



Sunshine, smiles and new friendships – Tarab and Arnold, two of our prize winners, became fast friends at our Prize Giving Ceremony!

JUNE 2025

Brighter Futures



CELEBRATING PROGRESS, POSSIBILITY AND COMMUNITY

This year's Prize Giving Ceremony was more than a celebration – it was a powerful reminder of what happens when young people are truly supported.

The event brought together everything *A Start in Life* stands for – recognising student success, honouring potential and celebrating the community that makes it all possible.

The room was filled with pride, joy and a shared sense of purpose as students, families and supporters came together.

From heartfelt conversations to unexpected connections and new friendships, the day was a joyful expression of what it means to be part of a community that lifts each other up.



The H & M Pope Award for Excellence in Engineering/Information Technology – Congratulations, Asim!

Thanks to people like you, we're bridging the education gap and opening doors for students who might otherwise be left behind.

This year's event also marked a milestone for our charity. Our long-serving Chief Executive Officer, Neil Robinson, officially handed over to Kathleen Donohoe – a moment filled with warmth, shared vision and a commitment to empowering students at every stage of their education.

The real highlight? Our students!

- » **Tarab (Year 6)** was celebrated for being an exceptional role model with his thoughtful leadership, respectful nature and positive influence on those around him.
- » **Hal (Year 11)** a state-level basketballer and dedicated coach, was recognised for his leadership, talent and resilience – persisting through multiple knee surgeries to mentor and inspire others.
- » **Casey (Bachelor of Arts Adv/Bachelor of Laws)** was recognised for her justice-driven work in legal reform, disability rights and criminal law, including contributions to state and national policy projects.
- » **Justine (Year 10)** was celebrated for her open-mindedness and energy, embracing new opportunities and exploring exciting career paths in design, fashion and aeronautical engineering.
- » **Isla (Bachelor of Science Advanced)** was recognised for her outstanding results and mature transition from Year 12, embracing university life with focus, creativity and determination.

Your support is what makes these stories possible. It fuels confidence, creates opportunity and helps our students take their next steps with pride.



How support helped this university student move forward with purpose

When Libbie walked on stage at this year's Prize Giving Ceremony to receive her award, her quiet pride was unmistakable. A second year Bachelor of Advanced Medical Science student, she has achieved a Weighted Average Mark of 90 and a GPA of 6.75 – an incredible accomplishment by any standard. But for Libbie, the road to this moment has been far from straightforward.

Coming from a refugee background, with limited English spoken at home and a family doing their best on a low income, **Libbie is the first in her family to attend university.** At the beginning of 2024, things were especially tough. Her parents were struggling to support both her and her two younger siblings. She moved in with her grandparents – both pensioners – to ease the pressure, but the costs of study kept piling up.

Libbie put her Youth Allowance towards her university expenses and borrowed textbooks from the campus library. To help stay afloat and determined to help others, she worked a casual job running chemistry support sessions for first year students. Late nights were routine – juggling lab reports and assignments after lectures and work.

Eventually, the weight of it all caught up. Expectations were higher, practical lab classes intensified; there was a lack of guidance and costs continued to increase. After first hearing about *A Start in Life* in Year 12, she decided now was the time to reach out – nervous and unsure what to expect, but hopeful.

As soon as we stepped in, Libbie felt reassured, and the support started to make a difference. Financial support meant she no longer had to make difficult choices between textbooks, transport and lab fees. But what surprised her most was the human side of the support – the regular check-ins, words of encouragement and sense that someone genuinely cared about how she was doing. **"The ongoing encouragement gave me a sense of stability, reminded me that my efforts mattered, and motivated me to keep striving. That kind of personal support is something you don't always expect from a scholarship program."**

With less financial stress and a strong support network behind her, Libbie began to find direction. But the



academic load has continued to grow, and the pressure remains high. She's shared how much she looks forward to our check-ins, saying they help her feel encouraged, provide guidance, and to navigate tough moments.

One of the biggest turning points has been her internship at the NICM Health Research Institute. Over the summer, she continued working with the same supervisor, gradually moving from observation to hands-on research. These experiences have sparked a deep passion for exploring the therapeutic potential of natural medicines. Libbie now plans to pursue a Master of Research next year, with the long-term goal of becoming a medical researcher. **She says none of her achievements over the past year would have been possible without the support she's received from *A Start in Life*.**

Libbie's story is a reminder that success isn't just about talent or effort – it's also about access, opportunity and timely support. She's not just getting through university – she's growing into someone who will give back through healthcare, research and kindness.

"A special thank you to *A Start in Life* – for your unwavering support, for believing in our potential, and for helping us imagine a future we may not have seen for ourselves otherwise."

– Libbie

Help students like Libbie and Natalie thrive

Scan the QR code to donate before 30 June



How your support is helping a curious young learner grow in confidence and courage

Libbie isn't the only trailblazer in her family. Her little cousin Natalie, now in Year 2, is already making her mark. And she's doing it not just through effort and enthusiasm, but with a big dream – to one day become a paramedic and "save people's lives".

When Natalie first started school, she was quiet and unsure of herself – reluctant to speak in class and still finding her feet in a new world of learning. But beneath that quietness was a deep curiosity. She loved asking questions, figuring things out and making discoveries on her own. Her teacher quickly noticed her determination, kindness and the care she poured into every task – **"her positive attitude and happiness make our classroom a brighter place"**.

And this growth accelerated once *A Start in Life* stepped in. Support began in Kindergarten, and with it came access to tutoring, learning resources and – just as importantly – encouragement. **"Meeting with A Start In Life allows her to recognise the people who believe in her potential,"** her mum shared. **"She has also gained more understanding, enjoyment and independence."** Together, they practise homework after school, read before bed and explore ways to link her learning to real life.

Natalie's love of learning has only grown stronger over the past year. She's joined the choir, taken part in

"Through books and activities, her thoughts can be put into words – and from there, gradually, her little world can grow wider by exploration and curiosity."

– Natalie's mum

Community Day and represented her stage in public speaking (in both English and Khmer!) She loves writing stories, practising rhymes and exploring how the world works – whether it's telling the time or describing the night sky. In fact, her dedication and joy for learning were recognised at this year's Prize Giving Ceremony, where she was proudly awarded the *A Start in Life* Award for Best School Attendance and Effort.

But Natalie's journey is still just beginning. Her confidence is blooming, her imagination is expanding and there's so much more she wants to explore.

She may be small, but she is growing into someone with a big heart, a strong spirit and a world of possibility ahead. With many years of learning still to come, Natalie will face new challenges along the way – and she'll need continued support to stay on track. Thanks to generous supporters like you, she's not just dreaming of a brighter future – she's starting to build it, step by step.



Congratulations, Natalie – A Start in Life Award for Best School Attendance and Effort



The Careers and Skills Development Scholarship, class of 2023 receiving their completion certificates



Tina receiving her award for her outstanding commitment and dedication at university

Student Achievements

The Impact of your Support

© THE WORK ISN'T FINISHED

A closer look at what's still unfolding

This year's Prize Giving Ceremony was a wonderful reminder of how far students can go when the right support is behind them. It was a chance to pause and recognise the growth, resilience and goals of students like Libbie and Natalie – whose journeys have been shaped not only by their own determination, but by a community who believes in their potential.

Stories like theirs show what's possible when a student is given the right support at the right time. But we also know there are many more young people still at the starting line – students with just as much potential, but without the help they need.

That's why our work isn't done. Education has the power to break cycles of disadvantage, but it's not a level playing field. Across Australia, families are facing growing challenges that are making it harder for students to stay engaged, feel confident and even access the basics.

Thanks to your generosity, we've already seen what's possible. But there's more to do. From covering school essentials and easing the pressure on families, to sparking inspiration and building belief – every bit of support adds up to something bigger. Together, we can help more students write their own success stories. Thank you for continuing to walk alongside them.



The Challenge

The Reality

The cost of education is rising

School costs \$2,671 per year for primary school and \$5,043 per year for high school – even in the public system *

Back-to-school basics are out of reach

1 in 3 parents can't afford uniforms, shoes or stationery *

Students are feeling disconnected

Many students report they no longer feel engaged in learning †

Single parents carry a heavy load

2 in 3 of our students live in single-parent households

Rural students face extra barriers

22% of our students live in country areas with limited access to resources

* 'Back to School Costs and Statistics for 2025' – Finder (2025)

† 'The Whole Learner – Young People on the Next Chapter in Learning Beyond Limits' – Learning Creates (2024)

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Help a student take their next step!

With the right support at the right time, young people can do incredible things – in the classroom, in their communities and in their futures.

Your gift can give a student the tools, guidance and encouragement they need to keep learning, stay motivated and reach their goals.



Donate before June 30 to support a brighter future – and claim your tax deduction this financial year.

Scan the QR code or visit www.astartinlife.org.au



☒ **Yes!** I want to give a student hope, support and opportunity **before June 30!**

Education is more than school – it shapes who you become



STEP 1: I would like to give a gift of

- ☒ **\$75** provide a child with a literacy, numeracy and creativity pack to boost learning at home
- ☐ **\$125** fund two expert tutoring sessions that build confidence and skills
- ☐ **\$225** support career development activities that open doors for students
- ☐ **\$1,000** equip a tertiary student with a life-changing laptop
- ☐ **My choice of \$**

**Donations
over \$2
are tax
deductible**

STEP 2: My payment type

Card No: [][] [][] [][] [][] Expiry: [][] / [][] CCV: [][]

Name on card: _____ Signature: _____

Email address:

OR: ☐ **Please find enclosed** a cheque/money order (payable to *A Start in Life*)

OR: ☒ I have made a direct deposit to:

BSB: 032 006 Account number: 424 978 Account name: A Start in Life Reference: Your name

☐ *Make this a monthly gift. Monthly gifts mean ongoing support – just \$10 a month can help a child succeed and dream bigger. Make your impact last.*

STEP 3: Return this form (in the reply paid envelope provided or by one of the methods below)

Donate online:



Scan the QR code on
the left to donate at
www.astartinlife.org.au

OR



Call us today:

Phone us on
02 9264 3017

OR



Post form to:

Reply Paid
A Start in Life
PO Box 20606
Sydney NSW 2002

Donate before June 30 – Donations over \$2 are tax deductible

Gifts in Wills are a significant and important donation source for A Start in Life. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 being not at all and 10 being very interested, could you rate how likely you are to consider leaving a gift in your Will to A Start in Life.

Not at all interested ☐ 1 ☒ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10 Very interested

All information provided to A Start in Life will be treated confidentially and used in support of one or more of A Start in Life's functions or activities. We value your privacy and are committed to safely securing and storing your information, limiting its use and providing you access to it. To ensure our records remain accurate and up to date, please inform us if your details change. For more information and to obtain a copy of our full Privacy Policy, please go to astartinlife.org.au/privacy-policy.

☐ I would like to opt out of receiving future newsletters from *A Start in Life*. If you wish to change your communication preferences, please call **02 9264 3017** or email **communications@astartinlife.org.au**.



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02 9264 3017

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