Captain Starlight playing a part in enhancing health outcomes for children and young people in the Northern Territory

Ralph Hampson¹, Laura Robinson¹

¹Starlight Children’s Foundation

In 2006 the Starlight Children’s Foundation (SCF) introduced the Captain Starlight program to the Northern Territory. Today, Starlight programs are provided in hospital and to communities through an outreach program.

In the Community Outreach Program, Captain Starlight works alongside local and visiting health professionals to provide distraction through activities such as art, music, story-telling, comedy and games. Distraction helps to alleviate boredom and encourages attendance at clinic. It also plays an important role in decreasing anxiety by giving the child back a sense of control through meaningful activities.

Captain Starlight also performs shows and leads activities that help to deliver key healthy living messages such as washing your hands and face, brushing your teeth, keeping your community clean, and developing healthy eating habits. Through these shows, performed at clinics and in community settings such as schools and festivals, play and entertainment is used to deliver these important messages, thus contributing to the reduction of chronic childhood diseases in the community.

An independent external evaluation of the program undertaken in 2008 by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health found Captain Starlight is well accepted and the program fills a gap in the provision of entertainment and play activities in Indigenous communities.

Building on these strong foundations we are delivering a range of new programs. These collaborative programs include:

- **Health Promotion**—the development of shows (performed by Captain Starlight) that incorporate health education messages focusing on nutrition, exercise, nose blowing, ear cleaning, washing hands, tooth brushing and mental health.

- **Healthy School Aged Screening (HSAK)**—Captain Starlight accompanies health professionals to attend these clinics in remote areas of the Northern Territory. Recently Starlight has piloted, with the NT Department of Health, the presence of Captain Starlight at Paediatric Multidisciplinary Clinics.

These programs have and are continuing to be developed in consultation with communities. The poster will focus on:

- overview of the services provided by the SCF
- assessment of the success factors which have allowed the programs to flourish
- account of the impact of these programs on the ground
• partnerships with the NT Department of Health and Aboriginal organisations
• future directions.

Starlight is committed to continuing to play its part in working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and health services so that children and young people can have better health outcomes. This will create stronger communities and brighter futures.