

# Breaking the Barriers:

## Forum on First-in-Family students in university

An OLT Seed Project

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# What am I waiting for?

## Motivations & Transformations

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I think the more inspirational stories sometimes are those older people who have just thought, “bugger it, I’m going to give it a go”, and have graduated at an older age. That’s inspiring ... and I think that along the way in the last 10 years, it’s really given me my courage ... to go, “You know what? Life’s getting away from all of us, your kids do grow up. What am I waiting for?” I’ve felt like I’ve achieved more things than what I ever thought ... and, the old way, you know, [you had to] go to high school, get a good mark and be able to be fitted in that way; you had to actually have the time and dedication and know-how to get to a university to do it, where, you know, this online has just opened up so many possibilities for people and I’m one of them.

*(Belinda, 31, online)*

# Motivations

More similarities than differences between the 3 cohorts

Mode of study chosen depended on life circumstances and 'serendipity' – finding out by chance, knowing someone else studying etc.

But the underlying reasons, hopes, dreams, changes, transformations and discoveries – similar across the three cohorts

# A better future

I wanted to do something more meaningful with my life and the best avenue to do that was to get the skills and study first. I thought it might make it easier to get employment at the end of it.

*(Georgia, 32, single parent, online u/g)*

Before I came to university I did a trade as a motor mechanic. I started out real young at 14 and by the time I was 24, I'd been there for 10 years in the same workshop and I needed more of a challenge.

*(Daniel, no children, on-campus u/g, now studying mechanical engineering)*

I need to find a career path, you know, learn something, get some more skills under my belt.

*(Tracey, 35, 2 children, enabling)*

# Improve financial situation

I'm the only income earner in our family so I thought it'd be good if I did actually earn more money than I do as a chef because it's not exactly a well-paid job. *(Richard, 29, 1 child, online u/g)*

My husband and I have always been on low incomes together, combined incomes, so I think everybody knows that will ease a lot of stress and just to be able to live and pay the bills, I think everybody knows that university is a great thing for jobs. *(Emma, 32, 1 child, on-campus u/g)*

# Self-sufficiency

So I can be self-sufficient. I don't want to be on government payments for ever. I want to be able to earn my own way and not rely on a man ever again so yes, that's pretty much it, rely on myself. *(Elle, single parent, 3 children, on-campus u/g)*

I might one day actually pull off owning my own house and actually have some super – enough to survive on. *(Natalie, sole parent, 2 children, online u/g)*

# Inspiration of others

## Partners:

My partner really... when we were talking about my options, she really got me on there, got me to have a look at the website and see what I could do and that really got me into it as well. *(Phil, 29, online u/g)*

I have a very supportive partner and he said “Just quit work. We don't need you to work. This is what you really want to do so let's focus on doing that”. *(Marilyn, 31, enabling)*

# Inspiration of others

## Mums:

My mum was always influential in my life in terms of wanting to progress to the next level and she was always extremely proud. *(Misti, 30, online u/g)*

Pretty much my mum because she didn't know much English as well and all the time she's been going to TAFE and doing TAFE courses and now she's got a diploma in business. *(Samir, 21, enabling)*

## Parents and other family in general:

My parents were both extremely supportive and sort of pro attending university so I'd say that they encouraged me. I have an uncle and a cousin who both did very well at university and I've sort of always looked up to them. *(Ned, 23, on-campus u/g)*

# Inspiration of others

## Workplace:

My current boss that I've worked for since 2004 had been encouraging me to try and take on some form of study. *(Evie, 43, u/g online)*

My old boss, she did [inspire me]... That's pretty much whose direction I followed in. *(Nicole, 21, on-campus u/g)*

## Teachers:

My music teachers in high school were always very encouraging and it kind of just inspired me to keep doing what I wanted to do. *(Natalia, 27, on-campus u/g)*

I had a number of teachers in high school that were really encouraging and supportive and made me feel like university would be a really great pathway. *(Gail, 23, online u/g)*

# Personal 'epiphany'

It was just my own personal epiphany I had, that I realised I'm sure I've got potential to do more. *(Donna, 36, 2 children, online u/g)*

It was kind of just my views started changing and I really wanted to be successful... I was just tired of being the kid that never really cared about school. *(Ahmad, 19, on-campus u/g)*

I guess I'm just sick of seeing a lot of injustice and oppression coming from big business especially; getting passed down to government and it's just something that is intrinsic in the entire world *(Marcus, 27, enabling)*

# Life changing event

When I had her [daughter] I just wanted a change of career and it seemed like a good idea. *(Erin, 29, sole parent, 1 child, online u/g)*

When [youngest child] came along – and she came when I was 39 – I kind of had this moment of going “What am I going to do? Do I want to go back to what I was doing prior to her arrival or do I want to do something that is a little bit different?” *(Vicki, 3 children, enabling)*

Well actually I have a long history through my family of alcoholism and that’s why I stopped drinking three years ago but then I wanted to study it further and that’s why I’m here. *(Ally, 39, sole parent, 2 children, on-campus u/g)*

# A long held dream

It was something that I always wanted to do. It's not something that anybody in my family has ever done. *(Ally, 39, single parent with 2 children, on-campus u/g)*

I've been wanting to do it for a long time. I enjoyed accounting at high school but once I got married and had kids it was a bit impossible to do it. *(Lance, 46, 2 children, online u/g)*

I've always wanted to go to university even when I was a kid. I was always very bright at school and I knew that our circumstances would never permit that. *(Molly, 62, widowed, online u/g)*

It's something that I've been wanting to do for quite a few years, for maybe five or six years. I've been craving to really get out there and start learning more. *(Marcus, enabling)*

# Transformations

- New sense of self
- Seeing new possibilities & opportunities
- Change in relationships with others
- Impact on next generation

# New sense of self

And, it's very strange for me because... during the day, I'm just a mother and I'm just a cleaning lady so, you know what I mean, like in the world of the work chain, I'm down the bottom... and then here I am, at night, studying psychology. So, I have a lot of moments where I'm like "Wow, hey, no-one would pick that". (*Donna, 2 children, online u/g*)

It's building my confidence back up in myself. (*Marilyn, 31, enabling*)

I've found that coming, it's really good. Like I feel like I've blossomed as a person if that makes any sense... I feel like, "I can do this. I have the ability. I'm not an idiot" (*Tracey, enabling*)

I have noticed it's really started to build my own self-esteem as well that I've got things to be able to contribute to conversations. (*Gemma, 42, 3 children, online u/g*)

I'm more acceptable to outside ideas, heaps smarter now, I'm more tolerant. (*Graeme, 31, on-campus u/g*)

# New possibilities & opportunities

It's a completely new experience for me. New and beautiful. It's a fresh start for my life really. That's the way I feel. It's really encouraging. It's good. *(Rochelle, 45, sole parent, 1 child, online u/g)*

I can see this bigger picture like "Wow, once I'm a nurse, I'm going to be doing this and it's going to be fun. I'm going to like going to work every day". *(Tash, 24, online u/g)*

I think it made me more confident about being challenged as well and since then, it's made me want to go overseas. *(Abbey, 22, on-campus u/g)*

I feel like I'm travelling to a foreign country and I'm just able to experience a whole new world. *(Corey, 30, on-campus u/g)*

# Change in relationships

I feel like, since I've been coming to university I have the knowledge to engage more with other people on a higher level, not just "What did you do today? What are you doing on the weekend". (*Tracey, enabling*)

Some of my friends that are not going to uni, changed a bit because I don't hang out with them as much as I did before. (*Samir, enabling*)

I've noticed my friends have changed along the way too. I kind of look for conversations where you know, I can discuss something a bit more in-depth not just "Oh my God, the kids are sick last week, how's yours?" (*Yvonne, 38, 2 children, on-campus u/g*)

# Change in relationships

It [university study] opens up your mind and you become very broad-minded; and I have found that the way I relate to people, the way I relate to some of the old friends and even family, is very different because studying makes you have a questioning mind and an analytical mind and, you know, it also gives you skills in reflection and self-reflection and those things, unless you've been taught that, I don't think always come naturally. So, I know that I relate to many of my old friends, and some of my family members, differently because I have that knowledge that I've gained... *(Holly, 43, 3 children, online u/g)*

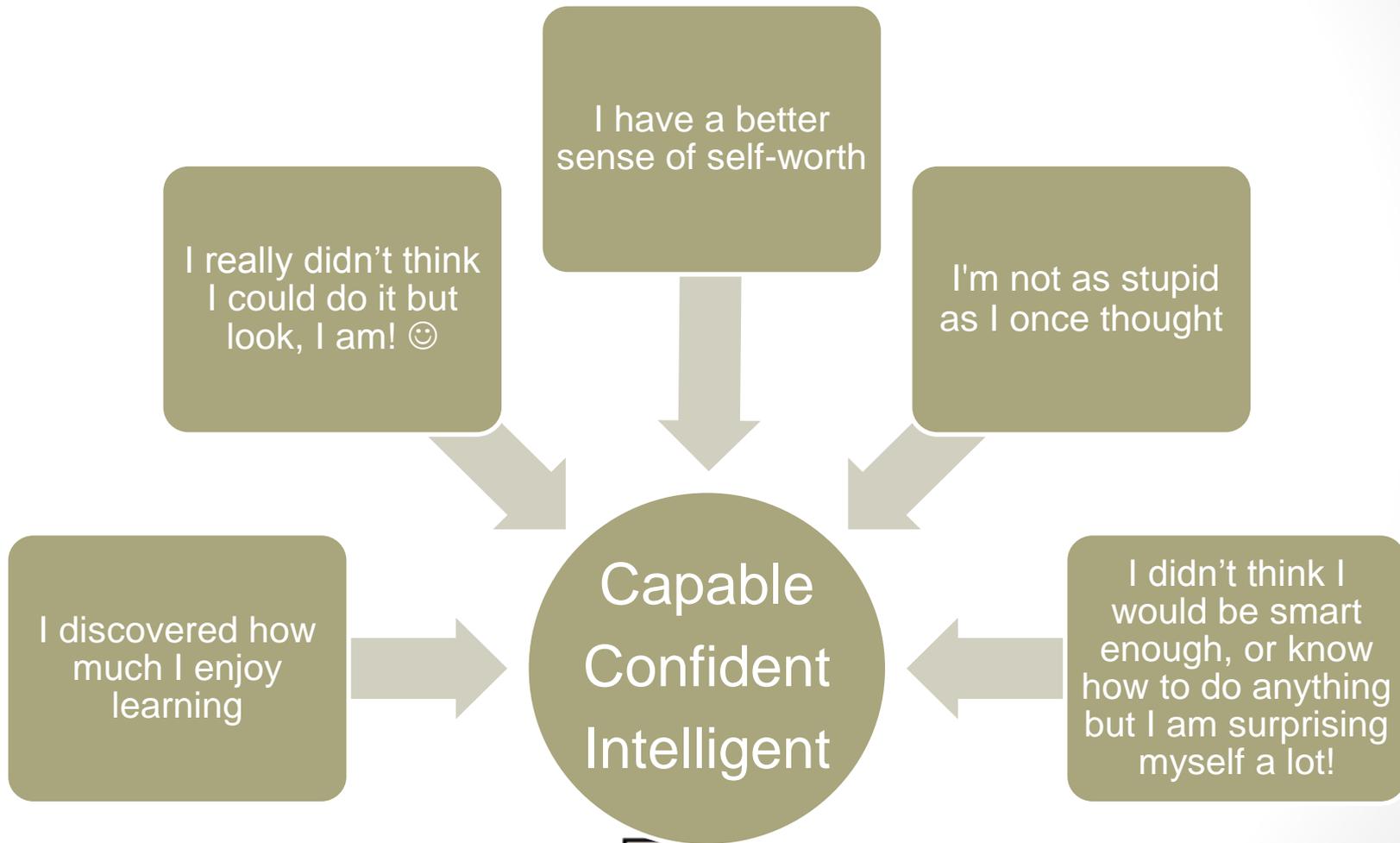
# Impact on next generation

I don't think I would ever consider not sending my children to university or at least some form of higher education. *(Misti, 30, online u/g)*

I've noticed that both of them are doing their homework more... and they're taking more pride in their homework; they're not just scribbling it... I sort of get that feeling that I feel like I'm modelling to them which is great. *(Tracey, enabling)*

You want to instil knowledge and instil the best wisdom into your kids so they've got the best tools to survive through life... I guess it's going to be a chain reaction of events I think where hopefully it will benefit them. *(Nick, 39, 4 children, on-campus u/g)*

# Voices from the survey



# An observation

## Hopes and dreams are quite modest:

- To get a job they like
- To improve their career
- To earn enough to have a home, self-sufficiency
- To encourage their children
- To make a contribution to family/society

## Transformations are highly significant:

- More self-confidence
- Improved sense of self
- Seeing a bigger picture
- New opportunities opening up
- New attitudes to education in the family