

**Abby — This was a huge thing for me to be around others who had the same condition as what I had and knew what I was going through.**

I was about 11 years old back in 2015 my first bald spot appeared, mum and dad didn't think much of it and thought that maybe it was damaged and burnt off from a hair straightener. It grew back and then one spot turned to 2 and the 2 spots grew back. I had long thick hair and after my spots grew back I had it cut off short to accommodate the new hair that had grown back. Nothing happened for a while so we didn't think anymore of it and continued as if nothing had happened, until I was in grade 6 and spots turned to patches and patches then turned to the total loss of my hair in a matter of weeks. We still didn't know what alopecia was and the drs said it was stress relating to me breaking my finger, but we knew it was more so then went to see a dermatologist, then a trichologist. We tried different diets, steroid solutions and even acetone treatment with no success. By the end of grade 6 I had my first wig. It was uncomfortable, embarrassing and I couldn't understand why this was happening to me. I felt so uncomfortable in wearing it that I got special permission from my school to be able to wear a hat in class instead of my wig.

I was glad when the school Holidays came so I didn't have to wear a wig or hat and could be me with no pressure and no one looking at me.

In 2017 I started high school and found a new wig which was more me and I felt semi comfortable wearing it and that no one was staring at me. I still had no hair on my head and had started to lose my eyelashes and eyebrows. We found a new specialist for a second opinion about what was going on and I was diagnosed with Alopecia Universalis, I had no bodily hair. We tried different treatments including immunotherapy and steroid treatments which had some success with my hair growing back but as soon as the treatments were over it all fell out again. It came time and after discussions with specialist and mum and dad to stop all treatments and time to be a kid again with out having the regime of tablets and lotions everyday.

We attended the AAAF open day in Hobart to find out more information about what services were available and what social support networks were out there as a family we struggled to find the right path to go down and that the drs only knew so much. It was there that we found out about microbladding and suction wigs, things we never new existed!

I was lucky enough in 2017 to be selected to attend the first ever AAAF camp in Dubbo at the zoo. This was a huge thing for me to be around others who had the same condition as what I had and knew what I was going through. It was confronting and scary.



## Abby —

The present day It is getting easier , but I still struggle about what's going on with me. The emotional impact on both me and my family has been huge and there has been a lot of tears shed and a lot of anger and frustration. I am lucky to have such a great support network with my family and my best friend Maryanne who has been through this with me and has had my back at school. I am a typical 14 year old who plays netball, Hangs with her friends, goes to the movies and has a part time job.

Moving forward I am now the proud owner of my first suction wig from the amazing Angela at angel wigs and I have had my eyebrows microbladed so I now have eyebrows! All the support from the AAAF helped purchase my wigs last year and this year has provided me with sponsorship to continue to play netball with my local club and I thank you all immensely. And I thank the variety club who helped with a grant towards my suction wig! I would like to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication in promoting and getting AAAF out there so people know about it.

This year to have the AAAF sponsor myself and my netball team has meant a lot to me. Not only has it allowed me to continue playing a sport that I love but it has also raised awareness between fellow team members, families and other teams. Quiet often the question has been asked if I am sick, does she have cancer? And then that's how the conversation starts.... NO I have Alopecia.

Without the program I honestly believe that many of my friends, parents and the community wouldn't be aware of the great work that AAAF does. Yes many people have heard of Alopecia but didn't know what and who the AAAF did, and the hours of time that is put into helping people like me and their families with the research and events and grants and sponsorship programs that is offered, even to donating hair for wigs for kids.

By sponsoring a sporting activity it not only promotes physical fitness but friendship and teamwork. I am your typical 15 year old girl who goes to school, has a part time job, good friends and family, but I also have Alopecia. To be part of this sponsorship program this year and to be able to speak about AAAF, wigs, what issues and treatments I have had and any other question that is thrown at me or my mum I believe has been an eye opener for many people and that they don't take having hair for granted.



## Abby

I can recommend to anyone that wants to apply for this sponsorship to do so. It has been an uplifting experience to be able to share my journey with people and to proudly say that I am sponsored by the AAAF and to wear the logo every week with great pride, and we hope that we can make it to finals and continue to spread the awareness throughout here in Tassie.

The 2019 netball season has come to an end. We played extremely well all season and made it right through to the preliminary final to be beaten by 7 goals in a hard nail biting game. We finished 3rd on the ladder for the under 17 competition which was an amazing job as we played girls much older than us. It was great that Jess came to support us and watch our game, it was truly appreciated. Moving forward to next year we will be back training harder and going for it all again and fingers crossed we can go that little bit better than we did this season.

We finished the season off with a crazy hair day at training as a fundraiser for the AAAF with most of the junior members coming into training with some wild and wacky hairstyles. Gold coin donation was given and we raised \$50 to go to the AAAF.

Recently we held our annual netball dinner to end the season where we could relax and unwind after a big season. Was good to let the hair down and have a dance and laugh with the girls outside training and netball games. Best and fairest for the AAAF was a tie between Mia Jarmen and Alexandra Mattarozzi, coaches award went to Cleo Cresswell, Best in finals Ella Cresswell and sportsmanship went to Molly Spencer. Well deserved to all the girls who played a fantastic season.

Once again I would personally like to thank the AAAF for being such an amazing sponsor to my team and for allowing me to continue to play netball this season. As a teenager with Alopecia many people don't understand how hard it can be to continue to play sports as there are many things that I worry about, like my wig falling off, and that I am different and will my team mates understand and accept me for who I am. I am very lucky to have such an amazing club that supported me and team mates that were there for me. With AAAF as my sponsor we were able to talk about Alopecia and make them aware and the wider community now has an understanding of the condition which is amazing.

I can recommend anyone that wants to apply for this grant to do so, it is an amazing opportunity to continue to do something you love and are passionate about. I thank all the team at AAAF for their hard work and support to make this possible.

