



SUMMER 2021

Brighter Futures



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Student Aspirations

We asked students what a brighter future means for them and how *A Start in Life's* support is helping them work towards this.

Dan Alumni, Bachelor of Engineering, Regional WA

My goal is to become a space engineer. I want to design new spacecrafts and launch vehicles that will improve our existing technology. *A Start in Life* provided me with a laptop capable of running aerodynamic analysis so I could conduct my final year research project. Their support also gave me the means to complete an internship with Boeing. Both my education and internship have created many opportunities for me in the aerospace sector.

Mo Year 12, Sydney

My future aspiration is to become an expert in the Cybersecurity field. I've been fascinated by Technology since I was a young child. *A Start in Life* organised great webinars for me, such as a Job Readiness Program, where I learnt how to write a good CV and prepare for an interview, and got to talk to a professional in the field about my future pathways. The Team is always there to provide me with any sort of support I need. They really kept me motivated and encouraged me to do my best during the crazy year that was 2020.

Tom Year 6, Sydney

I would like to be an IT Specialist because I'm really good at Technology, and it would be fun to tinker with many different inventions. *A Start in Life* helped my family get internet access, and helps me go to school to be the best I can be.

Mimi Year 12, Regional QLD

I want to continue my education, and study Medicine at University. Medicine would allow me to work socially, creatively and scientifically in a way that helps others. I know it won't be easy, but I also know that with dedication and perseverance I can accomplish this. The Team has always encouraged me to live a well-rounded life, and are actively involved in keeping me focused on my goals. The Team and all of their supporters are my role models, teaching me the power of generosity and kindness, an invaluable trait *A Start in Life* has never stopped displaying.





© REFLECTING ON 2020

A very different year of learning

Pepper Year 2, Regional NSW

Pepper is cared for by her grandmother, Diane, and has been supported by *A Start in Life* since 2019. In early March, doctors advised Diane and Pepper to self-isolate, as Diane suffers from a compromised immune system.

To help engage Pepper in home-schooling, Diane setup a home library. Pepper now proudly tells us, "In the library in my sunroom, I am the librarian and have a book to sign books in and out." To assist with the transition to home-schooling, the Team provided worksheets, computer practice programs, and reading books. This has led to significant improvements in her reading levels.

Matt Year 6, Sydney

Jo, a single mother of two sons assisted by *A Start in Life*, had to adapt to the role of teacher when their community entered a COVID-19 lockdown. The extra time working with her youngest, Matt, highlighted to Jo gaps in his learning. The Team bought Matt Year 5 and 6 English and Maths workbooks that were better tailored to his learning style and comprehension level.

"Matt learned so much during lock-down. He was able to practise basics that over the years seem to have been glossed over in school," Jo reports. Matt now finds English and Maths not so daunting, after being able to concentrate on those subjects without rushing. He went back to school with greater confidence, and now says he's "able to put his hand up and answer more questions than usual".

Anna 1st Year University, Melbourne

Anna is a tertiary student who, with *A Start in Life's* support, is pursuing a degree in Law. However, she has had a passion to sing since she was young. To help her navigate with the stresses of lockdown, our Team encouraged her to follow this interest and arranged for her to take online voice lessons. Anna said she "learnt a lot of techniques she never knew about", felt happier and hopeful, and continues to practise alongside her studies.

Annoying Lockdown

*Annoying lockdown,
I had a breakdown
Where are my socks?
When I finally get to go outside,
Ouch! I step on a rock
I'm stuck in this house,
Did I just see a mouse?
I don't know, but I like to shout!*

*When I go outside, I wear a mask
And when this is over,
I would like to try and busk with a mask
But then I will have to go to school,
And I will have to do tasks!*

Composed by an *A Start in Life* student

Ali Year 7, Melbourne

Sam Year 2, Regional NSW

Sam had the opportunity to discover a new interest while at home, when a generous neighbour gave him a piano. Fascinated by its novelty, Sam quickly picked up the basics and began to teach himself 'scales'. As the Team works to encourage Sam in constructive and stimulating activities, they have now allocated funds from his Student Support Plan for future, formal lessons.

Ange, Year 10, Sydney

When Ange had her much loved sport cancelled due to COVID-19, she chose to undertake an online Certificate in Floristry (Assistant). This led to her obtaining a part-time job, where she now happily employs those skills learned and earns some pocket money.



Inspiring ways to help

While the amounts and circumstances behind each donation may differ, they are united by a belief in the importance of education.

Bowling for a cause

Terry Munright has found that mixing fun and a bit of healthy competition is the best way to raise funds for charity. For the past six years, Terry has organised a Lawn Bowls day with proceeds benefitting *A Start in Life*, and helping provide a brighter future for young Australian students.

Terry originally became involved with *A Start in Life* through a Masonic Lodge in Sydney. After retiring to Tea Gardens, New South Wales, he founded the tournament, which has become an annual tradition and highlight of the community calendar.

Tea Gardens Country Club volunteers a "greens fees free day", donating the regular player's fee to *A Start in Life*, and sponsoring a sausage sizzle. Community members and local businesses donate items and services for a raffle and auction, led by a spirited local auctioneer.

Terry provides guests an update on the progress of students benefitting from their support, including recent milestones, accomplishments, and plans for the future.

Each year, he and *A Start in Life* are delighted by the funds raised. Terry says the feedback has been wonderful, "The Tea Gardens community is very generous, it's a lovely group to be a part of. Many participants say they want us to do this event twice a year!"



The business of giving back

A new supporter of *A Start in Life* is dedicated to the business of giving back. After founding and building a number of successful businesses, he wished to contribute to the greater good of his community. He now donates a percentage of his companies' total profits to *A Start in Life*. He chose *A Start in Life* because he understands, and has personally experienced, the value of and opportunities created by a good education.

Every amount counts

One of our most inspiring giving stories is that of a late donor who knew that every amount counts. He regularly collected and returned recyclables, donating refunds to *A Start in Life*. He found this especially rewarding as it reduced waste and supported a cause he truly believed in. His children told us that he often spoke of their luck, the importance of education, and living by the motto, "everything helps".

As the 2021 school year begins, help *A Start in Life* students get back-to-school with some creative fundraising.

Other ways to raise:

- **Give it up challenge** – Make your New Year's resolutions have double the benefits. If you're resolving to give up coffee runs, takeaways, costly Uber rides or other indulgences, consider donating the money saved in lieu.
- **School "funraiser"** – *A Start in Life's* focus on children and education makes a student or school "funraiser" particularly meaningful. Hold a bake sale, car wash, reading marathon or charity concert.

< Terry Munright (second from right) with fellow winners of the annual "Kneeler's and Grippers" charity day



Cam's study space



Strengthening educational networks

A key part of the Student Support Team's (Team) role is to work with families to strengthen the student's educational network.

While the shape of these networks are different for each child, they often include the parent/carer, teachers, learning support staff, tutors and allied health specialists. Our Team puts great care into building relationships with each of these contributors. Working in partnership creates a clearer picture of the student's needs, and ensures the most effective interventions and support are in place.

The stories below highlight how *A Start in Life* and educational networks uniquely work together to help students accomplish their goals and achieve a brighter future.

Key relationship Student Welfare Officer

Dani Year 2, Sydney & **Cam** Year 5, Sydney

Two of *A Start in Life*'s newer students are Dani and Cam, who live with their father, Rob, a single parent suffering from a chronic illness. *A Start in Life* was introduced to the family by Dani and Cam's School Welfare Officer, Christine, when she realised that they needed support beyond what the school could provide. The Team used Christine's first-hand insights to create Dani and Cam's personal Educational Support Plan, which included furniture to set up study spaces, laptop and internet access.

Close and consistent communication between the Team and Christine fuels Dani and Cam's progress, and has become a lifeline for the entire family. The Team contacts Christine whenever extra assistance is needed, especially when Rob is ill or in hospital. Christine frequently sees both students in-person, and provides additional updates on their schoolwork. Together, she and the Team ensure *A Start in Life*'s support evolves to meet their educational needs. It has already resulted in an increased engagement in school from both Dani and Cam, and they now have the resources needed to prepare them for their learning and easily complete homework.

Key relationship Tutor

Hal Year 7, Brisbane

A Start in Life first met Hal in 2016, as a year 3 student. Although Hal had already been diagnosed with learning difficulties, it took several years for health professionals to identify a developmental language disorder as the underlying cause. In 2019, *A Start in Life* provided financial assistance for Hal to undergo a speech assessment. A specialised tutor was then engaged to help Hal implement the recommendations of the assessment.

Hal's tutor has become a pivotal partner in helping her achieve learning goals and providing our Team with feedback. The tutoring allows Hal extra time to process her lessons and provides strategies to help her learn more effectively in class. The success of the tuition is demonstrated through Hal's results, which now show her working at level with her peers in Maths and English – considerable progress from prior years. The tutor tells us: "Hal has continued to gain self-assurance, but above all she is always willing to work hard and have a go".