

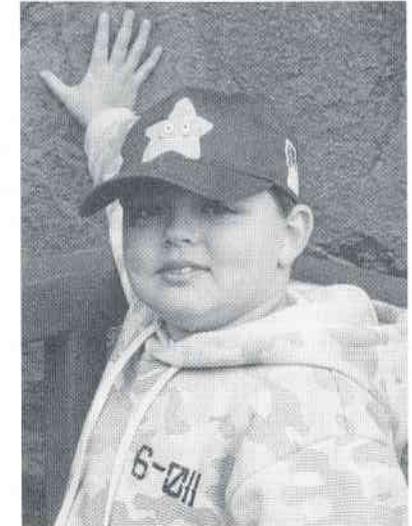
A Starlight Wish is like a dream come true for a seriously ill child, and an experience that stays with them and their families forever.

Nine year old Tyran was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy or DMD when he first started school. Tyran will soon be in a wheelchair and slowly have his life taken away. He will be lucky to reach 20 years old.

Last year Tyran was given the opportunity for his Starlight Wish to be granted. His wish was something that touched not only his family but the entire team at Starlight. Tyran's wish was simple, to walk up to Uluru and touch it while he could still walk.

The highlight of the wish was the moment when Tyran did in fact touch Uluru for the first time. He had told the other guests on the tour that this

Currently, 439 children are waiting to have their Starlight Wish granted. Unless our financial situation improves, less than half of these seriously ill children will be given the opportunity this year for their own life changing experience.



was his Starlight Wish and what the trip meant to him - so they all stood back to let him have his first moments alone - everyone watching with tears in their eyes to see the look on Tyran's face.

In 2008 we granted wishes to 371 children.

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Starlight Children's Foundation
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Sam Sample
123 Sample Street
SAMPLEVILLE NSW 1234

Emergency appeal update.
I have had an incredible response in reaction to my letter from a few weeks ago however I am still short of my target. At our meeting on 25 May, it was decided to extend the deadline in order to allow as many of our supporters as possible the opportunity to make a donation that will have a critical impact. **If you haven't already, please send your gift of \$25 by 30 June.**

11 June 2009

Dear Sam,

This is the most important letter I have ever written.

Starlight is facing an unprecedented financial crisis which is forcing me and my team to make decisions I never imagined we would face just twelve months ago. Decisions that will impact the lives of thousands of sick Australian children this year.

Even when I wrote to supporters at the end of March, I was not sure what action we would need to take to keep the essential core of Starlight's work going. I knew I might have to cut services, but things are tougher than I imagined.

Without your help, the cuts I will be forced to make will need to be even more drastic than they are already.

Thank you for your commitment and support in the past. But I need your help right now.

By making your most generous gift ever, you can help me to keep essential services open. You have been there for Starlight before, and I would like to thank you again. But this time I need to ask for an extra special gift of \$25, \$40 or even \$60 by ~~25 May~~ 30 June - still time for your tax deduction.

I need to raise a further \$2,000,000 this financial year just to cover the shortfall. It sounds a lot, but my experience shows that it can be met by you, and people like you, making donations of around \$25, \$40 or even \$60.

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"David was a hero with the courageous way he handled a cocktail of drugs that would have killed any adult. But after several months where we watched him decline, his resolve to keep on toughing it out wilted, and he cried and cried for a whole day.

"There was nothing that I could do to encourage or cajole him on. Finally, he declared 'Mummy, I can't do this any more. All they keep doing is giving me drugs that are making me sicker and sicker. I feel so sick I want to die. I want you to take me home to die.'

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"We arranged for Captain Starlight to miraculously appear and she suggested David watch her play the in-house bingo game on Starlight TV. He did that for five minutes. And then one of the Fun Centres was wheeled to his bedside and he spent ten minutes looking at a game. And little by little he got through the worst moments of his life."

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number of children like David. But a big part of our growth was made possible by the generosity of many companies and events. It is these funds that have been hit hard already by the global financial crisis.

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Amelia's mum Kara said of the experience, "She had the most wonderful day of her life. The whole Starlight experience has restored her confidence, and brought joy back to her life. All of our lives."

There are many success stories like this, thanks to your support. I couldn't bear it if we were not able to make these children's dreams come true.

I will be meeting with key staff and the board of Starlight again on 30 June. In that meeting we are going to have another good, hard look at our financial position.

In that meeting we must make final decisions that will directly affect our ability to help children like David and Amelia.

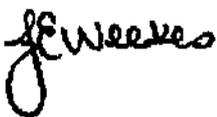
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Thank you very much for reading this letter. Please, help Starlight to help seriously ill and hospitalised children and their families through what is going to be a tough year for all.

Sincerely,



Jill Weekes
Chief Executive - Starlight Children's Foundation

~~PS. At the 25 May meeting my colleagues and I may have to make the toughest decisions of our lives.~~ My colleagues and I have already met, but some key decisions have been postponed until the end of the financial year. With your help, those decisions could be much easier, and the outcome much rosier for the thousands of Australian children and their families depending on us. Please help me to keep services running right now by grabbing a pen, filling in the form below and posting it along with a donation of \$25, \$40, even an extra special gift of \$60, by 30 June.

PPS. If you have already sent a gift and our letters have crossed in the post, then I thank you most sincerely for your kind donation.