



November 2025

Brighter Futures

A start in life

☉ STORIES FROM OUR COMMUNITY

A Family Who Has Never Given Up

When his father was hospitalised for many months, Zach kept life steady for himself and his younger sister – showing quiet strength and determination.

Sixteen-year-old Zach and his twelve-year-old sister, Paige, have been part of the A Start in Life community since 2020. Their single father, John, has always been committed to his children's education. Life has not always been easy for the family, but they've faced every challenge with quiet determination and a strong sense of care for one another.

Earlier this year, their resilience was tested in ways no young person should experience. John became seriously unwell and required emergency surgery, which led to the amputation of his leg and months in hospital.

We insisted that the family stay – after all, they needed support now more than ever. And that's when Zach truly came into his own. **While his father remained in hospital, Zach took on responsibilities well beyond his years.** He coordinated with our Student Assistance Team, sent through school reports, took forms to hospital for his dad to sign, and even took it upon himself to email us with updates. "We were blown away by Zach's perseverance and resilience" our team shared. "His maturity is so impressive".

At home, Zach and Paige kept up their routines. They packed their

lunches, ironed their uniforms and did their laundry. Every day after school, they travelled over an hour to visit their dad in hospital.

At a time when many young people might have struggled to stay motivated, Zach and Paige's perseverance never wavered. Not only did they attend school every day, they continued to give it their best. They completed every assignment and stayed engaged with their learning. Zach received a special school award, while Paige was asked to perform guitar at a school event. Their teachers have had nothing but praise for their attitude and effort.

John is now back home and continuing his recovery, and the family is beginning to find their rhythm again. **When we caught up recently, John was at a loss for words for the support they received from our team.** "I want to say thank you and appreciate everything you've done for us, especially this year. From my heart, thank you for your patience."

When we congratulated Zach on how amazing he'd been throughout this time, he became teary – a quiet moment that said more than words ever could.

“

I'm just full of emotions at the moment, because I'm so proud of them, and I'm just so blessed that you guys are in our lives.”

Now that Zach has a little more time and with a desire to support others, he is hoping to learn more about psychology, while Paige continues to find joy through playing guitar and being in a band with her friends. With the continued support of A Start in Life, Zach and Paige are well positioned to build on their strengths and develop the skills needed for a successful future.

Their story is a reminder that with encouragement, young people can find strength they never knew they had – and that support at the right time can make all the difference.

What Brightens Your World?

A colourful celebration of joy, imagination and self-expression

We recently invited our students to take part in a special art competition inspired by the theme "what brightens your world?"

Students were encouraged to think about the people, places, colours, moments and memories that make them feel happy and inspired – and to bring those ideas to life in their own unique way.

From bold brushstrokes to delicate details, their creativity shone, and their artworks were filled with meaning and heart. Each piece tells a story, from family and belonging to creativity and hope. We're so proud of every student who took part and are delighted to share a glimpse of their beautiful creations with you!



Alice
YEAR 11

"This piece is a mixture of what brightens my world. The painting I did relays the main concept of me drawing and my friends as the main idea of what brightens my world. Around the painting I also added some little things which I enjoy a lot and mean a lot to me." ➤



Tasheen
YEAR 11

"I painted this acrylic artwork to reflect what brightens my world which are peace, nature, and a sense of belonging. The house covered in ivy and surrounded by flowers symbolises the connection between my emotions and the environment that surrounds me. I sometimes struggle with social anxiety, which makes me overthink how others see me. The sunlight and bright colours in my painting symbolise warmth, happiness, and growth, reminding me to focus on self acceptance. I realised what truly brightens my world shouldn't be what people think of me or trying to please others, but calm, natural places filled with light, where I can follow my own path and feel free, inspired, and at peace." ➤



“

I draw my hand holding the world to show I care and respect everything around me. I also drew my grandparent's house, where I was born, and where all my cousins were born too...I include a cat I always play with when I come over to my grandparents' place and my family because every time we have a special celebration, all my relatives come together. We all have a love of fun. I add a lantern and the sun which shows that my world is shining bright.”



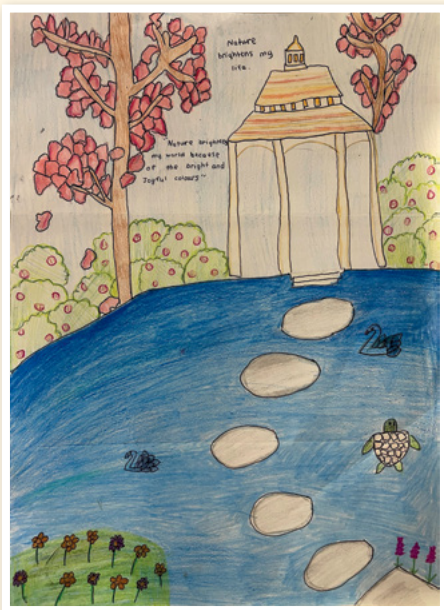
Natalie
YEAR 2





Rini
YEAR 4

"Nature brightens my world because of the bright and joyful colours." ↓



Jasmine
YEAR 7

"Nature brightens my world because of the tranquillity it brings." ↓



Katie
YEAR 7

"Katie's first entry is a rhyming poem titled 'Cockatoo' with her drawing of a dancing cockatoo which brightens her world." ↓



Tanya
YEAR 10

"This collage represents the little things that bring me joy, comfort and inspiration, that's what makes my world feel brighter... Altogether, it shows how bits of music, art and personality can come together to create a safe space that feels warm, making my life more colourful and meaningful." ↓



Cockatoo

Not like the miners, quick and shy,
who chatter fast as they dart by.
Not like the robins, red and small,
whose song is sweet, but a soft call.

Not painted bright like lorikeets,
with bright bursts on their cheeks.

This pale and wandering cockatoo
glides where quiet breezes play,
a ghost of light in wings of grey.

Its squawk is loud, not soft or neat.
A sudden cry, not calm or sweet.
No bursts of red but on its head...
A yellow crest like sunshine's thread

It does not shine in crimson tones
or flit through trees above soft stones.
But still it makes the morning new.
This gentle, golden cockatoo.



Mahnoor
YEAR 10

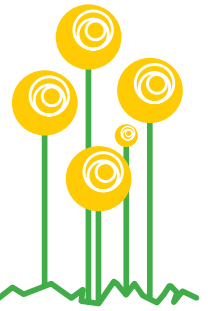
"My submission is a painting that reflects my love for nature (including mountains, flowers, trees, water, etc) and how it inspires me." ↓



Matilda
YEAR 6

"This is Matilda's painting for her art entry to the art comp. She loves seeing the sunset over our backyard each evening in Bundaberg!" ↓





The Yellow Poppy

At the heart of A Start in Life is the yellow poppy – not just a flower, but a symbol of resilience, renewal and hope.

Established on Remembrance Day in 1923, our organisation has always shared the poppy's spirit of hope and renewal. Over time, the yellow poppy became our emblem – representing brighter days, new beginnings and the belief that every child deserves the chance to grow and thrive.

The poppy's ability to grow in harsh conditions speaks to the strength of the human spirit and the enduring hope for a brighter future. Like the poppy, many of our students must find ways to grow in difficult environments – some live away from home, some care for family, some do not have family support, and all face financial and personal challenges that test their resilience. Yet, with the right support, they rise above hardship and reach for the light.

Yellow poppies are often associated with optimism, renewal and looking on the



bright side. They symbolise happiness, success and prosperity – qualities we see reflected in every student who continues to push forward, no matter how tough the circumstances.

Over the past century, our yellow poppy has continued to bloom in classrooms and lecture halls across the country. It's there in the backpack of a child proudly carrying

their very first set of schoolbooks, in the determination of a teenager preparing for exams, and in the quiet confidence of a TAFE student starting a course in a town far from home.

Each student carries their own story – and with your support, a future that feels possible. Together, we're planting seeds of opportunity, strength and success – one yellow poppy at a time.

Plant the seed for a brighter future

Every student has a story – and with your help, it can be one of confidence, growth and possibility.

As families prepare for the new school year, your support provides the essentials that ease the pressure – from school supplies and uniforms, to mentoring and guidance.

Together, we can help every student walk into 2026 feeling proud, prepared and excited by what's ahead.

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

