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**Sue’s story**

The expectation to go to university was “drummed” into Sue not from her family but from her high school. Coming from a single family home, Sue’s mother did not actively encourage her to consider university nor did she discourage higher education, rather Sue recalls her mother advocating that she would support Sue in whatever she wanted to do. For Sue, this consisted of taking a gap year after high school to work as a volunteer overseas before relocating from country Victoria to Adelaide to attend university.

Whether it was Sue’s overseas experience, her personal attributes of being an organised but relaxed and very positive thinking person, or having a strong friendship base already going to university in Adelaide, the transition to university has been a relatively smooth one for Sue.

**I lived with my best friend and two other girls from back home. So it was nice having that little family to have in Adelaide because we’re away from home. But I think even if I would have had to live in residential accommodation I would have made a different friendship group and I’m sure that would have been just as easy, it definitely helps by having people around you.**

Notwithstanding the smooth transition, Sue recollectsthinking in her first few weeks that once her undergraduate degree was finished that she would not be continuing with any further studies. A plan that Sue appears to have forgotten based on her current enrolment and near completion of a Masters in Teaching program.

**I kind of panicked in my last semester I was on exchange overseas and I kind of went “Oh what am I going to do next year, my degree’s finishing?” And I realised that it’s not going to be easy to get a job, so I thought, I’ll do another degree to back it up, hopefully it will be more employable at the end of it.**

When asked if she had ever considered withdrawing or deferring from university, Sue reports that there was a brief period when the thought of deferring had crossed her mind as she was keen to go travelling. Discussions with University staff however, resulted in her subjects being arranged in a manner that enabled Sue to complete a number of electives overseas that contributed towards her Australian qualification. The support of staff at university and the opportunity to complete electives overseas facilitated Sue to combine travel and study, and consequently removed her consideration of deferral.

Sue’s age and pathway into university directly from high school classifies her as a ‘traditional university student’. Despite this ‘traditional’ classification Sue doesn’t actually identify with the notion of being a university student, stating that factors such as not living in residential accommodation or being involved in extracurricular activities has resulted in her not feeling like a “proper” university student.

**I didn’t do the social side of the university scene, I had my own social side out of university and so I didn’t really ever go to all the parties and do all the residential things or I didn’t join events or university games. I look back and I wish I had done more of that. I never really had a lack of money so I’ve never felt like I was a proper university student, I’ve always got by and I had money so I’m not a proper ‘poor’ university student.**

Sue acknowledges that there a number of financial costs associated with attending university but considers the combination of work and Centrelink study benefits has enabled her to “get by pretty well”. Having relocated from a rural town Sue has been required to support herself, living with three other house mates. But deferring her university fees to HECS has allowed Sue to not be concerned with the paying of university fees and could therefore focus on living expenses.

When asked about the impact of study on relationships, Sue responds that the combination of strong support network in Adelaide, frequent visits and telephone conversations with her Mother plus her time spent overseas assisted her in not experiencing homesickness or any other deleterious impacts on her relationships.

**Family no, for my friends I went to school with yes, because I’ve moved away from home and some of them stay there and they kind of don’t change and then I feel like I’ve changed a lot because I’ve been overseas and I’ve been at university and I’ve had to be away from home. So there are a lot of people back home that I probably lost contact with, just because we’re moving in different directions. But then there are a lot of people back home who obviously are my better mates because it doesn’t matter how long it’s been or where I’ve been, you know they’re still there.**

In addition, Sue indicated that a number of high school friends remained in her hometown and had formed their own cliques, whilst those who went to university are “kind of like aliens” and as a result find it difficult to slip back in to those old friendship groups. Sue reiterated that she doesn’t perceive this change in friendships as having had a negative impact on her university experience. Furthermore, Sue’s mother regularly visits her in Adelaide providing important family contact and support, with Sue reporting these visits as being “good for her and good for me”.

What is evident through the conversation with Sue is that she believes she is lucky and that her positive outlook have set her up well. She attributes the development of her confidence and independence as transformations facilitated through her travel and her university experience. She believes these personal attributes will benefit her greatly as she continues to pursue her love of travelling and availing herself of opportunities provided by her university program such as spending four weeks in Nepal teaching. On asking about her future plans once she has returned from Nepal, Sue commented that she is hoping initially for teaching relief work in Adelaide and then intends seeing “where the wind takes” her.