

Embargoed: Monday, 15 January 2018

\$15,500 from Newcastle Permanent staff salary donations will help unwell kids fly

Children who are seriously ill in regional and rural NSW will receive free flights and ground transport to attend necessary medical appointments thanks to a \$15,500 cheque presented by Newcastle Permanent staff to Little Wings today.

The funds were raised by Newcastle Permanent staff through the staff's CommunityAssist salary donation program—an elective program for staff to donate money to charity directly from their fortnightly salaries. Participating staff nominate and then vote on the charities that will be the beneficiaries of the donated funds. Each year four charities are recipients of the donated funds, given in two donation rounds.

Little Wings was nominated by Newcastle Permanent staff member Gina Williams who has been a volunteer driver for Little Wings since 2015. Each week Gina and the Little Wings volunteer team drive children and their families between the airport and their medical appointment for treatment.

As a mother herself, Gina said it was her empathy for the parents of the children that led her to volunteer her time.

“I was drawn to Little Wings because I am a mum who lives close to a major hospital. My heart just goes out to these parents who have incredibly unwell children and aren't lucky enough to live near a major hospital,” said Gina.

“Some of these families regularly travel eight hours to attend chemo appointments. It's not only exhausting for the child, but for the parents too.

“It must be heartbreaking for the parents; to receive the devastating news that your child is unwell and then to face the reality that to give your child the treatment they need you have to travel for hours-upon-hours. As a mum, I can only imagine what they're going through.”

Little Wings CEO, Richelle Koller, said she was overwhelmed with the generosity of Newcastle Permanent staff.

“The Newcastle Permanent staff salary donation program is amazing—their staff have donated directly from their pay and they have chosen us, Little Wings, to be one of their beneficiaries. It's so incredibly generous.

“This \$15,500 will cover the operating costs for our aircraft and transport vehicles helping children and their families make their way to and from the John Hunter Hospital in Newcastle.

“This donation will ease the stress and burden that regional and rural families face when they simply don't have easy access to medical treatment for their very unwell child. We are so grateful to receive this donation from the staff of Newcastle Permanent,” said Richelle.

More information about the staff salary donation program can be found at www.newcastlepermanent.com.au/community and information about Little Wings can be found at www.littlewings.org.au

—Ends—



About Newcastle Permanent Building Society

As a complete financial services provider, Newcastle Permanent offers a genuine alternative to traditional banks for a range of financial services including the day-to-day needs of retail banking customers. Newcastle Permanent employs almost 1,000 staff and services more than 320,000 customers.

A customer-owned banking organisation, Newcastle Permanent has no shareholders to pay so 100% of profits are retained in the business to support our customers and the communities where we operate. We do this through better interest rates, competitive fees, and community support and sponsorship programs.

About the staff CommunityAssist salary donation program

The Newcastle Permanent staff CommunityAssist salary donation program is a voluntary program for all Newcastle Permanent staff. Participants donate money from their fortnightly salary and monies donated, totalling \$60,000 annually. The funds are distributed to four charities or community groups which have been nominated by, and voted for, by staff.

To date, more than \$750,000 has been raised by staff in the 20 years the program has been running, and more than 50 charities and community groups have been recipients of the funds.

About Little Wings

Little Wings is a not for profit organisation whose mission is to provide a professional, free, and safe flight and ground transport service for children from rural and regional NSW to access specialised medical service and treatment in major centres. Little Wings aims to support families to reduce the financial burden, emotional strain, and travel fatigue associated with long distance travel.

Little Wings was established in 2012 and provides services to seriously ill children across the Sydney Children's Hospital and the John Hunter Children's Hospital network. The organisation transports families with regular and ongoing medical appointments and brings children home for short breaks during their treatment to be with family and friends. Little Wings keeps families together during one of the toughest times of their lives.

