

Supporting Students Aspirations

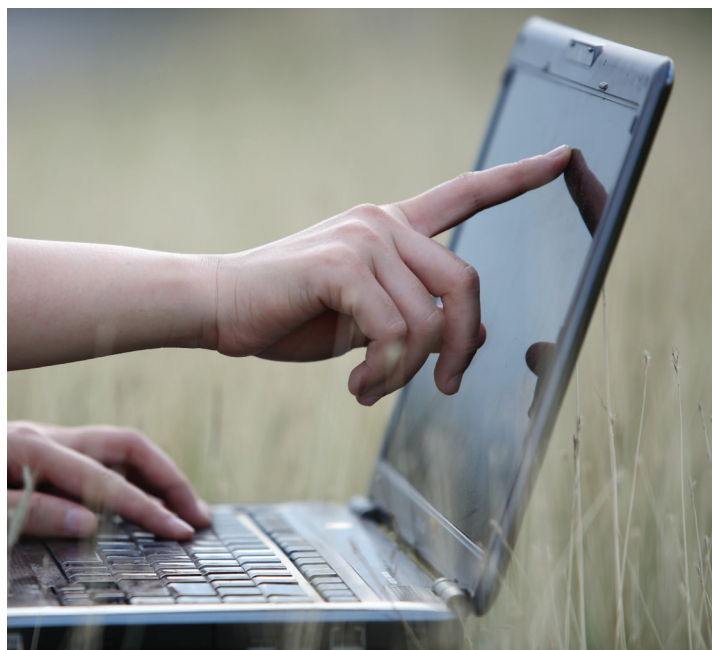
Sammy with Heath - one of her patients

As I have a deep love of animals and concern for their welfare, I had my heart set on becoming a Vet since I was eight. While my dream became a reality when I was accepted into university to study a Bachelor of Veterinary Biology/Veterinary Science, my excitement faded when I realised I needed to move 10 hours away from home, and my family's financial circumstances meant they were unable to support my living and studying costs.

Regardless, I thought I should be able to overcome these temporary setbacks and enrolled.

The workload of my six year degree is intense, with one of the more difficult course requirements being a need to attend placements outside of my full time class schedule. This made it very difficult to undertake any regular part time work and as such, I was living off Centrelink study payments which left me with less than \$50 a fortnight after my accommodation was paid for.

I needed some help and was completely blown away when *A Start in Life* advised me they could help.



The help I receive through the *A Start in Life* support plan allows me to travel to my course placements, purchase equipment like boots and gloves (a necessity for working with livestock!) and covers course text books and stationery. I also receive vouchers that help cover my food costs, ensuring I have enough to eat.

The laptop I received has allowed me to study wherever and whenever. I take it along to practical assignments and can complete the required work there and then - so much more efficient! However, the greatest benefit from the support provided has been feeling less stressed and being able to achieve better grades.

I cannot explain how truly grateful I am to have you assist me in working towards my dream career.



Over the course of the 2016/17 financial year, our tailored support plans provided students with the assistance pictured below. This assistance was made possible by the generosity of many, some of whom needed our assistance many years ago and others who recognise the benefits that flow from education. All support is valued, as it has allowed the wonderful student results shown throughout this Newsletter, to be achieved.



163 students received new school uniforms



105 families received a computer and internet access



42 students benefited from remedial tuition



154 students received new school and sports shoes



160 students were provided with textbooks and stationery



31 students had the opportunity to be involved in the arts



92 students were able to attend school camps and excursions



17 students had the opportunity to learn a musical instrument



80 students were assisted to play a weekend sport



130 families received food vouchers to cover school lunches



15 students benefited from treatment for a medical condition impeding their studies

The assistance provided to Years K – 12 students through A Start in Life

Student Attendance

Research shows that school attendance is a strong factor in determining student success.

When students are absent for fewer days, their grades and reading skills improve—even among those students who are struggling in school. Students who attend school regularly also feel more connected to their community, develop important social skills and friendships, are significantly more likely to graduate from high school, and go onto tertiary education or enter the workforce.

Our students mid and end of year school reports shows a very high attendance rate was reported across our primary and high school students in 2016:



93%
Average Student Attendance Rate

Students Giving Back to Help Other Students

A Start in Life recently received news that Margaret 'Joan' Malley (nee Shipton) had passed away.

In the very early years *A Start in Life* supported many students who attended the William Thompson School at Baulkham Hills in Sydney. Joan Malley was one of these students. Support was extended to Joan, the third youngest in her family, as her father had passed away leaving behind his wife and ten children. Joan was thirteen at the time.

After completing four years of education Joan graduated. Joan leaves behind four daughters who fondly recall their mother commenting on how she valued receiving assistance to complete her education, an education she otherwise would have missed out on.

Keen to ensure other disadvantaged students do not miss out on education, Joan chose to leave a gift in her will to help future generations through *A Start in Life*.

Interested to find out more about leaving a legacy that changes lives? Please contact communications@astartinlife.org.au or call (02) 9264 3017.



Margaret 'Joan' Malley

Recent Graduates Great Achievements

One of the best indicators of the success of our program is monitoring the outcomes of our recent student graduates. We are pleased to report that 100% of our recent Year 12 and tertiary graduates have successfully transitioned into full time study or entered the workforce.

While *A Start in Life* is pleased to have assisted them, a key factor in their wonderful attainment is these students own determination, motivation and resilience. With this in evidence and their education either complete or well progressed, we are confident their life outcomes are greatly improved.



YEAR 12 STUDENT GRADUATES

- 63% undertaking Tertiary study (University, TAFE)
- 37% are employed either full time or casually



TERTIARY STUDENT GRADUATES

- 25% completing further University study (Hons or PhD)
- 75% are employed either full time or casually

A Proud Mum Shares Her News



Rachel and Emily

Rachel, a single mother and her family have been assisted by *A Start in Life* for over four years. However, this year has been particularly significant. Recently, Rachel visited our office with some very exciting news. Her daughter Emily was selected as one of two students to represent her school at a Development and Leadership Camp. Rachel was also ecstatic as Emily had also been receiving school awards for her academic achievements.

In previous years, Rachel had visited our office often reporting financial and personal issues within their home. However this time, her visit was a celebration. The passion Rachel had describing her daughter's educational success also left the *A Start in Life* team feeling very proud.

Emily had previously struggled with her confidence and was unable to contribute and speak in front of the class. She also presented with development delays, which unfortunately caused her to be significantly behind the academic standard of her peers. Although previous advice suggested tutoring may not be beneficial, Rachel was certain Emily had the potential and wanted to try.

With the help of *A Start in Life*, a tutor was arranged for Emily. Within 4 months, dramatic improvements were seen. Her tutor reported "*Emily is developing independence in writing, she has a good work ethic and will now work hard to achieve agreed goals*". Emily was now confident enough to contribute to class discussions and to complete set tasks. She was improving across all learning areas. Emily also now looks forward to each school day.

Rachel also shared her excitement that her son Rick, who was supported by *A Start in Life* in his final years of High School, has recently gained a chef's apprenticeship at one of Sydney's fine dining restaurants.

A Brighter Future for Sheree's Family

Sheree and her family had experienced a lot of hardship when she contacted *A Start in Life* seeking assistance with the costs of her children's education. After a period of homelessness, Sheree had worked very hard to regain custody of her three children. She had sought services to escape domestic violence, and found stable housing that provided a safe environment for her family. Unfortunately due to their circumstances, with periods of instability and school absences, Kira 9, Lene 8 and Ty 6 were all behind their respective grade levels in literacy and numeracy. This affected their confidence, ability to engage in school work and class participation.

A Start in Life liaised with the family, to identify the critical areas of need and the assistance required that would provide the most benefit to each child's learning and development. Access to a computer after school hours was required, so the children could complete schoolwork and assignments at home. To assist the children to catch up with their literacy and numeracy, remedial tutoring support was identified as a critical need. Support to help the children make new friends, build confidence and resilience, was a key part of the plan; and they were given an opportunity to play after school sports for the first time.

After twelve months of implementing the tailored support plans through *A Start in Life*, the positive impact was evident.

The tutor's report noted that she had seen a dramatic difference in the children's behaviour and they were making good progress with their literacy and numeracy.



Kira's school report showed very high attendance. Her teacher commented he had seen a *"big increase in confidence"*, with Kira now actively taking part in class discussions and preparing and presenting in front of her peers. The laptop and printer supplied as part of the plan have greatly helped Kira to complete her homework.

Lene's teacher commented that her literacy has improved due to regular revision at home, including the use of the Reading Eggs program on the laptop, and that *"Lene is working much more independently in the class room and feels confident to ask for assistance when required."* Lene says she is enjoying playing netball and has made lots of new friends through her team.

Ty's teacher says his *"efforts in reading, writing and comprehension were outstanding."* Ty was recognised for his achievements by winning a school book prize. He said it was his proudest moment during the school year.

Sheree says *"having the support has made such a difference for all of us. The kids have the things they need, and because of this they love going to school."*

I would like to help young Australians in need by making a gift of \$ _____

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☐ Once

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☐ Cheque / money order payable to *A Start in Life*, PO Box 20606, World Square NSW 2002

Cardholder name: _____

Card number: _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _ / _ _ _ _

Expiry: _ _ _ / _ _ _ Signature: _____

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