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**Marg’s story**

The powerful influence that families have on the lives of some individuals, including decisions made about education can result in negative or destructive outcomes. For Marg, it was her mother’s active discouragement to continue on to university studies that resulted in her going directly into the work force after school, and not realising her aspiration to study until later in her life.

**When I was at school my mum thought well what’s the point, it’s just deferring the point of starting work and earning money. She couldn’t understand why I would want to do that, so that was why I put it off at that point.**

**I’ve come from a very blue collar kind of family and growing up I didn’t even really know what university was and then when I wanted to go my mum was saying “you should really go and get a job and start earning and buy a house. Our family saw university as being for rich people, not for us. We were not in that kind of class.**

The opportunity to return to study was presented to Marg through a work development program that supported study, leading her to think “it’s now or never”. As a result she commenced part-time study whilst balancing full-time employment, and is now delighted that despite her mother’s initial scepticism her mother is now very supportive of Marg’s progress and academic successes.

The transition into university was a nervous and apprehensive period, primarily as a result of Marg’s uncertainty regarding her ability to study and the overwhelming nature of the unknown. She indicates that the university lecturers were very helpful in assisting her to overcome her initial concerns and sites two key lecturers as being critical in the support she received from the university.

**Both lecturers have a great deal of experience and empathy and offer huge amounts of encouragement. They were really good to bounce ideas off and talk to them about my academic career and what’s going to get me to where I wanted to be…. helping me to filter out what I do and don’t need.**

Working full-time enabled Marg to pay university costs upfront and avoid a HECS debt. Despite her financial position, Marg identifies that there has been a financial impact on her household regarding available resources but doesn’t feel that it had been significant. Although the financial costs may not have had a significant impact, Marg recognises that a predominant cost associated with her studies has been the impact on her time resulting in her exercising less; having less time to be available to her family and not having family holidays. Consequently the time factor related to study has contributed towards Marg’s decision to take a break from study before continuing on to complete her honours year. She acknowledges that she, but also her family, need a break from her studies. An additional consideration before Marg commences honours is the decision to do so by taking a sabbatical from work, which would mean that continuing her studies at this time would result in a significant financial impact on Marg and her family. By reconsidering her timing and through being organised and strategic, attributes which reflect Marg’s personality and carer responsibility, she is planning to continue study at a later date so that she can minimise the effects on her family.

The underlying motivation to complete her current undergraduate degree and continue on with honours, is Marg’s recognition of the benefits, both financial and personal that have resulted from her studying.

**On a work front work I’m presented with opportunities that I might not necessarily have been given if I hadn’t embarked of studying. I’ve also had two promotions since I started my degree, which have facilitated other lifestyle things to be better.**

**Personally, I’m more considered and able to disseminate lots of information to actually get to the crux of whatever it is I’m dealing with, so the research skills have been absolutely critical to changing the way I think. I analyse things differently and question things more. University has increased my value of education.**

In addition to the acquisition of new skills, studying has also proven to Marg that she has the intellectual capability to achieve something completely different from anything she had previously attempted. Both self-improvement and achieving something for herself, are two additional motivators for Marg to continue with her education. She discusses the importance of advice given to her, early on in her studies:

**going to university is one of the few things that nobody else can do for you, it’s one of the few things that no matter, nobody else can do it for you, you’ve got to do it yourself and the only person that will get you through that journey, you’ll have support and stuff but when it comes down to it if you don’t do the work you don’t get it and I think that, it’s really stuck with me.**

Marg’s transformation and the value she now places on education, is reflected in her influence as a mother on her own children’s choices to continue with further study.

**From a personal sense I think I’ve actually kind of forged a bit of a path for my kids that they might not have considered. So I’ve changed our families’ attitude for my kids that university is not just reserved for the elite.**

**My youngest son was always going to go to university, but my oldest son has now decided to go to university which wasn’t something that he was ever really going to do, it wasn’t a part of his idea of where he would be going, so I think my studying has influenced him.**

Marg’s comments are evidence that her experience of higher education has transformed not only her life, but that of her children. The unexpected but invaluable benefits that Marg has had were not envisioned when she initially thought – “study, it’s now or never”.