

ASG's Scholastic

Issue 2 : 2018 Quarterly news for ASG members



- University - the real cost
- And the winners are . . .
- Coding - buzzword or a life skill?



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Australia
23-35 Hanover Street
Oakleigh Vic 3166
Ph: 131 ASG (131 274)
www.asg.com.au

New Zealand
Ground Floor, 216 Great South Road
Epsom, Auckland 1053
Ph: 09 366 7670
www.asg.co.nz

On the cover: Jack Woodman and Ella Fabel-Brock

University - the real cost

As a parent, you probably join many Australian families who are paying more and more on essentials, like food, water, electricity, petrol and rent. And, university costs are no exception.

The 2018 ASG Planning for University Index reveals that by 2028 students studying popular courses such as arts, commerce, health, architecture, engineering and information technology, can expect total costs to increase by 23 percent.

For a student living at home and studying computer science, this means by 2028, they'll be paying an extra \$16,241. This includes course fees, transport, computers, additional study costs, extra-curricular activities, and other living expenses.

With more than 90 percent of Australia's universities located in major cities, the majority of regional students who want to attend university will be forced to relocate and rent to attain a degree.

That'll put even more financial pressure on students and their families. In 2028 students studying medicine could pay more than \$71,000 in accommodation costs alone over six years. That's about 30 percent of the overall cost of their course. In comparison, students who live at home could be up to \$137,000 better off than students who live in shared accommodation.

For students who live away from home and study law, dentistry or vet science the total cost of their university education is forecast to soar by 29 percent from 2018 to 2028.

Ex-ASG student Cayla Batt is in her fifth and final year of a Bachelor of Science and Nutrition/Masters of Dietetics at Curtin University in Perth.

Her parents live almost two hours away, so she's been living in her parent's two bedroom apartment.

"I've been fortunate in that my parents bought the apartment as an investment property, but they spent more than they were planning to. In the areas where apartments were cheaper, my parents didn't feel it was very safe, so they bought an apartment closer to uni. It's definitely been a financial burden on my parents.

"I've also worked as a netball umpire since I moved to Perth to help support myself. One of the biggest cost factors is food and because I study dietetics, that means I spend a bit more than the average uni student. I don't eat noodles all the time, instead I eat lots of vegetables, which is quite expensive.

"I'm also hoping to do a rural placement later this year. This means I have to save more money for moving, food and other bills as I won't be able to work during that time."

ASG's CEO Tim Mitchell-Adams says the index highlights the intense financial strain a university education can place on the family budget.

"Students, parents and grandparents are often dumbstruck by the total cost of a university degree.

"The Higher Education Loan Program definitely helps with tuition, but course fees make up only a small component of the overall cost of a university education.

"Regional families are often hit hardest by the total cost of a university education, with country kids often forced to relocate to the city and rent while studying."

Snapshot of total university costs in 2018 and 2028

Course	Total course and living costs in shared accommodation		Total course and living costs in family home	
	2018	2028	2018	2028
Education (4 years)	\$146,633	\$189,676	\$82,534	\$101,431
Computer Science (3 years)	\$117,016	\$150,989	\$69,686	\$85,927
Veterinary Science (5 years)	\$208,242	\$268,964	\$126,844	\$156,731
Medicine (6 years)	\$253,099	\$327,198	\$153,851	\$190,139

And the winners are ...



ASG students, Ella Brock-Fabel and Jack Woodman, will travel to the US Space & Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama in July.

This member benefit is fiercely contested and every year we receive fantastic applications from our ASG students. The coveted prize is a weeklong stay at the US Space & Rocket Center with students from more than a hundred countries attending.

Sixteen-year-old Ella Brock-Fabel from South Australia has always been interested in science and wants to become the first Australian woman to go to space. She was part of the Bright Sparks Science Club in primary school and now studies physics and chemistry in high school. Ella also belongs to Mensa—a society whose members qualify by having an IQ in the top two percent of the population.

Along with her academic excellence Ella is also a *Relay for Life* team member as part of the Girl Guides. Her most fulfilling experience was when she volunteered at a camp for disabled girls last year—looking after their physical, emotional and special needs.

A trained musician, Ella plays the piano, saxophone and clarinet, and represents the Adelaide Youth Theatre.

For 17-year-old Jack Woodman, his love

for science and space started when he accompanied his dad, a science teacher to school. For Jack, science is methodical and logical, and he loves every aspect of it.

Jack's love for space is manifested by the fact that he became the equal youngest pilot in Australia by flying solo on his 15th birthday.

Another of Jack's achievement was receiving the Kwong Lee Dow scholarship to The University of Melbourne.

Jack has a black belt in karate, represents his school in soccer and music ensembles, and regularly participates in the 24 hour *Relay for Life – Border*.

Ella and Jack will share their exciting experience at the US Space & Rocket Center after their return mid-July. So, don't forget to read about their adventures on the ASG Blog, in readiness for the 2019 ASG Space Camp opportunity.

Brush with the law



How would you feel if you were offered the opportunity to undertake a postgraduate degree of Juris Doctor of Law (JD) without sitting for an entry test?

For 19-year-old Eleanor White, "It's such a surreal feeling." Eleanor is a neuroscience and anatomy student at the University of

Western Australia. "I've focussed on a career in science for so long, that an offer to study law is a different direction but an exciting one."

Eleanor's interest in the human brain started at school, studying human biology and psychology as part of her year 12 subjects. Having fantastic teachers made the subjects even more interesting. So, when she discovered neuroscience it was the perfect degree for her.

But has this all changed now that she's received an opportunity to do a JD? "I'm not entirely sure how I will connect the two subjects but anything is possible today. I can look at doing medical law, which is pretty exciting. I did want to be a doctor when I was younger and may still do that."

However, none of Eleanor's plans are set in stone because she has so many plans. "I am an environmentalist and would like to see the oceans cleaned up and plastic waste reduced. I would like to build sustainable

houses and help reduce our carbon footprint. I do what I can every day to help but it has to be a global movement to combat climate change."

Along with studies, Eleanor is the president of the Physiology, Human Anatomy and Biology Club (PHAC). The club runs educational, career and social events for students studying Human Sciences to enrich their time spent studying.

When she was in school, Eleanor received a Gifted and Talented Scholarship from John Curtin College of Arts, where she specialised in music. "I play the piano and the flute," she says. "Like Albert Einstein, I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music."

She also plays social frisbee at uni and loves hanging out with her friends. "I enjoy exploring and take time out to enjoy the little things in life."

2018 AGM and call for Director Nominations

The 44th AGM of the members of the Australian Scholarships Group Friendly Society Limited will be held on Friday, 26 October 2018.

Director nominations

The Board now calls for eligible nominations for directors' positions in accordance with the Constitution. If you are interested in nominating for a director's position this year, have any queries regarding the meeting or the nomination process, please contact Sue Mollison, in writing or by telephoning 03 9276 7717.

Nominations close at 5pm (AEST) on Friday 29 June 2018.

Teachers can make us or break us

Australia

Fortunately, there are many fantastic examples of teachers whose passion for teaching and learning is contagious. Their desire to make a real difference in the lives of students encourages growth, curiosity, and sets the foundation for lifelong learning. As one teacher puts it, 'dare to be brilliant'—a motto they live by and share with students and families.

If you know someone who sounds just like this, nominations for the 2018 ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards (ASG NEiTA) will open soon.

In March we celebrated ASG NEiTA in Melbourne, recognising the outstanding achievements of 12 teachers across the country. These teachers were nominated by their local communities and handpicked from more than 1450 nominations.

They collectively teach across the entire curriculum—having special interests in music education, STEM, early childhood education, teacher coaching, and helping students with special needs.

At the heart and soul of what our ASG NEiTA recipients do each day, is creating educational opportunities, which give young people a voice and ensuring there are no missed opportunities.

With the help of their communities and school networks, teachers overcome constant challenges of limited resources, stretched funding, geographical and social barriers, to help children and their families experience the best education journey.



ASG NEiTA 2017 Australian recipients

New Zealand

The ASG NEiTA awards were also held in New Zealand to thank and acknowledge six national recipients.

New Zealand's Education Minister, The Hon Chris Hipkins, was the keynote speaker at the presentation ceremony in Wellington. This gave our ASG NEiTA recipients a valuable opportunity to mingle with the minister and hear his vision for the education sector into the future.

Many of the ASG NEiTA teachers were interviewed by the media boasting headlines such as 'Teaching to Inspire: ASG Awards,' 'New strings to teacher's bow' and '...teacher claims prestigious teaching award'.

Some of the teachers like Michelle Allen and Adam Porter were interviewed by ABC for a live breakfast radio cross into Canberra. Tarewa Williams from Auckland also got up early for a live interview on the AM Show on TV3.

ASG NEiTA Chairman, Allen Blewitt says the national recipients have made their mark in local communities throughout Australia and New Zealand.

"It's in local townships, villages and indeed larger city centres where our ASG NEiTA recipients can be the heartbeat of these communities. For every student they teach, they could be impacting multiple lives as they establish relationships with parents, grandparents and connect home and school life, creating an eco-system of continued and shared learning and support networks."

The ASG NEiTA recipients received professional development grants, which will help them continue to make a real difference in education and impact their local communities.

You can view the 2017 teacher profiles on: www.asg.com.au/asg-neita and find out how you can nominate a fabulous teacher for the 2018 awards.



ASG NEiTA 2017 New Zealand recipients

Hand in hand with ASG

The Smith Family has a long history of helping disadvantaged young Australians to succeed at school, so they can create a better future for themselves.

Since 2004 ASG has been supporting The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program, which provides long-term educational support to 38,000 disadvantaged students across Australia.

The program supports students from preschool to tertiary studies—giving students the assistance they need to stay engaged in their education before moving on to further study or work.

Every year ASG sponsors 64 school-aged students and six tertiary students nationally through the charity's *Learning for Life* program.

Learning for Life provides financial support for essential educational items like school uniforms, excursions and stationery. It also provides personalised support from a Smith Family coordinator, and access to a range of out-of-school learning and mentoring programs.



Rhiannon was a former recipient of the *Learning for Life* program. For her, knowing there was support available made her try even harder and excel in her studies.

"The *Learning for Life* program made me believe that people were willing to invest in me. My sponsors thought I could finish my education and could go further," says Rhiannon.

Rhiannon did just that and is now studying youth work.

"We are very appreciative of ASG's ongoing support of the *Learning for Life* program. Thanks to this long-standing partnership we have been able to support hundreds of students to improve their educational outcomes," says Dr Lisa O'Brien, CEO of The Smith Family.

"We simply couldn't do our work without partnering with generous organisations like ASG who are committed to creating a better future for children in need."

Children and the digital world

The ever-changing landscape of the digital world presents challenges for parents and affects boys and girls differently.

Girls prefer social media for networking as it facilitates communication and connection. The images and stories they see—on how they look and act—play a powerful role in framing their sense of what's acceptable and what's not.

Parents can empower their daughters to make smarter online choices.

- **If you wouldn't do it in public, don't do it online:** Put guidelines into place as early as possible and enforce consequences if necessary.
- **Girls can be influenced easily, affecting their self-esteem:** Encourage them to take time out to reflect on thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Help them to navigate through challenging online experiences, which can sometimes cause anxiety.
- **Parental controls, restrictions and guidelines:** Set up expectations from the

time a device is put in your girls' hands. Younger children are more likely to follow the rules, so make the plan early instead of banning it later.

Most boys now live in two worlds—the digital and the real. While their social and physical needs are best met by spending time in the real world, it's amazing how alluring the digital world is for boys.

- **Digital technology is highly addictive:** Gaming—in particular—taps into boys' psychology and physiology, including the love of competition. The dopamine high, the instant feedback they get for effort, and the online socialising is an instant gratification for them.

Schools are discovering, gaming is highly engaging for boys of all ages. They are either using games directly to engage the boys in learning or applying some of the principles to many areas of the curriculum.

- **Find the balance:** Ensure boys are socialised both in the real and digital worlds. Many boys find it easier and less demanding to immerse themselves in a



digital game instead of going outside to play—where the chances of getting hurt physically or mentally are real.

Raising girls and boys in the digital age now has a new set of rules and requirements for parents.

More:

Parenting Girls online course - <https://www.parentingideas.com.au/product/parenting-girls-online-course-asg/>

Parenting Boys online course - <https://www.parentingideas.com.au/product/boys-asg>

Gravitating towards space



Five years ago, when Srajan Singh was in Year 10, he travelled to the U.S. Space & Rocket Center as one of ASG's student winners. That experience "was a life changing one and the turning point of my life."

As a year 10 student—like most youngsters—Srajan was contemplating the future. What uni courses would give him the maximum benefit? Should he study medicine, which he had set his mind on, or go another way? So many doubts, questions and uncertainties—"and then Space Camp came along and I travelled to NASA, opening my eyes to opportunity. There was renewed conviction of what I was capable of and I knew the future was mine to grab with both hands."

Today Srajan is in his fourth year of a Bachelor of Medical Studies/Doctor of Medicine degree—deciding whether to specialise in emergency medicine or general surgery.

"I still have a long way to go and I'm looking forward to doing some meaningful work in my field," Srajan says. "This is my research year and I'm doing some pretty interesting stuff like working on a cardiology research project. The aim is to find associations between ECG test results and patient's medical histories.

"I'm also doing two surgical projects on colonoscopy and bowel leak detection. There are no appropriate benchmarks for bowel cancer detection primarily in regional centres. I'm doing a retrospective study to develop a new benchmark, helping endoscopists assess their ability and improve."

Srajan has another two years to go before he can qualify as a medical practitioner. But that hasn't stopped him from chalking out his future plans.

"I seem to be gravitating towards everything space," Srajan says. "I don't know whether it's intentional or just subconscious. But speaking with Don Thomas—an astronaut at Space Camp—in 2013 certainly had a big impact."

Srajan would like to go back to NASA and be part of the International Space Station (ISS) Medical team. This involves monitoring crew health and conducting medical research.

Medical monitoring helps determine the ISS crew members' flight readiness, establish baselines, guide inflight countermeasures and assessments. It also guides post-flight rehab to returning crew members to pre-flight health status.

To achieve this dream, Srajan plans on training at the Australian College of Aerospace Medicine. Also called aviation medicine it is a medical specialty concerned with the interaction between the aerospace environment and human physiology.

Studying medicine means long hours of study and practice, with students not having enough time for other activities. But not so for Srajan. Along with his bachelors' degrees, he's also doing four additional units in music and programming.

"Music keeps me grounded and I've been playing the guitar for many years. I was in an alternative rock band, but have been learning electronic music production recently."

He is also doing two programming units and learning software development and graphic design.

Srajan is the Promotions Officer for the Australian Medical Students Association for the Rural Health Summit in 2018. He is also a resident adviser for first year medical students at the Port Macquarie UNSW Rural Clinical School.

Along with the many hats he wears Srajan is also a comic artist, graphic designer, and writes for UNSW MEDSOC.



So does he ever get time to relax? "Yes, I do, I love playing video games and enjoy making art. I have my own online art store and design stock." You can find some of Srajan's creations on Redbubble.

Need we say more about this amazing young man for whom a life-changing trip, changed his life forever!



Aspiring for the best



Jack's a goalkeeper and Kody plays in the centre. Both have been playing football since they were 4 ½ years old. They are in the 12th grade development team—A league in the Northern Football Federation—and both want get into a higher grade.

"The boys train twice a week and also play for their school team. They also represent their school in basketball. Along with sports the boys also play the piano—just for themselves at the moment."

So, what does Terri do when the boys are training? "We have a one year old Italian mastiff, Bootz, and she needs a lot of exercising, so I walk her. The boys love Bootz and she goes everywhere with them. If they could have it, Bootz would go to school with them too."



Every morning the alarm rings at 6 o'clock—like clockwork—jolting Terri Power out of bed. There is no time to hit the snooze button—not on weekdays at least.

Terri wishes she had some 'me time' but as a single mum of 11-year-old twin boys, this is a luxury she doesn't have. "After I wake up, it's just go-go-go. I get breakfast and lunches ready, wake up the boys, have breakfast with them, feed the dog, and then it's time for school."

She drops the boys to the bus-stop and is off to work at Mazda, whom she describes as the best employer. After a busy workday, it's time to pick up the boys from school, take them for sports practice, and then back home for study and dinner. Sounds full on? ... but Terri wouldn't have it any other way.

"Like most parents I want the best for my boys and am always looking for ways to contribute to their future. Other than teaching them social skills and empathy, I also want to make sure that when they grow up, they have the money to pursue their dreams." This is where ASG has helped her.

"My sister told me about ASG and I liked the concept of putting money aside every month. So, when the twins were born I enrolled them in ASG. The boys—Jack and Kody—are both into basketball and football. Not surprising since Terri herself played football since she was 13 years old. "I used to play as a striker, but now play in whatever position the coach puts me in."

And, how has ASG helped? "As a single mum whatever I put away for my boys will help them in the future. The money that I have saved will give them a head start when they grow up."

Other than the monetary aspect Terri also loves the resources that are available to her through *ASG's Scholastic* and websites. "I am up-to-date with topical news and information, and the real cost of education."

With such a busy life does she get any free time and holidays? "Yes, we do look forward to the school holidays," Terri says. "The boys have a great relationship with their dad and the four of us go camping and to the fairs."

What about the boys? What do they want to do? "Well, they're still too young to think about their future but Jack has talked about being a paramedic. Kody is still a bit unsure but when asked has said he'd like to be a PE teacher or a builder. He likes drawing and is pretty good at it."

And Terri, what does she hope for the boys? "With the education they're receiving, I hope that's a good grounding for them." She hopes her sons will reach their full potential and take up jobs that suit them best.

"The only thing I'm hung up about is when they grow up and move away from home, they should never, never forget to call me."



Coding - buzzword or a life skill?



In the media, **coding** is 'the new cursive writing!' Technology is and will always be an integral part of our lives and computer programming has made our lives easier. That's one reason why many people want to be part of this global movement.

Why children should be part of it?

Experts claim that like literacy and numeracy, coding is a fundamental skill for children to develop their computational thinking—a combination of maths, logic and algorithms.

Computational thinking helps break down larger problems into smaller ones, which can be managed one at a time. This is applicable across all areas of life.

Coding develops life skills

Dr Sarika Kewalramani, education lecturer at Monash University draws insight from her experience as a STEM teacher. She says coding:

- helps children collaborate with peers, experts and community members
- gives children the opportunity to design innovative solutions
- gets children interested in STEM
- boosts problem solving skills.

Sarika says children learn to apply solutions and troubleshoot to meet the criteria for success. "Competing with their peers and working together on a coding task can boost children's self-esteem as they design innovative solutions and try different things."

Structured activity can help children develop a sequence of steps to test solutions. Giving children the opportunity to plan, manage, assume various roles and responsibilities, in a typical programming activity, can increase their motivation to engage in mathematical concepts and relate to real-life experiences.

Coding related to robotics develops children's "creative abilities and heightens their cognitive activity," says Sarika.

ASG student Rebecca McMahon, learnt coding when she was in Year 6. It's helped her look and resolve issues in several different ways.

"I am more patient and focused now, as debugging a program can be an intense process. It means being precise—as even a comma or a full stop in the wrong place can cause the code to run incorrectly."

Rebecca became interested in computer programming after dabbling in Scratch. She participated in ixtend, programming a game on Scratch to save planets from a black hole. "It was extremely challenging initially, as I had no experience in programming."

She then programmed a game after watching other children and by experimenting with the platform. "Computing will become a natural part of our lives—so much so that people won't even know that it's there".

A word of caution

Before you set off on this exciting journey —strike a balance. Embrace advancements and learn to code, but also question technology and its uses without blindly following it.

Life of a coder

Felix Greenhalgh turned his love for coding into a career. We find out what life as a 'techie' looks like.

When did you first know that you wanted to become a software developer / IT professional?

Honestly speaking, I don't know if I set out to be an IT professional. I was enrolled in IT lessons in primary school. This taught me how to use functions in Microsoft Excel and a basic introduction to programming, which was fascinating.

Very soon I realised that I enjoyed interacting with computers. However, it was only when it came to making a choice for university that the opportunity to learn about web development leapt out at me. So started my professional journey into the world of IT.

How did you sustain this interest?

From an early age I was a reputed puzzle solver, and loved a good brain teaser. What I didn't know was that these are some of the fundamental skills in software development. When I was young, I was gifted with iPods and a second hand computer—that I could play with—which really nurtured my curiosity in IT.

How has this helped you develop allied life skills?

Like any hobby that requires you to upskill and learn, coding has taught me to be flexible and curious—always.

The real skill is being able to understand the problem quickly by asking the right questions and focusing on the right aspects of it. Another big skill is communication. Unlike other industries where a blueprint can help explain an idea, explaining the near-3D concepts behind code is frustratingly difficult. While building a holistic solution is important, effectively communicating the choices behind it means more to the customer.

What you do in your current job?

I've recently changed jobs and my role has changed considerably from the pure software development that I did as a graduate.

I now work as a Technical Business Analyst in a software company. We work with universities across the globe to help students complete the work placements they need to pass their qualifications (e.g. trainee doctors).

I use my technical and software knowledge to help document the needs of our clients, and translate them into technical specifications for the software developers to use to build the solution.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

That feeling of success when I've solved a problem that's been on my mind for too long. I get that reward regularly, and it never stops feeling good. Combine that with fixing other people's problems! Whenever I make someone else's life easier, their excitement and enthusiasm are evident, and a reward in their own right.

Working in a high functioning team is a great feeling. Earlier in my career I've developed code on my own in the middle of the night, and it's a great feeling. But like most things, there's more fun when you have people to share the victories with.

What do you expect the world to look like in the future?

For me, technology can only grow and will be used to solve many problems. I see software development as a blend of creativity and logic that can be used to do virtually anything—and importantly, by anyone.

Being traditionally bi-lingual in French and English, as well as a software developer, I know the language I'm betting on to guarantee me a job in the future.

START CODING	
Program	Ages
Scratch	8-16
Blockly	10+
Alice	10+
Twine	12+
LEGO Mindstorm Robotics	10+
Kodu	8-14

7 free programming languages to teach kids how to code

<https://www.lifewire.com/kids-programming-languages-4125938>

Want your kids to learn another language? Teach them code

<https://theconversation.com/want-your-kids-to-learn-another-language-teach-them-code-47409>



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Career: Medicine

Karl Marx famously said, “Medicines heal doubts, as well as patients”. We chat with two ASG students who want to make a difference.

Even before starting school Cambell McMaster had decided that he wanted to be a doctor “to fix daddy’s back”.

Fast forward 15 years and Cambell is in his second year of a Bachelor of Medical Studies and Doctor of Medicine degree at UNSW.

“I grew up on a farm—outside of Hillston in central NSW—with two older brothers who did everything for me,” Cambell says. “I am happiest when I can help people—so in a way I decided being a doctor is how I could make the most impact.”

To get there Cambell studied hard and long to get the marks. Being a rural student helped too, as it was easier to get into undergrad medicine at UNSW and the ATAR requirements are dropped a little.

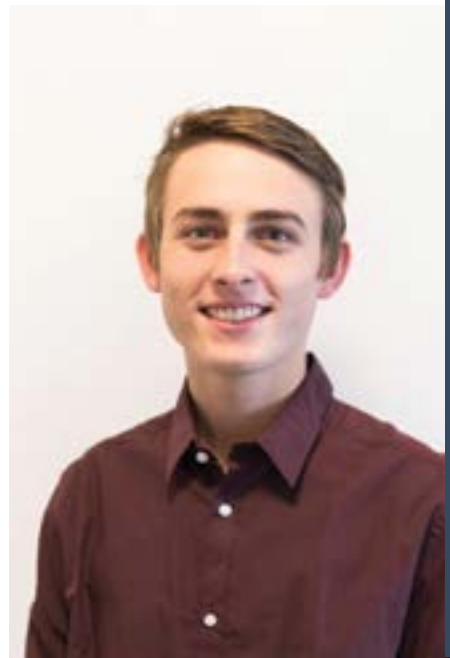
This year, Cambell is learning a lot of content with his course being developed

into an integrated structure. Students focus on a specific scenario and learn everything around it. “That means, I’m constantly taking in the ‘bologs’ all the time—histology, microbiology, immunology, pathology, pharmacology, physiology—along with anatomy, biochemistry and many more.

“This helps me in viewing a particular situation from different aspects. As a medical student this is essential as it will help my critical thinking skills when I’m a clinician.”

Cambell’s day starts with him trying to wake up at 8.30 am, and then classes from 9am to 5pm, with six lectures some days. It also means many assignments—sometimes studying up until midnight.

“But I still have a social life. Our cohort is smaller compared to other degrees, so I



have many friends in my class as well as outside of it. I am able to make lifelong friends and also make medical connections for later in life. I enjoy playing the guitar and hanging out with my friends, so I’m not complaining because my health isn’t compromised by studying 24/7.”

With a few more years to go, Cambell isn’t making too many plans as yet. But he does hope to be a rural GP and go back to the country where doctors are most needed.



Neil Banerjee

But cracking the UMAT exams isn’t easy and it has even been labelled as the hardest test ever. There are however, alternate pathways to getting into medicine if you have your heart set on it.

Neil who is in his second year of a graduate degree at The University of Melbourne explains how.

“Mine is a graduate course, which means you have to complete an undergrad degree. Unlike other graduate courses, my degree has three years of clinical placement, which can be at a hospital and sometimes at a GP’s clinic. Out of the three years we also have six months of research on a subject of our choice.”

Most of the learnings in the first year are from classroom lectures, but from the second year onwards it’s self-directed. Students must spend time at the hospital wards with patients to get a real perspective of classroom lectures.

“There are long hours of grunt work—sometimes 10-12 hours—and you have to be on your feet most of the day,” Neil says. “But I have no regrets because this is what I signed up for.”

“And there are some really aww moments too, like the Teddy Bear Hospital, where kids from the Royal Children’s Hospital bring in their teddies to get fixed.

“To hear the children talk about how their teddy is suffering—sometimes mirroring their own complex medical issues—forces you to get creative. It’s fun and a great experience.”

For Neil relaxing after long hours of work is “hanging out with friends, playing soccer and gaming. My dog, Tucker is also a huge stressbuster—so many kisses and hugs can make any stressful day better.”

If you still have your heart set on medicine and have been unsuccessful in clearing the UMAT, an option is the GAMSAT (Graduate Medical School Admission Test)—a graduate-entry program. As with all exams there’s a lot of studying but you have the opportunity to try and get the required scores through your undergrad study years.

It’s also a good idea to get a job or volunteer, to help with the interview process. Also, don’t limit yourself to one medical school—try in different states and hard work always pays off.

Neil Banerjee has always wanted to study medicine having been in and out of hospitals since childhood. “I suffer from Crohn’s Disease and I am indebted to the specialists for looking after and making me better. Since then, I’ve wanted to be that person for others.”

Q&A with Christine Lai

There's no such thing as the 'same ol' day for Christine Lai. She is the Chair of Women in Surgery, a general surgeon and a fellow of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons. She graduated in 1998 from the University of Adelaide.

Christine works as a senior staff specialist and supervisor of general surgical training at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Adelaide. She is also a clinical senior lecturer at the University of Adelaide and does some private practice.

Why did you choose this career?

I knew many people who had achieved great job satisfaction being a doctor. One inspiration came from the movie *The Doctor*, which showed the profound impact the medical profession can make on patients' lives.

On qualifying as a doctor, I chose to go down the path of surgical training. I had very positive experiences as a medical student during my surgical rotations in my last two years of a six year degree. The work was interesting—we saw patients in the wards, outpatient clinics, emergency departments, as well as going to theatre to operate. I loved scrubbing, helping with operations, and being part of the surgical team, which comprised of students, interns, junior doctors, trainees, senior trainees and consultants.

I am very thankful to the amazing senior trainees and consultant surgeons who encouraged and mentored me. If it wasn't for them I may not have pursued a career in surgery. Some of these surgeons are now my colleagues!

What makes your career special?

Patients trust me to look after them when they are at their most vulnerable, which is an immense privilege. Along with looking after patients my surgical career also includes teaching at the hospital and being a surgical educator for the Royal Australian College of Surgeons. To have clinical and non-clinical aspects as a surgeon provides an interesting variety in what I do on a daily basis.

What do you like about your career?

Surgery is different to many of the other specialties. In the theatre I work with nurses, anaesthetists and trainee surgeons. In my speciality of cancer surgery, I work with oncologists and radiation oncologists as part of the management of my patients.

As a surgeon I meet with many amazing people at meetings and conferences, form networks, and develop great friendships with people from all around the world.

I also enjoy teaching students and surgical trainees as part of my role at The Queen Elizabeth Hospital.



What is the most important lesson you have learnt?

How we treat people is so important. I focus on giving my patients and their families the respect and compassion that I would expect for myself and my family.

What advice would you give to students looking to do this career?

I wouldn't change my job for the world. If you are interested in becoming a surgeon you have to qualify as a doctor first. Try to get opportunities in surgical wards to experience what the job entails.

There are many specialties within surgery and even more subspecialties. It's good to work in several areas to find out where your interest lies. The job—especially as a trainee—can be challenging at times, as the hours are long, and the patients may be very ill and require much support. In addition to working, you will need to study to pass surgical exams—at the expense of doing other things. If you're passionate about surgery, the time spent training is only a short part of your career and is time well spent to reach the end goal.

What are the job opportunities?

Surgeons work in public and private hospitals and some are employed by universities to teach and do research. There are job opportunities in metropolitan and rural centres for surgeons.





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