

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **HUNTER KIDS THE WINNERS FROM CHARITY BALL**

**12 December 2012**

The wheels are in motion for it to be the third and most successful Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Charity Ball yet, with the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children (RIDBC) Hunter being selected as the charity of choice for 2013.

ARTC's Executive General Manager for the Hunter Valley, Alec MacKenzie, said the ARTC is aware of its footprint in the Hunter and the Ball is a chance to give back to the community.

"Our Hunter Valley business is as local as it comes, we live here, we work here and we are part of the community – and that's why it's very important we do our bit and recognise the support they give us," Mr MacKenzie said.

RIDBC Chief Executive, Chris Rehn, said that without support from organisations such as ARTC, RIDBC would not be able to continue to provide vital services for children with vision or hearing loss in the Newcastle and greater Hunter region.

"Children who are deaf or blind require consistent, expert early intervention to achieve the best outcomes – particularly through the critical early years. ARTC's Charity Ball fundraiser will ensure that we can continue to support local children with vision or hearing loss – from newborns through to school age," Mr Rehn said.

Alfie Orbell, who is three years old, is receiving support for his vision loss from RIDBC Hunter and his mum Tracy said that Alfie is now doing very well.

Children who are diagnosed with vision or hearing loss require expert assistance to learn how to best access the world around them. RIDBC's specially trained teachers and therapists support Alfie's family in managing his vision loss, ensuring he gets the best possible start in life.

"Alfie loves coming to RIDBC Hunter, often joined by his older brother Harry. The program has really helped my whole family, and Alfie's confidence has improved exponentially, particularly with his peers," said Tracy.

Mr Mackenzie said the ARTC Hunter Valley social club had the idea for the Ball in 2010 as a way of using the money raised from office vending machines.

"Since then, the Charity Ball has raised nearly \$200,000 in its first two outings for local Hunter charities," Mr MacKenzie said.

This year, over \$94,000 was raised for the Newcastle chapter of the Miracle Babies Foundation and in 2011, the ball raised over \$77,000 for the Starlight Foundation.

Tickets are now on-sale for the ball being held on 22 March 2013 at Panthers Leagues Club in Newcastle.

## **ENDS**

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**About RIDBC Hunter:**

RIDBC Hunter opened 21 years ago in Floraville in response to increased demand for specialist hearing and vision loss services in the Hunter Region. Since opening, the Centre has provided education and therapy services to hundreds of children and families in the region through a preschool, early learning program, parent support groups and early learning groups.