

Max — My Alopecia Story—Sponsorship Recipient

I don't exactly remember when I started to lose my hair. I know it happened around 2014, when I was about 11. I also know it started like it did for any other any kid. In patches across my head.

When it began, I honestly couldn't have cared less. Hair wasn't a vital organ and I wouldn't die if I lost it, unlike some other people in my grade who certainly would have. My alopecia then took a turn for the worse in 2017 when I was 14 and so I decided to shave my head as all my hair was going to fall out anyway. However, it didn't bother any of my friends. After that, my eyebrows fell out and then that was it.

When I lost my hair, it did spark questions. However, they were never mean or malevolent. I also definitely got used to not having any hair, it makes me different, and I just go about my day like normal. I doubt my hair will grow back, however I don't mind.



Art was my passion and has been for most of my life. In particular, I have a soft spot for painting and comic art. I have been practising comic art for about 6 years now. I have never had any of my comic ideas published before however, I have tried. And so when I heard about the AAAF sponsorship from mum, I decided I had nothing to lose and so I applied for the silver scholarship. I am very glad I did. This scholarship is a great opportunity. Not only for my artistic skills to grow but I will also be producing a comic on alopecia to create awareness for children and adolescents facing this condition.

So that's pretty much it, and at the end of the day, I'm just a teen with alopecia no different from any other kid – minus the hair of course!

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Mid-Sponsorship Update 1

The last two months or more with my art teacher, Abbie, have gone quite quickly. I have learned quite a lot and used multiple different media, diversifying my art. With Abbie, I have used many mediums from ink, oil paints, and most recently charcoal. I have also learned to push myself more in my art, relying more on observation than previously. Taking the time to get the shapes and scale correctly really enhanced the piece of art that I was working on.

It will be a shame when Abbie leaves to go to the U.K as I have learnt so much. However, the time I have had has been quite beneficial and like I said previously, I have learnt a lot. Abbie has arranged for my lessons to continue with Sebastian, another local artist. This will also be very beneficial, to continue my art. I hope to learn new techniques and new media to work in. Similar to the work I did with Abby.

To raise awareness of Alopecia in my school community, I am going to speak next term in a meeting house about what Alopecia is and what it isn't and what it is like to live with it.

To enhance my comic and make it more accurate I would like to ask the AAAF if they have any resources I could use. This may include the number of children and adults who have alopecia in Australia. This may be in the form of a fact sheet or PowerPoint. This would assist me in explaining the facts about the condition.

I then plan to also interview some of my friends and ask what they thought it was like when I first lost my hair. This will be useful as that can then help me get an idea of how I might want to structure my comic. Over the holidays, I will also be gathering some facts on the alopecia condition.



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Mid-Sponsorship Update 2

The last 3 months have been filled with action-packed Alopecia awesomeness!

Following the trip to the Gold Coast, I gave a speech last week in my school during our weekly meeting house. Admittedly I may have talked a little too quickly, however, most people seemed to like my presentation. In the presentation I talked about: what Alopecia was, what happened when I first realised that I had it, I talked about the alopecia awareness week and the scholarship. Overall, I think people appreciated me coming to talk to them and I think it was a good learning experience for many.

I also met my new art tutor Sebastian who is really nice (we both share a love for Star Wars)! Recently I have just been learning about painting tips, such as a new way to blend colours together. I have got a sense of tonal variation in pictures and learning a bit more about scale. I am also painting on a new material. Strangely painting on a smooth wooden surface is actually better than canvas as it's easier to use most of the time. Next week I'm going to start a larger painting of my brother. It will be a distorted portrait. I will definitely implement the new techniques I've learnt. I only hope the painting goes well.

Lastly, I have been talking more about my final comic. The project is somewhat daunting. However, I have produced comics for school such as in Science and Global Politics class so hopefully, that experience should make the process easier. Despite this, I am also very excited at the prospect of starting the comic. I have already decided that the main protagonist will be a penguin with Alopecia. Penguins are cute and I think this will attract a larger, younger demographic. The whole story will surround the character of Baldy the penguin. He wants to be a professional skier however thinks that nobody will accept him because of his hair loss. I want there to also hopefully be a turning point in the story in which Baldy realises having no hair is trivial. Baldy can become whatever he wants to be and doesn't have to be restricted by his lack of hair. It will be difficult as I want the demographic to be larger than just for little kids, however, I think I'll be able to do it.

Overall as summer is drawing increasingly closer things on the Alopecia front are pretty good.

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Final Sponsorship Update

My name is Max. I applied for a AAAF Sponsorship directed towards my passion for art. This was a great opportunity as it gave me a chance to produce a comic. Something I think I wouldn't have done until much later if I hadn't received the scholarship.

When I applied for the scholarship I had no idea that I would get it. I also had no idea how much fun I'd have with the project. Although producing a comic is very demanding, I did enjoy the process. Through the sponsorship, I was able to learn new skills. One example is learning to use my computer for digital art. Although I am still learning about photoshop I didn't think I would learn nearly as much as I did in such a short amount of time. I have Lucy to thank for that, a family friend who is also a great artist.

I am very grateful to have received the Alopecia scholarship and i can't thank the AAAF enough. With the AAAF sponsorship, I was able to produce the Alopecia comic and I was also able to receive oil painting tuition from some great artists, first Abby and then Sebastian. With the art tuitions, I have been able to significantly further my artistic ability and make some great friends along the way.

I brainstormed ideas about my Alopecia comic with my Mum and we both decided that the main protagonist should be a cute animal that young children would find appealing. I also hoped that younger readers may identify with the character of Kurt (the penguin). I then wrote the comic. It was my first time seriously writing a comic script and it was an interesting process. Initially, I found it very daunting. Then I had to actually draw the comic. Drawing a page a day seemed manageable, but it was also a lot of work. Finally, when I went to Sydney, Lucy taught me the basics of photoshop and I was able to clean up the images, colour the images and insert the text or lettering in the comic. I'm still not entirely finished colouring as it takes a long time. I plan to colour all the panels during the May school holidays. However, it is also very rewarding when I finish a panel.

In the past 6 months I have made fantastic progress and I am very grateful for receiving the scholarship. I am glad I put myself out there and applied for the scholarship because so many great things have been happening since then.

