



Thank You!

A Start in Life would like to thank all our supporters who responded to our 2015 Back-to-School Appeal. You helped us raise \$11,940 to equip our students with the back-to-school supplies they need to flourish this year! This equates to 92 summer uniforms or 184 backpack and stationery sets.

Whilst we fell short of our \$15,000 target, we are pleased to have enabled many of our students to begin the 2015 school year as an equal with their peers.



Recognising our Students

On Sunday 22 March, *A Start in Life* celebrated and rewarded the achievements of 17 deserving students at our Annual Prize Giving Ceremony in Sydney.

Congratulations to the award recipients: Zander, Otto, Erin, Aisha, Grace, Justin, Jade, Wid, Emily, Zach, Lotus, Braedon, Silan, Alex, Omed, Hoodya and Sarah. We are all truly proud of your progress and inspired by your resilience.

Special thanks goes to our partner Shangri-La Hotel, Sydney for hosting the event and to our major supporters for joining us on the day.

Families in Crisis

Unexpected crises and family breakdowns are always hard on children. Whilst adults are generally better equipped to cope and move forward, children are often overwhelmed and challenged during times of uncertainty. Naturally, this can impede on a child's education, as it did for the four Cummins boys from the NSW Northern Rivers.

The Cummins Family

In 2013, single mother Nina Cummins contacted *A Start in Life* in search of support for her two sons. In the midst of an acrimonious divorce and unemployed following a debilitating neck injury, Nina was deeply concerned about her children's wellbeing and the impact of the family's breakdown on their education. The uncertainty of the family's pending eviction from their home was also weighing heavily upon the children.

A Start in Life's Student & Family Management team worked carefully with the family to develop a tailored case plan for each of the boys, with the aim of improving their wellbeing, educational experiences and outcomes. We referred the boys to a counsellor, who has helped them to develop strategies to cope with their parents' separation, and we also provided after-school tuition to address issues of underperformance and apathy towards their schooling. Additionally, the two children were afforded opportunities to participate in an extra-curricular activity of their choosing, which has encouraged them to stay motivated and connected with their peers.

As their 2014 school reports demonstrated, the Cummins boys have made notable improvements in their performance, application and self-confidence since receiving support from *A Start in Life*. Our assistance has also given the family hope for a brighter future. "I am truly grateful for your generous help and support for my boys. I am using it as a positive sign that things will take a turn for the better for us," said Ms. Cummins.



"It meant a lot that someone outside the family cared so much about us, at a time when we could have felt so abandoned and alone." (Verity, supported by A Start in Life in the early 1990s)



High-school student and Juvenile Arthritis sufferer, Libby, greatly improved in Mathematics and won an award for Agriculture in 2014.

A+ For Effort!

Report cards show our students are more engaged

Throughout January and February, *A Start in Life's* Student & Family Management team was busy assessing end-of-year school report cards, university transcripts, annual student updates and parent/carer feedback for the 2014 academic year. And, we are delighted to report that, overall, our students have made admirable progress throughout the year – not only in terms of their academic grades, but also in their social, emotional, psychological and physical development.

Of particular note, we learned that our students are more engaged with their education. They are attending classes more often, showing a greater commitment to their studies and, importantly, enjoying learning. Parents and carers have also indicated that their children are also happier in the home and are worrying less about their families' circumstances.

An Education Beyond Textbooks

In 2014, *A Start in Life* set out to extend its support to students to include not only their educational essentials but also all other aspects of well-rounded education. Over the past 12 months, we have made it possible for:

- 83** students to go on school camps and excursions
- 35** students to be involved in music and arts
- 32** students to participate in weekend sports
- 73** families to have a home computer and Internet
- 49** students to benefit from after-school tutoring
- 25** students to receive medical treatment

These are opportunities which would otherwise not be available to the students.

Your Opinion Counts

At *A Start in Life*, we value the opinion of our supporters and are always interested to hear your feedback on our newsletters and other communications.

If you wish to provide feedback, please contact (02) 9264 3017 or communications@astartinlife.org.au

Educational Outcomes

- 73%** of students demonstrated improvements in performance across multiple subjects in 2014
- 70%** of students enjoyed going to school more in 2014 than in previous years
- 62%** of students showed greater motivation to learn in 2014 than in previous years
- 62%** of students were more confident in their abilities in 2014 than in previous years
- 47%** of students received an academic award in 2014

Social Outcomes

- 62%** of students developed positive peer relationships in 2014
- 52%** of students were happier at home in 2014 than in previous years
- 44%** of students were able to explore a new hobby in 2014
- 42%** of students worried less about their family's circumstances in 2014 than in previous years

"Last year was a good year for our students. It is very pleasing to see that, with our donors' support, they are doing well at school and university despite difficult family and financial circumstances. It is also wonderful to know that our commitment to providing students opportunities to access an education beyond just educational essentials is starting to bear fruit," said *A Start in Life's* CEO Neil Robinson.

A Start in Life wishes to thank our supporters for generously helping us to make the 2014 academic year a bright one for our students.