



# Pre-Budget Submission 2020-21

## Livewire Online





"I don't know if I'd be here if it wasn't for the support of Livewire. I didn't want to be alive anymore, I was so sick of being sick. Everyone talked me through it and (because of the support) I got through eventually."

**Livewire Online Member**

"I can't thank you enough for giving my daughter the chance to connect to other teens going through similar. My daughter thought she was the only girl who's going through these hospital experiences. I've already noticed a change in her because she now realises she's not alone."

**Livewire Parent**

**Pre-Budget Submission 2019 -20**

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## OVERVIEW

Starlight's vision is a world where everyone can experience a happy childhood, even young people who are seriously ill. Why? **Because happiness matters.** A happy childhood is associated with greater social connectedness, an enhanced sense of self and healthy life behaviours.

Adolescence is a particularly significant time of social & emotional development and can be difficult enough without the added complexity of dealing with chronic illness or disability. **1 in 5 Australian adolescents are currently living with a chronic health condition**<sup>1</sup>. These young people are at high risk of social isolation, lower emotional well-being and mental illness. It has been found that 60% experience mental health problems<sup>2</sup>, which negatively impacts the management and prognosis of their condition<sup>3</sup>. For teenagers in rural or regional areas the social isolation can be further compounded by lack of peers with similar experiences and oftentimes limited availability or access to support services. Peer relationships play a significantly influential role in a teenager's psychological wellbeing and support systems.

**Livewire Online (Livewire) is an innovative online community providing vital peer support for adolescents with a chronic health condition or disability who often experience social isolation from peers.** Livewire is a unique place where these young people can connect with others dealing with the same issues they are in an actively-moderated, safe and supportive environment. 40% of active members live in regional or remote areas, and geographical location presents no boundaries, with Livewire available wherever a teenager is.

Livewire is experiencing unprecedented levels of community engagement. In 2019 alone there have been in excess of 31,100 logins. An independent social return on investment (SROI) review confirmed that for every \$1 invested in the Livewire program, \$5.30 is created in value to the community<sup>3</sup>.

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## Collaborating to Improve the Well-being of Teenagers

Every year Starlight invests over \$20M into the Paediatric Public Health System through programs that meet the social and emotional needs of children and teenagers who have a serious illness.

Livewire is a proven model to overcome social isolation and improve mental well-being, helping teenagers with a chronic health condition to not only survive but to thrive.

**Starlight is requesting contribution from the Federal Government of \$2.646M for the Livewire program over the next three years to ensure increased demand for support of adolescents with chronic illness and disability can be met. This will deliver over \$14M in value to the community**<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> K2A Alliance (2019), *Chronic Illness Alliance*, <https://www.kidstoadults.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Suryavanshi, M. & Y. Yang. *Clinical & Economic Burden of Mental Disorders Among Children with Chronic Physical Conditions*, 2008-2013 2016

<sup>3</sup> Turner, J., & Kelly, B. (2000). *Emotional dimensions of chronic disease*. *Western Journal of Medicine*, 172(2), 124-128

<sup>4</sup> 2013 Social Return on Investment (SROI) by Social Ventures Australia. Livewire Online creates \$5.30 in community value for every \$1 invested.

## THE NEED

### Happiness matters for seriously ill adolescents

Adolescence is a time of finding one's way in the world. It is a time of physical, psychological, emotional and social change. For young people with a serious illness or chronic health condition, these normal development stages can be delayed or compromised. Unfortunately, this is the case for thousands of teenagers. And it is the reality more and more teenagers are facing as medical advances have led to improvements in survival rates for serious childhood illness.

"If children are unable to fulfil their social and developmental potential, this not only harms their futures, but also the societies in which they live"

Selina Lo, Pamela Das, Richard Horton  
The Lancet, Vol. 389, No. 10064

Australia now has unprecedented numbers of teenagers navigating adolescence and a serious health issue. They experience increased risk of negative psychosocial outcomes such as lower overall life satisfaction, poorer mental health and lower self-efficacy. It has been found that 60% of teenagers with a chronic health condition experience mental health problems<sup>5</sup>, which negatively impacts the management and prognosis of their condition<sup>6</sup>. These teenagers have access to one of the best health systems in the world. But that's not enough. We need to make sure the support available to these teenagers helps them to not only survive, but to thrive.

During adolescence, young people begin to develop more autonomy from their parents and peer relationships play an influential role in their social and emotional support<sup>7</sup>. **But young people living with a serious health condition often feel alone. Social isolation is commonplace and can have devastating consequences.** For teenagers in rural or regional areas the social isolation can be further compounded by lack of peers with similar experiences and oftentimes limited availability or access to support services. Negative peer interactions such as bullying has a significant impact on psychological, physical and academic outcomes. Conversely, **strong peer connections have been found to enhance a young person's wellbeing<sup>8</sup>.**



"... when you have shared so many highs and lows together the fact you have never met in person is irrelevant. In that moment when we are all laughing, chatting and joking together, nothing else matters. Livewire has given me the most precious gift. The gift of being a teenager!"

Livewire Member

<sup>5</sup> Suryavanshi, M. & Y. Yang. *Clinical & Economic Burden of Mental Disorders Among Children with Chronic Physical Conditions, 2008-2013* 2016

<sup>6</sup> Turner, J., & Kelly, B. (2000). *Emotional dimensions of chronic disease*. *Western Journal of Medicine*, 172(2), 124-128

<sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies (2018), LSAC Annual Statistical Report 2017, *Adolescents' relationships with their peers*

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

## THE PROGRAM

### Connecting socially isolated teens through online peer support

Livewire is an innovative program designed to provide vital support for adolescents with a chronic health condition or disability who often experience isolation from their peers. It is a unique, member-only community website (desktop and mobile) which is actively moderated, safe and secure. Accessible to those at home or in hospital, the program is available 24/7 whenever a teenager needs it, utilising a form of communication commonly used by young people - digital interaction.

The Livewire community has been designed to connect peers who understand the complexity of living with serious health conditions and to promote the voice of lived experience through:

- Live chat and private messaging
- Information provision
- Community & entertainment content
- Live streaming
- Blogs



Members talk about whatever's going on in their life, from upcoming medical procedures to issues with friends and family. Moderators (known as Chat Hosts) play a critical role in community engagement and are trained in adolescent wellbeing and how to provide a safe, supportive online experience. To further ensure the safety of members interacting on Livewire, a parent/guardian and a health professional must support the young person's membership request, as well as provide information that verifies their identity and health condition.

As an online service, Livewire has the benefit of being accessible to young people living in regional, rural and remote areas who often struggle to find local support or peer networks. **40% of active Livewire members live in regional or remote areas.** Livewire is place where they can simply be a young person and their geographical location presents no boundaries.

### Program Impact



## FUNDING REQUEST

The strategic plan for Livewire Online involves:

- Maintaining the existing website;
- New member acquisition as well as,
- Creating new engagement opportunities to encourage return visits through unique collaborations and content.

No significant website upgrades or enhancements have been assumed in the funding requirements.

Livewire Online is part of a broader program to meet the needs of teenagers. It also includes Livewire In Hospital, which in 2019 created almost 46,000 experiences for young people in 11 paediatric hospitals and specialist inpatient mental health units across Australia. The total funding for both programs is \$3.27 million per year and we are requesting Government support to fund \$2.65 million over 3 years, or 27% of the total investment.

### Program Funding

Year	Funding Required
2020	\$826,115
2021	\$954,571
2022	\$865,749
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$2.646M</b>
<b>SROI value created</b>	<b>\$14M+</b>



## Appendix A –Starlight Children’s Foundation

Starlight’s mission is to brighten the lives of seriously ill & hospitalised children and young people. Our hospital and community programs are founded on the principles of positive psychology, where factors such as social connection, play, fun and resilience have been shown to play a vital role in wellbeing, both in childhood and for life. Established in 1988 and recognised as an integral part of the Australian paediatric healthcare system, Starlight works in partnership with health professionals as part of the ‘total care’ of seriously ill children & young people.

Every year Starlight invests over \$20M into the Paediatric Public Health System through its programs designed to meet the social and emotional needs of children and teenagers who have a serious illness.

Starlight is the 5th most reputable brand in Australia<sup>9</sup> and Australia’s broadest reaching children’s charity, on track to deliver more than 610,000 Starlight experiences in 2019.



610,527  
STARLIGHT EXPERIENCES  
Created in 2019



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



WE MADE THE AFR BOSS  
MOST INNOVATIVE COMPANIES LIST!  
2011  
FINANCIAL REVIEW BOSS  
MOST INNOVATIVE  
COMPANIES

<sup>9</sup> Reputation Institute (2019), *Annual Australian Reputation Index*, RepTrak