



MARCH 2024

# Brighter Futures

*A start in life*  
a brighter future for young australians

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## Decades Later – the Everlasting Power of your Help

Your support paves the way for fulfilling careers and remarkable achievements for many decades to come. It did for April and Mark, when hardship struck their families, and it will for our current students.

### April

April was nine when *A Start in Life* began providing support. It was the early 1990s and her mother needed help to support five children after her father unexpectedly left. At our recent 100 Year Anniversary event, April gave a speech reflecting on the positive impact this charity made on her life. With our help in place throughout her schooling, April told of how she “finally felt normal” as she “no longer felt shame”, could fit in with her peers and be part of her community. She said the assistance extended beyond finances as she also felt a strong sense of support. April worked hard at school and at her extra-curriculars – “I wanted to achieve greatness to show I wasn’t a wasted investment. That I deserved the support and encouragement that I was receiving.”

*And this life, all that I have and all that I’ve done, quite possibly wouldn’t have happened without all of you. Without this wonderful charity. Thank you for making me feel like every other student at school...thank you for opening my mind, taking my blinkers off and giving me the gift of knowledge. – April*

After completing Year 12, April moved to England to follow her passion and worked in West End theatres. A few years later, she returned to Australia and began working in production, starting “at the bottom” and working her way up in post-production.

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**“To those being supported now, know that we *all* believe in you. We believe that you can achieve greatness and do anything you dare to dream. So good luck, because the world is waiting!” – April**

She is now a Co-Executive Producer on *MasterChef* and was recognised for this with an AACTA award this year. She has worked on countless leading Australian television shows and has worked in visual effects on a *Marvel* movie. Every working day she leads over 100 people, has travelled the world for work where she has seen “the most wondrous of things” and is currently writing a novel. As she said, “the [charity] changed our lives. It’s as simple as that”. April is a loyal supporter of *A Start in Life* and has been donating regularly for the past twelve years “trying to give back a little of what I was so lucky to receive”.

## Mark

Support for Mark began in the early 1980s after the sudden death of his father, when he and his brother were only 11 and 7 years old respectively. When recently reflecting on the impact *A Start in Life* has had on his life, he said it was “a true blessing” as it helped cover costs that would have otherwise been “too hard to meet” and allowed him to focus on his studies and future career. This career has been filled with numerous achievements, including becoming a Director and strategist for leading Australian companies, a philanthropist and board member, an Australian Senator and Minister for Sport.

**“[The charity] reduced a great amount of emotional stress for my family and helped me lead a fruitful life. I am eternally thankful for the long commitment and support...[it] was so important to my development and social conscience.” – Mark**

## 🌟 STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

# Casper and Lee’s Big City Adventure Full of Learning

Supporters helped fund 11 year old twins overnight excursion to Sydney.

Living with their grandparents Marleen and Richard in Gunnedah, Casper and Lee have shown remarkable progress over the past four years, thanks to supporters of *A Start in Life*. Witnessing noticeable improvements in attentiveness and self-esteem, Marleen and Richard have told us how much they appreciate our role in the twins’ education, believing they can now “be the best they can be at school and home”.

Recently, our assistance enabled Casper and Lee to embark on an overnight excursion to Sydney. Despite initial nerves, the young twins embraced the experience, relishing the opportunity to explore the city. From exploring the Royal Botanic Gardens to seeing the Opera House and walking under the Harbour Bridge, the trip allowed them to discover new interests and expand their perspectives. From their day at Taronga Zoo, Casper nurtured his “love for animals”, while Lee discovered a passion for wildlife, including pythons and giraffes.

While initially daunted by the noise and scale of the city, the excursion also provided valuable opportunities for learning and personal growth. Lee learnt more about being part of a group and how to interact with others, while Casper embraced the opportunity to practise his independence. Both twins returned home with a newfound sense of confidence, with their grandma noting how “grown up” they seemed.

Casper and Lee are already looking forward to their next annual excursion to our national capital, Canberra!

**“We are so grateful that they could go on the excursion as it has taught them so much about self-confidence, believing in themselves and having some independence from us.” – Marleen, Casper and Lee’s grandma**



# Preparing Young Learners for the Future

Our Career and Skills Development Scholarship enjoyed a successful first year. Its purpose is to broaden student's career horizons and equip them with skills needed for a modern career. The following highlights show it achieved this and more.

## Career sampling with industry professionals

Students had the opportunity to 'sample' one possible career of interest by meeting with an expert from that profession. They spent time with experts like sports psychologists, small business owners, doctors, marketing managers and logistics specialists, gaining insights into a 'day in the life' and assessing their interest. Each student also evaluated how the personality traits we helped them discover during the year matched with their career aspirations. For some, like Vee who dreams of becoming a doctor, the experience reinforced how well their sampled career aligned with their passions, personality and work ethic. Others discovered the realities and challenges involved with their sampled career and are now exploring other professions. All students, however, remain determined and optimistic about their future prospects, like Aliya who said that despite the "hard journey, the outcomes are certainly promising".

**"At the start of the year, I really had no idea about what my future was going to look like. Through the career sampling opportunities and excursions I have had in this scholarship, I now have several careers that I am interested in and want to learn more about." – Libby**

of the 21st Century skills taught in our workshops, like Libby who noted the importance of communication and collaboration when "seeing people work together to create solutions". Students also began to understand the responsibilities that come with work, as Vee said "it was an eye-opening experience ... it has helped me discover a deeper sense of what is ahead".

## Q&A with tertiary students

We were delighted when six tertiary students currently being assisted by *A Start in Life* generously made their time available to sit and talk with our Year 9 students. By sitting with older students who have overcome their own barriers and are broadening their horizons, valuable guidance was shared – including the transition from school to tertiary studies and tips for the first year. The scholarship students felt relieved as they learned of opportunities to change subjects, courses and career paths. They learnt, first-hand, about the many different pathways for entry into tertiary studies and their responsibility to be an independent learner. Hearing from older students who our Year 9 students could relate to meant so much more when the tertiaries spoke of what "uni life" involves and how it is important to "always be open to new opportunities". As one of our scholarship students reflected, wisdom was being passed down. The Year 9 students appreciated the kindness of the tertiary students, felt reassured to hear from others who have been in their shoes and walked away inspired.

Excitingly, all scholars are continuing onto the scholarship's second year!



## Industry excursions

Our scholars embarked on excursions to prominent Australian companies, including the UTS Animal Logic Academy and the Reserve Bank of Australia. Here, they heard from employees and immersed themselves in the dynamic environments of these workplaces, uncovering new career interests and envisioning possible future roles. Justine, for example, is now interested in consulting due to the appeal of teamwork, projects and travel. Students also observed real life applications



# A Night to Remember

In November of last year, *A Start in Life* joyfully celebrated its 100 Year Anniversary with 100 members of its community.

In an evening filled with many highlights, none shone brighter than the exchange of personal stories. Alumni, current beneficiaries and supporters of our cause took to the stage, happily baring their souls as they spoke about the transformative power of *A Start in Life* each has experienced.

One tale that resonated deeply was that of a resilient young woman who, despite facing the daunting challenges of immigration, the loss of her father, and financial hardship in her youth, went on to become a successful lawyer – a testament to the unwavering strength of the human spirit and the power of help when challenges are greatest.

Equally moving was the heartfelt account of a single father, his voice trembling with emotion as he expressed gratitude for *A Start in Life's* assistance. This support buoyed him and his 11 year old son through very turbulent times. His words served as a poignant reminder of the profound impact a helping hand can have on those in need.

It was also a night of pure camaraderie, a testament to the enduring spirit of a community that has flourished over the course of a century. Students, past and present, happily mixed with supporters, sharing stories of how their lives and educational journeys have changed as a consequence of *A Start in Life's* help.

Supporters were not mere spectators, but also active participants as they too expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to be part of something truly meaningful – a sentiment encapsulated by one



supporter who tearfully proclaimed, "it means the world to us to be involved with such a wonderful organisation". This long-standing supporter also shared "Listening to the stories of your students, their personal struggles, their growth with your programs and their enthusiasm about their futures was heartfelt. We thank you so much for all that you do."

The evening was not only a celebration of the past 100 years but also of the limitless possibilities that lie ahead and flow from helping students in need who are committed to their education. We plan to be here for another 100 years equipping students with skills and resources that better prepare them for modern careers and improve the quality of life that is then available to them. If you are already a supporter helping make students' lives brighter, we thank you. If you aren't yet, please consider lending your help to ensure the next century is as impactful as the last.

## I want to help *A Start in Life* and invest in the future of young Australian students

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