



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Deborah Mailman helps Camp Quality teach 3 million kids it's "uncool to be cruel"**

On May 12 the McDonald's Camp Quality Puppets will show their 3 millionth child why it's "uncool to be cruel". To celebrate such a huge milestone for the children's cancer charity, Australian actor Deborah Mailman has agreed to become the program's first ever patron.

"We are ecstatic that Deborah has agreed to be our Puppet Patron, she is so well respected within the Australian community and we have a shared belief in the power of story telling through theatre," says Angela Carroll, Camp Quality's National Puppet Programs Manager. "She is talented and honest, and achieves all this with an image of happiness."

Nine hundred children are diagnosed with cancer every year. For the past 20 years the life sized puppets, Matt, Kylie, Dean and Melissa, have been visiting schools to teach tolerance and acceptance, helping kids across the country understand what their friends are going through.

One of the major challenges facing children living with cancer is returning to school after treatment. They leave a safe and understanding healthcare environment and venture back out into the wider community. Whilst the majority of kids are excited to get back to school, the physical and psychological effects of treatment can make the transition difficult and lack of peer support can make it even harder. Kids can be less sympathetic and sometimes cruel simply because they don't understand why their friend looks or feels different.

Camp Quality believes that laughter is the best medicine and demonstrates the power of fun therapy in everything they do. The McDonald's Camp Quality Puppet program is no exception, entertaining children whilst addressing various aspects of cancer treatment. The 45 minute performance creates an imaginary world which helps children make sense of their real world in a fun and safe way.

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"We give the kids a safe forum to openly discuss their fears and concerns. It can be quite amazing to hear the questions from kids.... Things that we as adults take for granted; 'Can I catch cancer?', 'Why does my friend look different?', 'Will their hair grow back?' 'Isn't it only adults that can get cancer?' " says Angela.

After seeing the show parents and teachers can see a noticeable difference in their children. It opens conversations at home about accepting change and understanding differences in people. Children have been seen to retain the information well, forming a long lasting grasp of the idea of tolerance of others.

Deborah's official patron duties are due to start in the not too distant future. She hopes to help the puppets spread the word about accepting differences in others, being tolerant and accepting, and like Camp Quality, she believes that laughter really is the best medicine.

*The program has been made possible for the last 19 years by funding from McDonald's and is supported nationally by puppet co-ordinators and 75 volunteer puppeteers. The puppet show currently visits 250,000 kids a year, in 1,000 schools all over Australia.*

#### **Quick Camp Quality facts:**

- Committed to bringing hope and happiness to every child living with cancer, their families and communities through ongoing quality recreational, educational, hospital and financial support programs.
- Operating in Australia for 25 years
- 13 locations across Australia
- Puppets visit 250,000 kids a year, program has been running for 20 years (supported by McDonald's for 19 years),
- Puppets will see 3 millionth child on May 12
- CQ hold approximately 240 recreational camps and recreational activities a year
- Junior, senior and family camps assisted by CQ staff and volunteers
- Hospital program, "Giggle" life sized remote controlled robot puppet used for fun and diversion therapy in oncology wards across the country
- Offer financial assistance to families in need
- Support 5,000 kids and families every year
- Programs supported by 3,000 volunteers
- 900 children are diagnosed with cancer each year and 15,000 children are currently living with cancer
- Donations to Camp Quality can be made at [www.campquality.org.au](http://www.campquality.org.au) or by calling 1300 66 2267

#### **Photo Opportunity:**

Existing images of the puppets are available for your use

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