

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

“It would be a tragedy for a student to drop out of a course that they had worked so hard for due to some problems that can be easily remedied with practical financial assistance and supportive advice.”

Jan Horstman, Manager, Student Welfare Service

Justin's Story*

“Trying to study was almost impossible when everything else in my life was so hard to cope with,... I'd worked so hard to get here – I thought it would be great to be at Uni, but within a few months it was all slipping away. I thought I was going to have to give up...”

Like many students, Justin had conflicting emotions about starting University. He was excited about the freedom, apprehensive about the study, but was looking forward to starting his adult life. **What he didn't expect was to be so overwhelmed by all the new responsibilities.**

It hadn't been easy for Justin. Throughout his final year of school, his mother remarried and there were 4 younger siblings at home including a new baby. After finishing school, he was under pressure to contribute financially to the household or leave.

“My Mum was supportive – but no one in our family had been to Uni before - and her new husband thought it was a waste of time, he thought that I should just go out and start working full-time.”

*“I'd pushed trolleys at the supermarket since Year 10 for pocket money – and since starting Uni I got some regular shifts working the checkout - **it's made me realise I want to get some qualifications – I want a chance for something more.**”*

Even with part-time work and a Centrelink payment, Justin was struggling with the financial pressure of rent, bills, the cost of text books and other student expenses. *“Moving out of home was great at first, it was a lot quieter and I didn't have to share a bedroom, but I didn't realise how much everything cost. And I wasn't great at cooking, so I wasted a fair bit of money on take-away food.”*

So under all the financial and emotional pressures and the threat of failing the course he had worked so hard to get into, he approached Victoria University's Student Welfare Service. *“Everyone else seemed to be doing ok – I felt like such a loser.”*

“We see many students in Justin's situation,” says Jan Horstman, Manager of the Student Welfare Service. *“When he came to us for help – and it was a difficult thing for him to do – **he thought he was the only one who was having trouble coping with managing study, moving out of home and trying to finance it all.**”*

“What we really need is to give these students, whatever their circumstance, some immediate and practical support. It might mean providing meal and food vouchers, public transport tickets or short-term loans to assist with rent and utility bills. Some students just need help to relieve the immediate pressure. We can educate them about managing a budget, and developing some basic skills in cooking - they genuinely want to keep up with and succeed in their studies – and we want that as well.”

Some students, like Justin, just need short-term support to get them through a difficult time. However, others are dealing with complex and difficult issues and require longer-term counselling and support.

Over 50,000 students attend Victoria University and the Student Welfare Service may be contacted by up to 200 students a week who need help and advice. **I urge you to please consider a donation to Victoria University's Foundation - your gift will be directed to our Student Support Fund to assist students in a time of crisis.**

Your donation to the Student Support Fund will make a real difference to the life of a student and help ensure that they receive the practical assistance required to allow them to continue study at Victoria University.

*Name and some details have been changed to protect identity.