



A start in life

a brighter future for young australians



**ANNUAL REPORT
2016**

CONTENTS

About Us. 2

President & CEO Report 3

Treasurer’s Report 6

Students & Families 8

Financials 16

Student Sponsorship 18

Thank You. 19



About us

A *Start in Life* provides an in-depth and tailored model of support to address the needs of the most disadvantaged Australian students, assisting them to overcome the barriers to their education and reach their potential.

Students are typically referred to us by schools, community groups, welfare agencies and other educational institutions, or are self-referred, and include young people of any gender, ethnicity or religion. Our robust assessment processes, developed through over 90 years of experience in addressing the unique and complex needs of students, ensure that our support is always directed to the young people whose needs are most acute.

Our qualified Student and Family Management team works to develop tailored support plans for each student to identify and address the student’s individual barriers to their education. With a focus on continued engagement, our Student and Family Management team continually monitors and reviews the progress of students and the often changing financial and overall circumstances of their families to ensure the efficacy and ongoing relevancy of support.

Based on the identified needs of our students, our assistance may include (but is not limited to):

- Information technology
- Extra and co-curricular equipment and fees
- Medical treatment for learning impediments
- Accommodation/living costs
- School fees
- Books and stationery
- School uniforms and shoes
- School camps and excursions
- Remedial tuition

PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT



Allan Elliott
President



Neil Robinson
Chief Executive Officer

It gives us great pleasure to provide our 93rd Annual Report. We are extremely proud of the charitable work undertaken in 2015/16 and which, with the help of supporters, we are well positioned to continue to provide. We are pleased to be able to offer this support to those within our society requiring assistance and we are committed to be able to provide this assistance for as long or as short a timeframe as required.

In 2015/16 we saw significant achievements both from *A Start in Life* and from the students supported. This year we increased, by 10% the average value of the assistance we provided to students in need around Australia and this increase followed a +30% uplift in 2014/15. This continues to be important as we seek to provide support that covers all the costs of an education - costs which are often unfortunately still out of reach for many Australian students and their families.

We are however very happy to report this organisational achievement is dwarfed by the achievements of the students supported and the benefits that continue to flow from our "wholly tailored and in depth model of support". Poverty and disadvantage, we considered, were not resolved with "band aid" solutions or a one-size-fits-all approach. We are delighted that the results and outcomes we are excited to share vindicate the benefits of this tailored support model.

While there are many wonderful individual achievements within this, all of us at *A Start in Life* are most proud of the fact that these achievements have been made by students living in difficult circumstances. Our work is not complete and we know continued interaction with students by our Student and Family Management team is beneficial as it ensures the support is continuously being directed to the areas of highest need or areas from which the greatest benefit will flow.

We acknowledge and thank all those who have made this possible- it includes those who assist financially, those who advocate widely and generously, and those who freely provide their time and passion for our cause. We are appreciative of the number of supporters who see the need and choose to increasingly assist year on year. We humbly suggest this is an endorsement of the charitable service we provide.

Our thanks also to the Executive Committee of *A Start in Life*. We are fortunate to have a stable committee, deeply familiar with the work we do and who continually challenge us to be even better at supporting the students, either through new initiatives or increasing efficiencies. Once again the small and energetic office team at *A Start in Life* have determinedly applied their diverse skills to truly making a

PRESIDENT & CEO REPORT

difference and we wish to recognise the significance of this. Allowing the team to extend the assistance even further is a loyal group of volunteers, whose contribution we value greatly - thank you.

Throughout the year we noted benefits emerging from initiatives put in place. Both families and supporters were appreciative of the increase in the assistance provided directly to the various organisations (53%) and service providers best placed to meet the educational needs of students. The increased interaction with students, parents and carers and recording of progress continues to be insightful and provides valuable information not only of successes, but also of areas where assistance could be beneficial.

This financial year proved to be somewhat challenging. We were disappointed by the adverse publicity a handful of charities unreasonably brought to the very worthwhile Not for Profit sector and note the impact it had on donations received. The careful stewardship of funds entrusted is a key focus of *A Start in Life*. As such, we consider ourselves well

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Academic Achievements



- 67% of primary and secondary students increased or maintained their average score across all subjects studied
- 100% of tertiary students increased or maintained their average score across all subjects studied
- 80% of students passed all of their subjects
- 37% achieved scores in all subjects placing them at the top of their year
- Students in Years 7-10 improved on their results from the previous year in Science, English and HSIE
- Students in Years 11-12 achieved average Maths scores of 70% or more

Social Outcomes



- 71% were happier at home
- 68% were more motivated
- 50% worried less about the families financial circumstances
- 54% were able to explore a new hobby

Learning Outcomes



- 71% enjoyed going to school more
- Over 85% won Awards- many for leadership, sport and community service
- 62% mastered new complex skills
- 67% found it easier to do school work in 2015

placed to capture support from donors that will now be even more diligent in seeking out charities focussed on both stewardship and maximising the benefits that flow to those who require assistance.

While our year was largely positive, we were however saddened to hear of the passing of Ray Ctercteko, who was not only one of the oldest beneficiaries of the charity but also one of our strongest supporters. We wish to also acknowledge the passing of Lesley Fox and Ian Hickson, two people who, being very familiar with the positive impact flowing from *A Start in Life's* support, chose to leave a gift in their Will that will benefit many others. Our Accountant Steve Floyd advised us he will be retiring in August 2016, after 23 years of valuable and dedicated service. Our sincere thanks to Steve for all he has done for *A Start in Life* - it is significant.

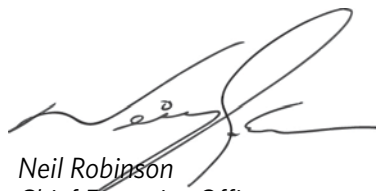
There are however, other losses that we are delighted to share. Eight students advised they no longer needed our assistance as they had graduated. Over 15% of the Students and Families supported in the previous year advised their circumstances had changed for the better and were also no longer in need of assistance.

We recognise these and other successes would not happen without the generosity of many individuals, companies and Trusts and Foundations across Australia. Together, we ensure students are not falling behind and have the resources needed to compete as equals with their peers.

The year ahead is an exciting one for *A Start in Life*, as we continue to create opportunity for youth who may otherwise miss out and as we continue to fill a void that unfortunately exists within our society.



Allan Elliott
President



Neil Robinson
Chief Executive Officer



Executive Committee (L to R): Neil Robinson, John Carroll, Allan Elliott, Oliver Bergstrom, Jeannine Walsh, Dale Berrier, Joe Hansell.



A Start in Life team (L to R): Susan Falon, Steve Floyd, Neil Robinson, Angela Floyd, Sara Lamedo, Vanessa Prospero, Monique Binstead.

TREASURER'S REPORT



Whilst the Charity posted another consecutive year where a small surplus was achieved, FY16 was a challenging year due to the softening in investment markets and a decline in amounts received from donors.

Revenue was down 19.6%, from the highs of 2015/16, to \$1.37 million. While we were fortunate to receive a large number of gifts in wills in 2014/15, this did not eventuate in 2015/16. Similarly, fewer opportunities existed to take profits from sale of investments in the current year. However, it was pleasing that despite the reduction in revenue, overall assistance to students reduced by only 3.3%.

Maintaining the high level of support provided to our students highlights the continued commitment in identifying barriers to education and developing tailor made solutions for students to help overcome them. As a result of these measures profit was down year on year, although positive overall.

With revenue reduced, expenditure across most expense categories i.e. fundraising, marketing, banking and administration were similarly reduced. These prudent financial measures were put in place by the management of the Charity.

A Start in Life remains in a strong financial position with \$8.89 million in Capital Funds. These decreased 3.7%, both as a result of the reduction in the 30 June 2016 market value of the Charity's financial assets and cash equivalents, and the commitment of the Charity to maintain its support to students. When you consider equities markets in Australia and internationally, produced returns either marginally positive or negative during FY16, *A Start in Life's* overall result should be considered positively and the executive team should be commended on the prudent management of the Charity, including its diverse investment portfolio.

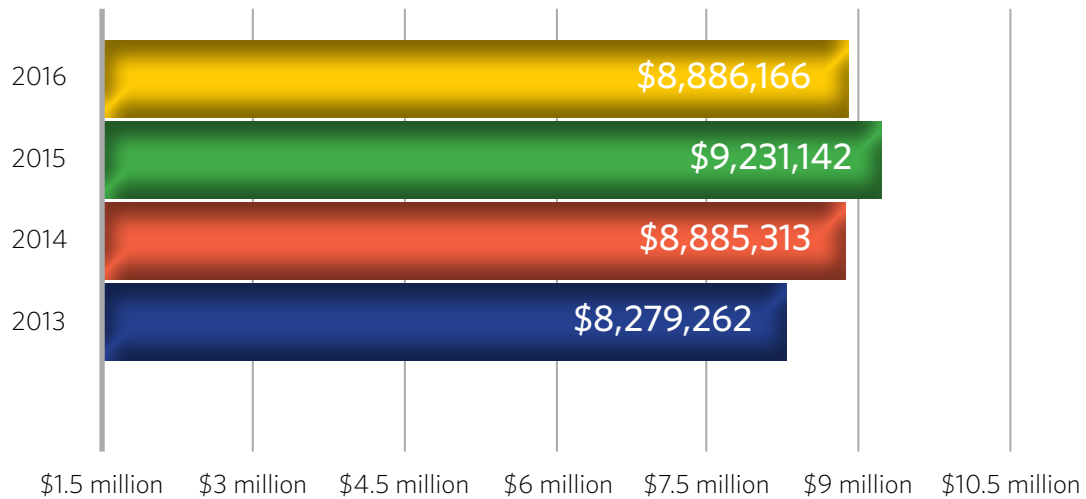
On a personal note, I wish to thank, the soon to retire, Stephen Floyd for his assistance with the financial management of the Charity and in turn advise supporters Steve leaves behind the marvellous legacy of a financially well managed charity.

Finally, the Charity and its Board are ever mindful not to be complacent and remain focused to identify and foster initiatives to increase income from supporters, manage costs, diversify and strengthen our returns from our financial assets and deepen the support provided to our students.

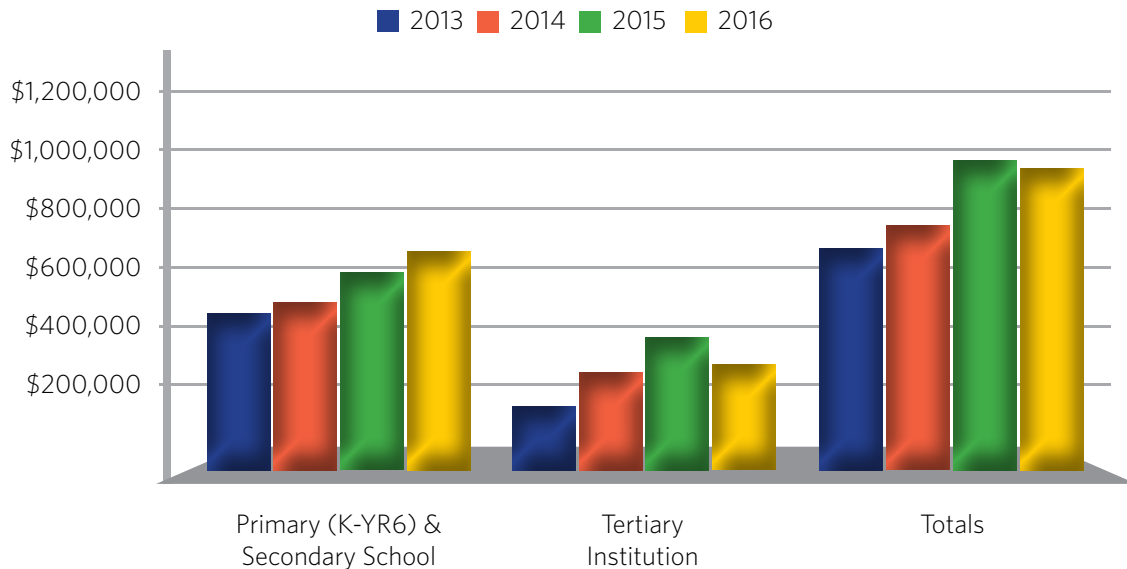


Joe Hansell
Treasurer

Net Assets



Distribution of Support to Students



STUDENTS & FAMILIES



Vanessa Prospero & Sara Lamedo

Throughout the previous financial years we introduced a number of significant changes to the depth and nature of the support *A Start in Life* provided students and families in need. This included the introduction of our very successful 'Beyond Educational Essentials' program. The focus of the Student and Family Management team over the 2015/16 financial year was on further embedding these enhancements into our overall program to ensure that the support to students and families is sustained and that the benefits to students and families continue to flow.

We, the Student and Family Management team, have great confidence in our work with students and families and in the integrity and benefit of our work. Our regular assessment of students' and families' circumstances and their progress is fair, consistent and transparent, guided by a set of very specific benchmarks and criteria. This allows us to direct our support to those whose needs are acute, and to develop and implement tailored support plans to most effectively address these needs, which are often complex and changing.

We are also continuously employing our training in social work to inform our team's policies and procedures and to guide our increasing interaction with every student and family supported by the charity. Indeed, our interaction with students and families is a critical part of what we do; it helps us to have a better understanding of their unique situation whilst



In March 2016, we held the annual student awards event at Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney to recognise the achievements of our students

giving our students and families the encouragement and social support they need. This is an important adjunct to the financial and practical support that *A Start in Life* provides towards all aspects of their education.

Through our work in the Student and Family Management team, we are making a real and tangible difference to the lives of young people in difficult circumstances and their families. Hours upon hours spent analysing school reports, academic transcripts, student updates and family feedback questionnaires show just how effective our program is in improving both the educational and social outcomes of these young people and their families. We are also delighted to read of students ambitions and achievements. The phone calls, letters and emails we often receive from students and families expressing heartfelt thanks for our support are a rewarding validation of the difference we are making.

As the Student and Family Management team, we are pleased to be part of an organisation which really does transform the lives and brightens the futures of young people and families in need.

Sara Lamedo & Vanessa Prospero
Student and Family Management Team

Continued Engagement – Term of Support to Students at June 2016



STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Our beneficiaries in 2015/16

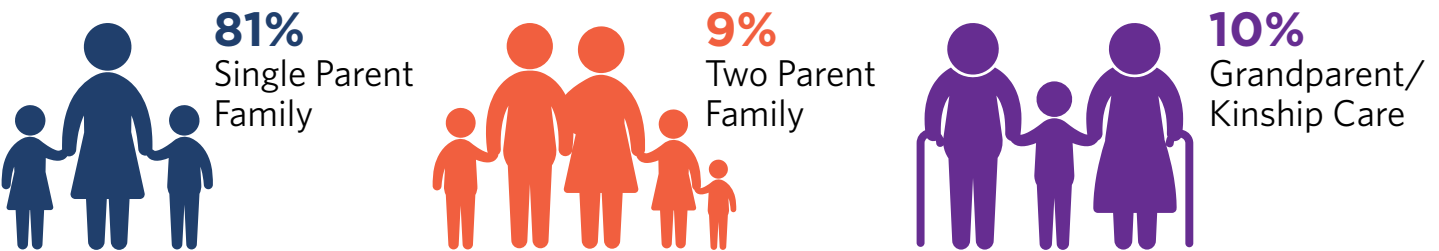
A *Start in Life* continues to support young Australians (4-24 years) in primary school, high school, vocational education and university, whose circumstances have been assessed as “necessitous”, defined simply as in economic and social distress. Thus, to be eligible for our support, a student must not only be enrolled in full-time education, they must also, but they must also be living below the poverty line and with limited or no family assets. Beyond critical financial disadvantage, the students we support and their families typically present with multiple other indicators of social disadvantage, which places them at significant risk of underperformance and disengagement from education.

Of the students and families supported by A *Start in Life* in the 2015/16 financial year, 40% were battling poor or chronic health which affected students’ academic attendance and performance. 81% of students were being cared for by a single parent over the year, with a further 10% placed in the care of grandparents or other relatives. Approximately 60% of students and families experienced inadequate social support, other than the support provided by A *Start in Life*. These students and families were not able to access help, advice, empathy or subsequent relief from friends, family or their communities, leaving them socially isolated.

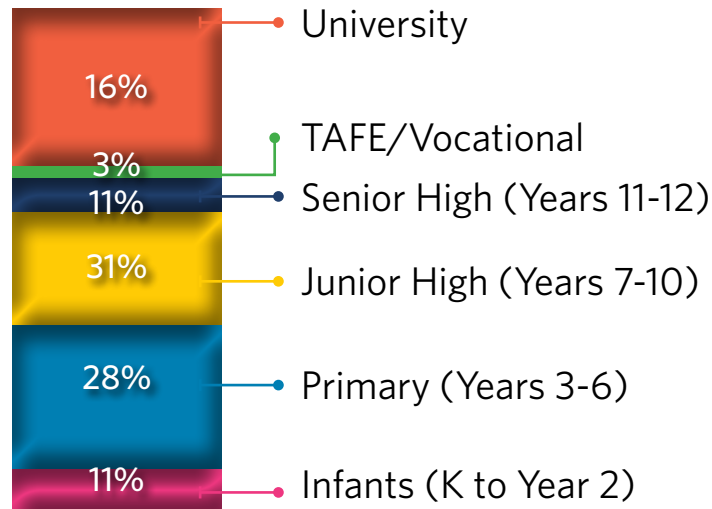
Moreover, 85% of our students and their families relied on others for their housing or accommodation during the 2015/16 financial year. Of these, approximately 44% required government housing during the year and 41% were living in private accommodation which was considered sub-standard, or where access to transport, schools or other necessary resources was problematic.

A *Start in Life* is aware that by providing support directly for the students’ education, it is indirectly assisting in overcoming these potential barriers to an education. Our 90+ years’ experience has taught us that by enabling students to access a quality well-rounded education as equals with their peers, we can help them to reach their potential and, ultimately, to rise above their disadvantage. This is, indeed, the long-standing mission of A *Start in Life*.

Our Students’ Family Arrangements in 2015/16



Our Students' Level of Education in 2015/16



Towards Education Equality



Moving closer to our goal every year!

\$5,000

\$2,980

2016

\$2,700

2015

\$2,030

2014

\$1,800

2013

The average dollar support per student required to access all aspects of an education

↑ 10%

Increase in average dollar support to students in 2015/16

STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Support Provided



146 students received new school uniforms

83 families were given access to a home computer and internet



31 students benefited from remedial after-school tuition



165 students were provided with stationery and textbooks



135 students received new school and sports shoes

31 students were given an opportunity to be involved in the arts



63 students were able to attend school camps and excursions



19 students were able to learn a musical instrument



60 students were assisted to play a weekend sport



89 families were granted assistance towards basic living expenses

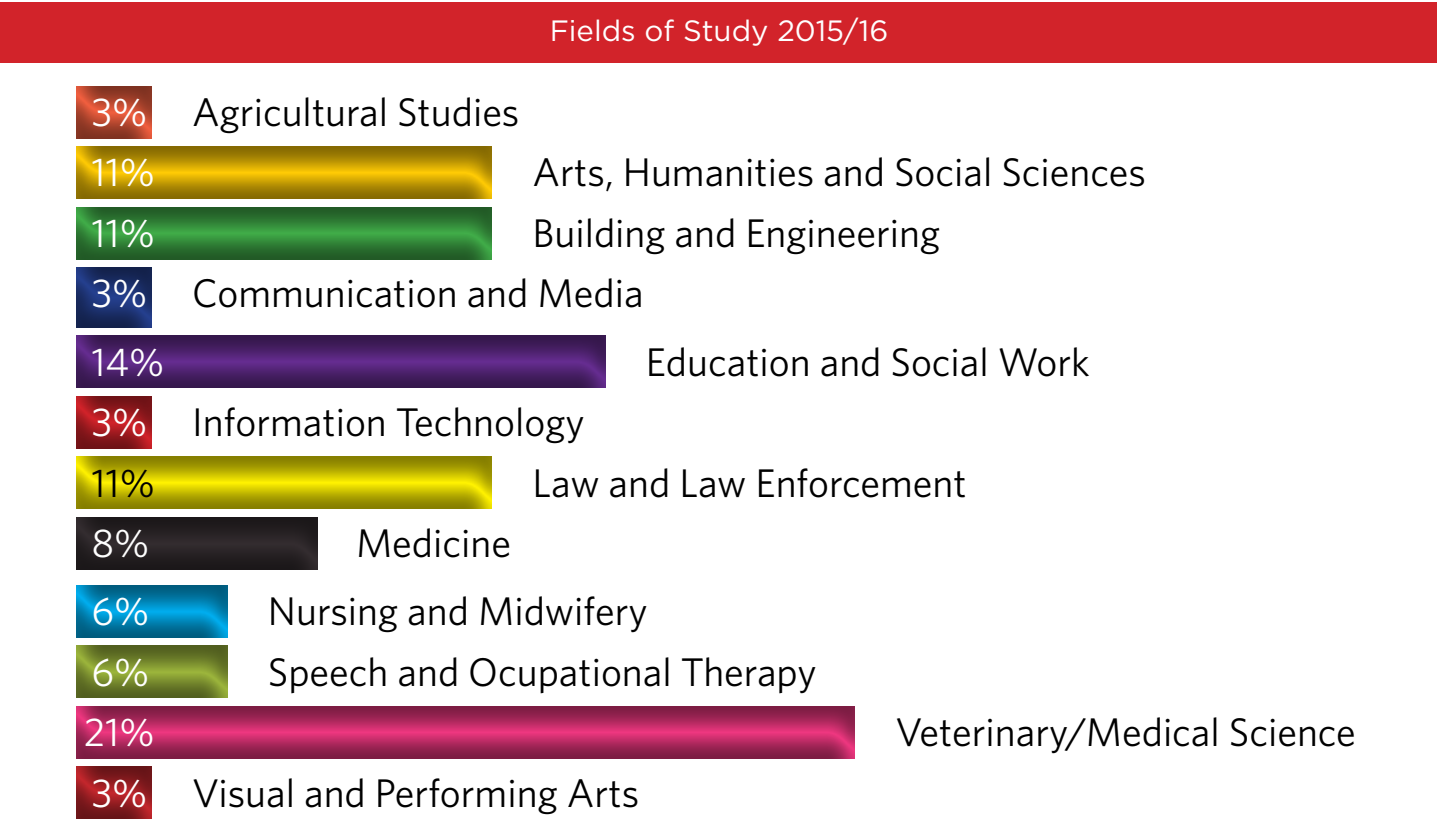
Higher Learning

Of the tertiary students who we supported over the 2015/16 financial year, 14% were studying at TAFE, 44% were studying a single bachelor's degree at university, 36% were studying a double bachelor's degree and 6% were studying at an honours level. In that time, we were delighted and incredibly proud to see 8 students graduate from their courses.

The support that *A Start in Life* provides to these tertiary students differs slightly from our support to other students and their families. Not only do we engage with tertiary students in a different way (read: lots of SMS and online communications!) but, given that many of our tertiary students must move away from home to pursue higher learning, we also need to consider in our support plans for tertiary students the general expenses and pressures of living independently, usually for the very first time.

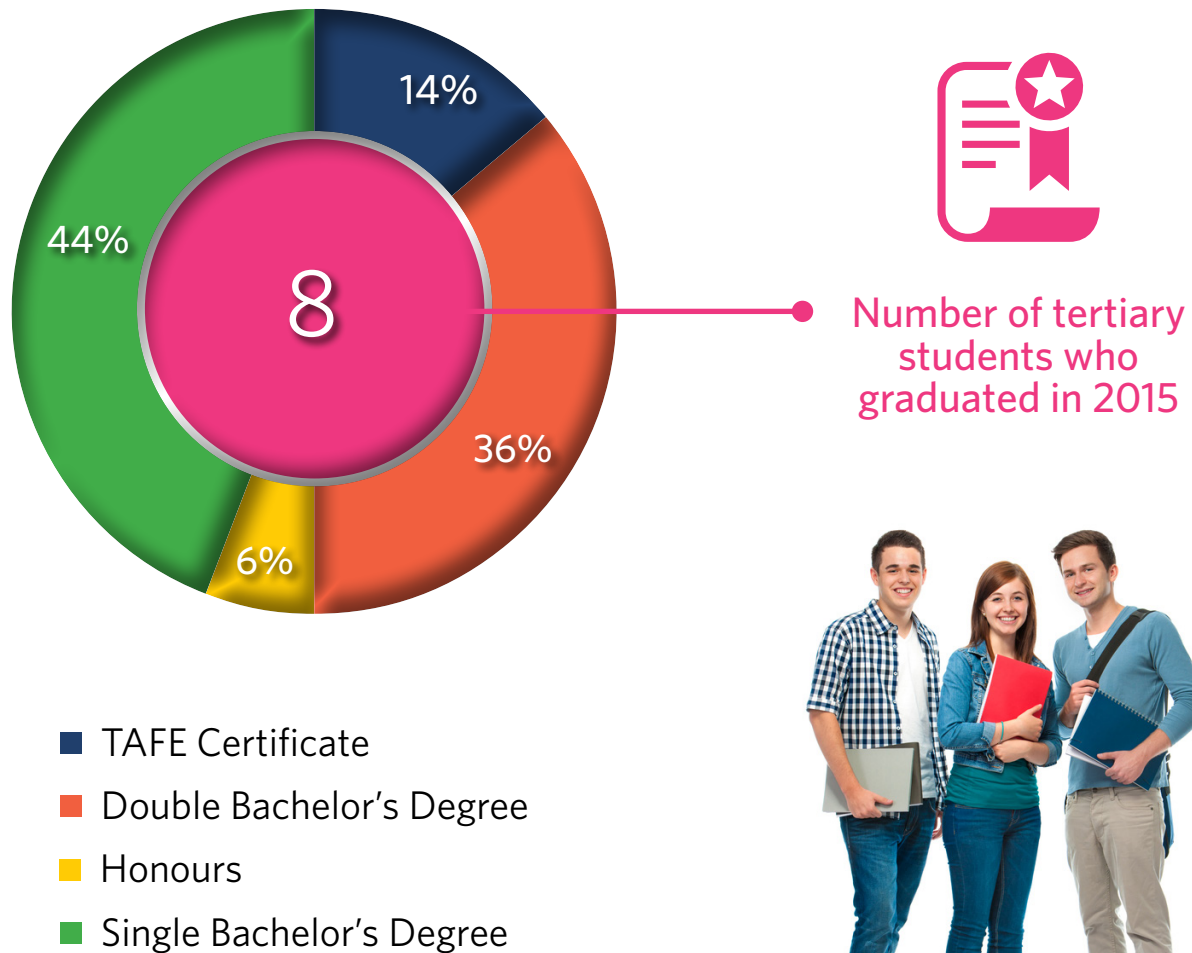
We help to cover costs of their textbooks, tools of trade, materials required for assignments, extra tuition if required, laptop computers, Internet and student software, as well as accommodation and living expenses.

This practical support ensures that our tertiary students are sufficiently resourced to remain engaged in tertiary education, despite their often difficult life circumstances; whilst the unwavering belief in and encouragement of our students by the Student and Family Management team gives these students the confidence and motivation to do well in their chosen fields.



STUDENTS & FAMILIES

Our Tertiary Students' Course Levels in 2015/16



FROM OUR TERTIARY STUDENTS

"Coping with difficult personal circumstances and maintaining decent grades" • "Being a representative for regional and rural students at my university's Student Representative Council" • "Beating depression and anxiety" • "Living away from home on my limited budget and studying medicine" • "My strong will and determination" • "Studying a degree in a subject I'm passionate about at a good university" • "Doing the hard work to achieve great results in my studies and helping my classmates to understand the content" • "Returning to study at TAFE" • "Being the first in my family to go to university" • "Completing my Uni degree while juggling part time work and being a young mum with two children"

What are our tertiary students most proud of achieving in 2015?



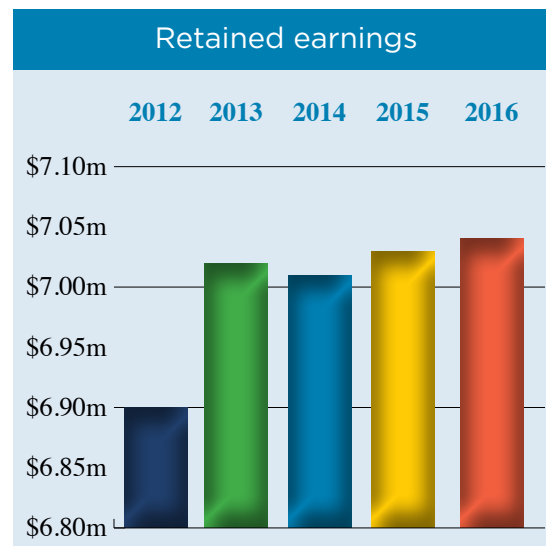
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2016 \$	2015 \$
Current assets		
Cash and cash equivalents	679,775	808,288
Trade and other receivables	86,002	97,419
Financial assets	1,289,932	1,354,403
Inventories	-	4,794
Other current assets	400	400
Total current assets	2,056,109	2,265,304
Non-current assets		
Financial assets	6,393,044	6,457,227
Investment property	170,729	170,819
Other property, plant and equipment	533,858	541,297
Intangible assets	24,044	34,155
Total non-current assets	7,121,675	7,203,498
Total assets	9,177,784	9,468,802
Current liabilities		
Trade and other payables	181,296	145,336
Employee benefits	99,739	53,434
Total current liabilities	281,035	198,770
Non-current liabilities		
Employee benefits	10,583	38,890
Total non-current liabilities	10,583	38,890
Total liabilities	291,618	237,660
Net assets	8,886,166	9,231,142
Capital funds		
Endowment fund	561,563	561,563
Special purpose funds	866,337	895,344
Asset revaluation reserve	416,895	745,967
Retained earnings	7,041,371	7,028,268
Total Capital funds	8,886,166	9,231,142

Financial assets reflect a softening in investment markets

Capital Fund balances available will allow student support to be maintained as planned

Incremental gains were made to retained earnings



STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS & OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

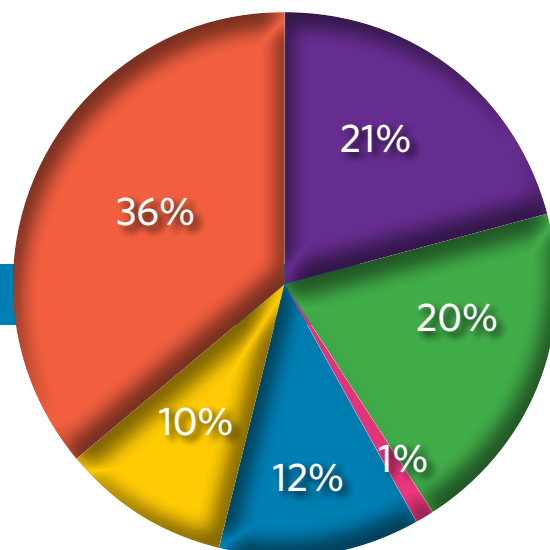
	2016 \$	2015 \$
Revenue	1,370,002	1,703,804
Expenses		
Student assistance	(923,846)	(955,612)
Fundraising	(147,546)	(169,402)
Marketing	(71,846)	(96,451)
Banking, investment & accounting	(107,762)	(112,190)
Depreciation and amortisation	(21,438)	(25,700)
Office & administration	(76,667)	(82,875)
Profit for the year	20,897	261,574
Other comprehensive income / (loss)		
Net change in fair value of available-for-sale financial assets recognised through other comprehensive income	(36,801)	99,877
Total other comprehensive income / (loss)	(36,801)	99,877
Total comprehensive income / (loss) for the year before allocations	(15,904)	361,451
Allocations from capital funds	29,007	50,875
Allocations to capital funds	-	(395,375)
Total comprehensive income for the year after allocations	13,103	16,951

The high level of bequests in 2014/15 were not repeated in the current year .

Operating profit returned to levels consistent with prior years

Sources of Operating Income

- Donations
- Student Sponsorship, Events & Other Fundraising
- Gifts in Wills
- Management Services & Other Income
- Corporates, Trusts & Foundations
- Investment Income



STUDENT SPONSORSHIP

Student Sponsorship invites people and organisations from across Australia and overseas to help support a disadvantaged young person’s education until his or her family can get back on their feet and support the child’s education independently. FY16 marked the seventh year of our Student Sponsorship program. Thank you to each of our Student Sponsors for continuing to make a positive difference to the lives of the students you sponsor.

Student Sponsors – Map of Support



Thank you to our supporters in 2015/16...

It would not be possible to provide assistance to students without the generosity of the businesses, trusts, foundations and organisations who contribute to *A Start in Life*. We wish to thank Lowes Australia, Club Totem, Shangri-La Hotel, Netsuite, The Mailing House, Meriden School, Freemasons of NSW & ACT, CLEARbridge Foundation, Emorgo Foundation, The RALI Foundation and The Bennelong Foundation, and others who choose to give anonymously.

Thank you to the individuals throughout Australia and overseas, who by way of donations, pledges, student sponsorship or gifts in wills, make a difference to the lives of disadvantaged Australian students and their families.

You help build brighter futures for young Australians in need.





*Supporting students
since 1923*

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