



LOTS OF GOODIES . . . Telera and Jakob Scott relish the gifts received from Santa

Gifts and ho ho hos for sick kids

SILENT night turned to a joyous jingle bell rock when children at The Townsville Hospital's children's ward realised the man in the red suit wasn't visiting empty handed on Thursday.

In fact he had six full boxloads of gifts to ensure not only a Merry Christmas but also a happy new year could be had by all the children in the ward.

Santa visits the hospital each year thanks to the generosity of the Special Children's Christmas Party organisers and Golden Casket who donate the toys and Santa's time out of his busy schedule.

The Townsville Hospital Foundation's marketing and promotions co-ordinator

Stephanie Nolan said it provided a lift for the children at a time of year when they should be celebrating all that Christmas brings but instead found themselves in hospital.

"It's wonderful to see the reaction of the children when they see Santa appear at their bedside with toys especially for them."

This year's Special Children's Party event co-ordinator Bev Hockings said delivering the presents to the children a week before Christmas was something she looked forward to each festive season.

"We had Santa walk through the entire ward," she said.

"We not only have enough presents to give all the children a number of toys for Christmas

but also to supply the hospital with quite a few to last through the year. Everyone gets excited when they see Santa; the children just loved it."

Ms Hockings said they wanted to make sure the leftover gifts were used to benefit the community where the money was raised from businesses.

The donated toys ranged to suit from baby age to 13 year-olds. "We have play sets, trace and draws, portable pianos, photo albums and pirate ships," Ms Hockings said.

"They're interactive toys and toys the children can use in a wheelchair if they need to. There would have been 60-odd toys."

— ALEXIS GILLHAM