

Starlight Express Rooms

Making an Impact –
Social Return on Investment





Starlight

Starlight is the only children's charity with a permanent physical presence in every major paediatric hospital within Australia.

Starlight's in-hospital programs are delivered every day to children around the country, lifting their spirits, building resilience and forming an integral part of their total care.

While health professionals focus on treating illness, Starlight programs support the child by providing distraction from the pain and stress of their treatments, providing the opportunity to simply be a child. All Starlight programs aim to support well-being and resilience, and are underpinned by the World Health Organisations social model of health.

Starlight programs can help children to maintain that important sense of self, providing transformational experiences that bring happiness, joy and hope to the whole family. Pain, loneliness and isolation can sometimes dominate the lives of children in hospital, and they often miss out on normal experiences that healthy children take for granted.

Starlight Express Rooms are located in Australia's major paediatric hospitals providing respite for children and their families. The Starlight Express Room (SER) is a treatment-free space for children to access a range of facilities and activities, socialise and enjoy time away from the stress of the wards during their stay in hospital. SERs are operated by Captain Starlight.

The **Captain Starlight** program is designed to reduce the loneliness, pain and stress often associated with hospitalisation. It features professional performers who entertain and engage children in a variety of activities.

Other Starlight programs include initiatives which target adolescents (Livewire) and children in remote indigenous communities as well as the original Starlight Wishgranting program.

Aims of the Evaluation **A Social Return on Investment Approach**

Starlight is committed to research and evaluation so that programs impact positively on the lives of seriously ill children, young people and their families and communities.

Starlight continuously conducts research and evaluation projects. In 2012 PwC was commissioned by Starlight to conduct an assessment to 'quantify the impact and value delivered through the Starlight Express Room and Captain Starlight programs.

A **Social Return on Investment (SROI)** approach was used to provide a baseline estimate of the wider social and economic benefits of the SER and Captain Starlight Programs.



“SROI is a framework for measuring and accounting for the ‘value’ stakeholders ascribe to a program. It estimates a value for the change that a program has for its stakeholders and compares this value to the investment required to achieve that impact, resulting in an SROI ‘ratio’ that compares benefit to investment. In summary, it is a method that enables a monetary value to be placed on social returns.”

PwC



What was involved?

The project involved the collection of data from records provided by Starlight, including:

- SER daily schedule
- SER special events schedule
- Cost data
- Monthly sign in sheets

Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders:

- Parents
- Health professionals
- Starlight Team members

Questions focused on the perceived benefits and change that the programs had on their experience in hospital and broader health and wellbeing. Data collected during the interview phase informed the benefit indicator and assumptions used in the analysis or program impact using SROI. Data used to create proxy assumptions is sourced from a range of publically available sources, including prices from community and company websites and Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item prices. The project identified a range of benefits that the SER and Captain Starlight programs provide to patients, siblings, parents, health professionals and the hospital.

Key benefits

The key benefits were wide ranging and included but were not limited to:

*Increased entertainment,
a benefit to patients and
their siblings*

SERs provide children with the option of a range of activities and access to equipment and facilities

*Anxiety reduction,
a benefit to patients*

SERs impacts on the patient's experience while in hospital; playing a part in reducing the anxiety associated with being in hospital, contributing to improved health and well-being

*Less missed appointments,
a benefits the hospital*

The SER provides outpatients with an appealing option for wait time between scheduled appointments, resulting in a reduction in the costs associated with missed appointments. Parents and health professionals noted that the SER typically increases the appeal of attending hospital.

*Increased socialisation,
benefit to parents of patients*

Isolation and pain can dominate patients' lives and impact those of their families. Ill children can be particularly isolated because they are removed from existing support of networks in their communities. Parents of ill children & the children can use the SER to meet and socialise with others in similar circumstances.

*Better workplace, a benefit
to staff and the hospital*

SER's provide opportunities for children in hospital, their siblings and parents to meet and socialise with others in similar situations. Children and their families can be particularly isolated because they are removed from their existing community supports.

This positive result shows that through the Captain Starlight and SER programs, Starlight is able to bring about real value to children, young people, their families, health professionals and the hospitals that we work in partnership with.

The Overall Benefit

*PwC has established the Starlight Express
Room delivers a SROI ratio of 4.1:1.
This mean that for every dollar investment
there is a return of over \$4 to the community.*



“The SER provides for children and families a sense of they are not in a hospital. It is an oasis for them. It is a safe place, a sanctuary where doctors, nurses or any other clinicians are not able to do anything to them. It is a place of play and rest for both patients and their parents.”

Health Professional

The Starlight Express Room, ... it's just so much fun and all that, the atmosphere, and everyone is always happy and cheery and you meet someone new every day.”

Patient

More information about all Starlight programs can be found on the website at www.starlight.org.au

Starlight is committed to research and evaluation so that we can ensure programs are making a significant difference to the lives of seriously ill children, young people and their families. If you would like to learn more about the work of Starlight please email: impact@starlight.org.au

For any further information about the SROI approach used please contact

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