



SPRING 2022

Brighter Futures

A start in life
a brighter future for young australians

☉ A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Supporting Independent Students

For young Australians in today's world, broadening educational and career horizons is a challenge.

This is especially true when they are without financial and parental support. Oswald and Hanna are two students who live independently of their parents. They are, however, incredibly mature, motivated and resilient young adults determined to make the most of their education and future. We were delighted to recently welcome Oswald and Hanna into our program and help them broaden their educational and career horizons.

Oswald Year 12

Oswald has been responsible for his own finances, education and living situation since 2020, when he moved out of home due to a strained relationship with a parent. He applied directly to *A Start in Life* late last year, as his limited income was not enough to cover the cost of his schooling, accommodation and other requirements.

In the short time we have supported Oswald, he has proven time and time again that he is a highly motivated and astute young man. He took it upon himself to apply and be accepted into his selective school for Years 11 and 12, and recently set himself a goal of achieving an ATAR of 80. He is very engaged with our team, who check in with him regularly. At a recent check-in, Oswald told us he has been avidly using the planner and study guides we provided to assist with his studies.

Throughout various hardships, Oswald discovered how physical activity supports his mood. Next year, he hopes to study a Bachelor of Exercise Science and Rehabilitation and become a physiologist, coach or personal trainer. We have provided funding for access to his local running track and gym to help him explore his passion for sport as a career, and further support his mental health. Oswald's future prospects are

perhaps best summarised by one of his teachers who said he has a "propensity for complex thought" with "the skills and ability to succeed".

Hanna Year 12

When Hanna applied to *A Start in Life* late last year she was struggling to cover essential schooling and living expenses. She has not had contact with her parents since moving out in Year 10, and now lives with her sister and brother-in-law.

Despite various hurdles, Hanna's teacher told us she has "never missed a beat at school". Hanna is a bright and diligent student, who was already preparing for life after school by regularly speaking with her career advisor. Since receiving our support, she has begun tutoring, with her tutor stating she is motivated to work hard for the HSC. We have regular check-ins with Hanna and our funding also includes Year 12 study guides, which Hanna said have been a great revision tool for classwork.

Hanna also has a passion for sport. She has excelled in netball umpiring and would like to study Occupational Therapy or Exercise Science at University. To support these passions and enhance her career prospects, we are funding her netballing. Hanna was originally aiming for an ATAR of 80; however, with our support, she is now aiming for above 87. Her PDHPE teacher states Hanna values learning and consistently devises strategies to build on her already superior results.

We are greatly impressed with Oswald and Hanna's resilience, motivation and maturity. Both are pre-approved for our 2023 tertiary scholarship and we have no doubt that, through their own efforts and our support, they will experience bright and successful careers.

Highlights from our Student Support Team

Our Student Support Team works directly with students and caregivers to better understand each student, their educational capabilities and requirements.

As part of this, we have regular check-ins with students and their families, speak with teachers and other educational providers, review school reports and conduct questionnaires. This helps us tailor each support plan to each student's individual needs and means the support we provide is very diverse. From the support provided over the last financial year, our students achieved a variety of positive outcomes, some highlights of these outcomes are shown below.

Financial support

Assistance Provided by <i>A Start in Life</i>	Outcomes from Assistance Provided
Encouraged and provided funding for all relevant HSC study guides for Year 11 and 12 students	- Students were much better resourced, prepared and attained improved scores - The majority achieved an average of B or above across all subjects in Semester 1, 2022
Actively encouraged and funded participation in school excursions and incursions	- Students were provided with new, diverse and relevant experiences - Education occurred outside the traditional classroom setting - Facilitated learning of important life skills, including socialising with peers - Promoted personal development
Provided grants for compulsory work placements for tertiary students	- All students successfully completed placements and passed the related unit - All gained valuable hands-on experience (eg. a Veterinary student scrubbed into surgeries to observe and assist, a Law student researched cases and created a proposal for her supervisors) - Reduced financial strain where part-time jobs could not be completed during these unpaid placements
Delivered funding for students' development of a new interest or extra-curricular activity and developed a learning goal aligned to it (eg. archery, yoga, BMX riding and cooking classes)	- Increased mental and physical health - Improved interactions with both peers and family members - Provided opportunities for new friendships and diverse cohorts - Explored and developed new skills "... boxing classes and boxing camp have been invaluable. Not only has it been great for Charlie's fitness, she has gained self-confidence, focus, resilience and motivation... she has made some great friends. Her schoolwork has also improved and I feel boxing has helped with that." – mother of Charlie, Year 8
Ensured resources were available to primary and secondary students seeking academic extension	- Increased motivation and interest in subjects, resulting in further improved grades (average uplift per student was over 15% across Maths and English) - Enhanced opportunities to choose schools and classes of interest - Tutoring facilitated deeper and diverse understanding of topics - Enabled students to push themselves further and enhance capabilities
Rewarded tertiary students who successfully improved or maintained very high grades with an academic bonus	- Helped maintain motivation of higher achievers - Incentivised students to attain ever increasing grades and improved employment prospects - Over 60% of tertiary students maintained a Weighted Average Mark (WAM) above 75 or improved their WAM by 10%



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Regular Interactions with students and parents

Focus of Interactions by <i>A Start in Life</i>	Outcomes from our Interactions
Co-developed an English and Maths learning goal with each primary and secondary student	- Over 80% students worked at or above grade, with over 40% receiving an A or B grade in English in Semester 1, 2022 - Over 70% of students worked at or above grade for Maths, with almost 35% receiving an A or B grade in Semester 1, 2022
Increasingly focussed each interaction with students and parents on attaining minimum levels of effort across all school subjects	98% of students now enjoy school reports showing their 'Effort' is at a Satisfactory level or above, with 70% receiving High or Very High overall effort in Semester 1, 2022 - School reports reflect these increasing efforts (eg. "growing dedication", "active participation" and "positive attitude to learning")
Provided tailored assistance to students starting at new schools (including relocating and transitioning from primary to secondary school)	- Once funds for uniforms, stationery, textbooks, compulsory fees and excursions were allocated, our Student Support Team - prepared Year 6 students for the transition to high school by discussing the environment, study timetables, etc. - guided parents in advocating for their children's needs at their new schools (particularly where special needs existed) - minimised disruptions to learning
Supported and mentored tertiary students at quarterly check-ins	- Provided an additional source of support and reassurance at a pivotal point in each student's life. For those with limited support networks (eg. living away from home) this was especially impactful. - Enabled active discussion and reflection on - educational and career goals - academic and personal growth - barriers to achieving goals and how to overcome them - motivation and new study techniques "...the support shown to me gives me confidence and courage to take on these challenges, and perhaps I wouldn't do the same had I not had the support..." – Wally
Liaised with teachers, parents and over 50 specialised services directly involved in facilitating improved educational outcomes for students supported	- Advocated for parents within schools, therefore - improved communication between caregivers and schools - increased parental engagement with their child's education - Unique and complex barriers were addressed (eg. speech pathology was funded for a secondary student upon recommendation from a paediatrician) - Further supported students by working with specialists, including community hubs and student support officers
Provided weekly study templates and actively encouraged students to utilise a study routine to ensure timely completion of homework and assessment tasks	- Over 80% of primary and secondary students now say they have a good study routine and are able to complete their homework - Enhanced study, research, time management and organisational skills - Increased overall ability to learn through homework and assessments, and improved exam preparedness



STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

The Many Benefits of Physical Activity

The benefits of physical activity extend far and wide, including improved physical and mental health, enriched social and family networks, and increased confidence.

Part of the support we provide involves funding a diversity of extra-curricular pursuits, including all sorts of physical activity depending on each student's personal interests – be it running, archery, dance, basketball, BMX riding or yoga. Two recent stand-out stories are those of Charlie and Hazel. Both are young females in Year 8 who have found new passions and are reaping the benefits.

Charlie Year 8

We first met Charlie in 2020, when her single mum applied for support. Charlie was always an active child and enjoyed sports, however financial constraints meant her family could not afford to enrol her in any out-of-school activities. At that time, her school's student welfare officer told us Charlie didn't believe in herself despite being a hard worker, and her teacher believed she needed help to come out of her shell. After speaking with Charlie and her mum, we helped formulate a learning goal to attend boxing lessons to develop Charlie's skills, assist with motivation and build confidence. To support this goal, we provided funding for boxing lessons and a boxing camp, which she has thoroughly enjoyed. In August this year, Charlie's mum, Mal, sent us the following email.

*"I would like to thank you and all the people involved in the A Start in Life program. You do a wonderful job and your support has helped to really make change in Charlie's life... Earlier in the year she seemed to struggle a little... The support you gave her with her boxing classes and boxing camp has been invaluable. Not only has it been great for her fitness, **she has gained self-confidence, focus, resilience and motivation.***

*When Charlie first started boxing, she was very shy and wouldn't do the classes without a friend with her and didn't talk to anyone. She now attends classes 3–5 times per week by herself and has made some great friends. She has some fantastic mentors, including current and ex-professional boxers male and female... **Her schoolwork has also improved and I feel that boxing has helped with that.** So once again, thank you."*



Hazel Year 8

We also met Hazel in 2020, when her single father applied for support for Hazel and her twin sister. At the time, they were struggling to pay for basics such as internet access and uniforms, and did not have the capacity to afford any extra-curricular activities.

As part of our support plan, we helped Hazel set a learning goal to join an out-of-school hobby to increase her physical activity and make new friends. She told us she was curious to try karate as her dad used to practice it, so we directed funding towards regular karate lessons.

After Hazel's first lesson, her father contacted us to say she had already made a new friend, and Hazel has thrived with karate ever since! At a recent check-in, she told us how much she enjoys karate and how it has helped her build confidence to interact with others.

Hazel is very focused and has been going up grades as she gains more and more experience. She has even started to enter karate tournaments, winning both non-contact and padded-contact categories in her division at a recent competition.

Hazel is understandably quite proud of her achievements and has even inspired her Dad to start practicing karate again! In fact, they recently attended a karate camp together and have enjoyed bonding over this shared passion.