



Ronald McDonald
House Charities®
South East QLD

THE STAR ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE
17 December 2019

Gympie mum feels festive spirit thanks to gourmet Star experience for seriously ill children

Gympie mother Sonia Hartwig and her son, Enosh, will be one of many Ronald McDonald House families set to gain some cheer this festive season thanks to a gourmet buffet experience and a sackful of toys being delivered by The Star Entertainment Group.

Through its Treasury Brisbane and The Star Gold Coast properties, the company has proudly supported Ronald McDonald House Charities South East Queensland (RMHC SEQ) since 2014.

Originally from Rockhampton, Mrs Hartwig's journey with 14-year old Enosh started about eight years ago, well before his diagnosis of having a rare type of Autoimmune Encephalitis of the brain/PANS, Dysautonomia, and Adrenal Insufficiency.

The conditions mean Enosh has lost a lot of his skills and uses a wheel chair for support; he has also become intellectually impaired; and the Dysautonomia continues to affect his central nervous system, including heart rate, digestion, temperature control, activity levels, blood pressure, and more.

Today, the family travels every four weeks to Brisbane for Enosh's IV treatment and stays one week each time - something they could not do without the vital accommodation provided by RMHC SEQ.

"We've travelled over 20,000km in the last few years to receive medical care in Brisbane, which resulted in our family moving from Rocky to Gympie six months ago to be closer to the hospital," Mrs Hartwig said.

"We have stayed close to 400 nights at the South Brisbane House since it opened three years ago, and before that we stayed at the Herston House.

"Sadly for us, these nights continue to rise and there doesn't seem to be much hope in the near future that Enosh's treatments will cease - we are just trying to maintain his current condition.

"That is why we are forever grateful to RMHC SEQ for the ongoing services, support, and care they have provided to Enosh and our family."

Mrs Hartwig said she is looking forward to the special Christmas-themed Make-A-Meal buffet experience that will light up the South Brisbane House courtesy of The Star Entertainment Group.

"We've spent the last two Christmases at the South Brisbane House - The Star's Make-A-Meal is such an incredible treat as we don't get to go out much," Mrs Hartwig said.

"Their delicious food and friendly service is truly amazing - we literally turn up and everything is ready to go with all the special trimmings!"

RMHC SEQ CEO Dr John Gilmour welcomed the return of The Star Entertainment Group's chefs and other team members for the company's sixth Christmas 'Make-A-Meal' event and 16th Make-A-Meal in total.

"In the last year, we have accommodated over 5,100 families across our three Houses and welcomed 32,700 individual visitors to our Family Rooms in Brisbane and on the Gold Coast," Dr Gilmour said.

"They come from all over with the largest region being central Queensland with more than 20 per cent; followed by the Darling Downs, Wide Bay Capricornia, Brisbane Metro and West Moreton, North Queensland, Sunshine Coast, NSW and ACT, the Gold Coast, and other states and overseas regions.

“There are currently over 70 families in residence at the South Brisbane House.

“These Make-A-Meal event brings joy and unites these families that are dealing with the most difficult of circumstances and we are truly grateful to The Star for their ongoing support, which over the years has provided meals and entertainment to hundreds of families who have used our facilities.”

Treasury Brisbane Chief Operating Officer Kelvin Dodt said over the past six Christmases more than 100 chefs and 30 stewards from the company have volunteered to help feed the families.

“We just want to help, especially at this time of the year,” Mr Dodt said.

“Providing community support is always important, but even more so over the festive season.

“Hospitality is our bread and butter, and putting on a Christmas feast means a lot to us at a time when we know these families yearn to be at home, with their children, and other loved ones.

“Led by our Treasury Brisbane team, our chefs will be producing a mouth-watering feast for the families and our workforce is showing their support by donating toys for the children.

“Our support is part of our company’s wider commitment to the Brisbane community where we have been an active member for more than 20 years, and in the Gold Coast community for more than three decades.”

The Star Entertainment Group’s culinary team will deliver a gourmet buffet of prawns, roast turkey, baked ham, and vegetables; and sumptuous desserts including trifle, hot apple crumble, and Christmas pudding with custard.

In addition to the Christmas fare, the families will enjoy gingerbread decorating with icing and lollies, and a special visit from Santa bearing the donated employee gifts.

In 2014, The Star Entertainment Group committed to raising \$3 million towards the construction of RMHC SEQ’s South Brisbane House and supporting the charity’s Family Rooms at the Gold Coast University Hospital.

Ahead of the South Brisbane House’s opening in November 2016, it also helped the charity reap significant savings of around \$140K in furniture and electronics for the House; and has made grants totalling \$210K towards the charity.

The special Christmas-themed Make-A-Meal buffet experience will take place on 17 December 2019 at the South Brisbane House, from 5.00pm to 7.30pm.

ENDS

For further information contact:

Preshni Pillay, RMHC SEQ, 0425 814 028, preshni.pillay@rmhc.org.au

Naomi Jamieson, The Star Entertainment Group, 0419 661 648, naomi.jamieson@star.com.au

Ronald McDonald House Charities South East Queensland

Ronald McDonald House Charities South East Queensland (RMHC SEQ) provides accommodation for the families of seriously ill or injured children requiring care in treating hospitals within Brisbane and on the Gold Coast. RMHC SEQ helps to preserve the family unit in the midst of physical, emotional and financial stress. It also gives parents the chance to draw hope and comfort from other families in similar situations, while being supported by dedicated and friendly staff and volunteers.

RMHC SEQ currently has three Houses in Brisbane; one at Herston beside the Royal Brisbane & Women’s Hospital, one at South Brisbane directly opposite the Queensland Children’s Hospital (QCH) and Mater Mothers’ Hospital and a House in the QCH.