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| A blue circle with lines and dots  Description automatically generated  **“An Autobiography about a problem”**  **By: Lucas P-E Newman** |

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## **EARLY YEARS**

I was born in Port Macquarie and lived there until we moved to Newcastle when I was 6. I lived with my Dad for just a little while, but because my parents split up I mostly stayed with my Mum and my sister Olivia. She is called Via. I remember going to Via’s birthday party on a hill at Lake Cathie. It was mermaid themed, and very windy to the point where I remembered nearly getting blown away. I still have a Lightsaber that I got when I was really young. Mum hid it from me because I kept hitting people with it, and then she forgot about it. I found it a few years ago and love it. I also remember getting a red camera for a birthday or Christmas, I loved that camera for years but sadly it was broken. I was going to fix it, but I took it apart and couldn’t get it back together. I eventually had to throw it out.

As a child, I loved to figure out how things worked and that ultimately came to a point where I would get a screwdriver and take apart my toys. I was usually bad at it and would destroy my toys because I wouldn’t know what I was doing. I still do a version of this, taking apart electronics and fixing them, but I’m better at fixing things and doing it safely. When I talk to my Mum about doing this, she reminds me now that I have actually taken apart more than just toys. She says: “2 x toasters, 3 laptops that were the best but still didn’t need to be disassembled, calculators, watches, and a huge number of small electrical items”. Mum says I was a very expensive child, and maybe I still am. I was banned from having a screwdriver for a very long time. Now I have a whole heap of quality screwdrivers and bits to do my work with.

I didn’t speak properly until I was four due to my childhood apraxia of speech which has had a profound impact on the way I communicate to this day. I was also diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and ADHD when I was six and in kindergarten. I remember feeling different because I had it, and that’s not always a good thing. I think it can be a good thing in some situations, like with maths and science, I think my autism helps me with my love for maths, science, music and art because it allows for me to understand the material better and see things in a different way than most people.

When I was supposed to go from my preschool to kindergarten with my friends, my primary school said I wasn’t ready. I heard that it may have been because my poor communication skills for my age at the time or my age. It was really hard for me to lose my friends when they went off to “big school” without me. Mum changed me to a different preschool, and I made some new friends. I feel like there has been more expectations because I have been older than everyone else in my classes. I turn 18 this year, and I’ll still be in year 11, which makes me feel old and it doesn’t help that my friends also call me old sometimes.

## **PRIMARY SCHOOL**

When I moved to Newcastle I had to adjust to a new school, Warners Bay Primary School. I was in kindergarten and originally, I didn’t have friends because I didn’t know how to make friends at that point. It was all new, so I sat by myself for a while. Eventually I became friends with Thomas and Lachlan. Even though I had learnt had to read to level 17 in kindergarten, in year 1, I completely forgot how to read. I had to go and do Reading Recovery every day and start all over again. I was very frustrated, and my Mum tells me about having to read science books about astronomy and dinosaurs to me because I could read them by myself like I could before. I hated it but by year 2, I was reading the same sort of level as others in my class.

I became friends with a boy called Eden. He had autism like me, and an older sister in my sister’s class. We spent a lot of years in primary school being friends, hanging out at the netball courts when our sister’s played in the same team, and doing things together in the school holidays.

I was popular with the guys and girls at primary school. The girls always loved having me hang out with their group. I transitioned from playing role-play type of games with them, to playing more active sporty games like tips with the boys as I got older.

In 2017 I participated in the drama group for StarStruck. I was supposed to be practising with a group of other students all doing the same thing, but I wanted to do my own thing. So, I created my own choreography and performed it at StarStruck.

It was either in year 5 or 6 when I got really good at art. It was mostly drawing and sketching, and I learnt by tracing and watching YouTube tutorials. I drew mostly cartoon characters like Spiderman. My teachers noticed this and sent in my art to be nominated for GATS camp. I got in and went to GATS camp at Gwandalan Bay for a week. They introduced me to spray painting – I still have the artwork on my wall. I learned about chalk and oil pastel techniques. I still like doing art occasionally, but not as something I want to pursue as a career, more as a hobby.

In year 6, I was the oldest boy in my year group. This meant that when I did ok at Cross Country, I was nominated to run Cross Country at zone. I practiced a little bit at school on the oval with my friends but really, I hadn’t ran a cross country except for my school race before then. I went off to Zone and came 8th out of 15 boys my age. It was a pretty good result based on me not having much experience.

My year 6 teacher at Warners Bay Public School got me into my love of mathematics. My friends and I liked to play Pokémon. He found a way to make math more of a competitive game that my friends and I could enjoy during class. He introduced a Pokémon like game about maths, which we were allowed to play in place. Another thing he did was introduce me to Khan Academy. It was the competitive side of it where I got to earn badges. The more badges you earnt, the more things you got like skins. The more badges and points you got, the more you could win the competition I had with my friends. The same teacher introduced us to a project where we had to decide what jobs we wanted in the future and map the way to achieve it. This is where I originally found out about engineering and how I found out I wanted to become an engineer. This teacher started my love of math and engineering and got me to pursue it further in my education.

## **FAMILY & IMPACTS**

While I do not have a dad, I do have multiple people in my life that I look up to and who have affected me for the better. One of them was my great grandfather. He has sadly passed but one of the key memories I have with him is when he was explaining mathematics to my family and I, he told a story that goes something like this: “I used to have a student I would teach, they were extremely skilled in mathematics so I pulled them to the side during class and got them to take a test, the test got me to tell the kid different shapes by the amount of sides it has, so I went through them, what shape has four sides? A square, what shape has five sides? A pentagon, this continued on for a bit until I asked the question what shape has infinite sides? and he replied to a circle” this is one of the first interactions with math that has shaped into my love for it.

Somebody who has affected my love for math and science is my Uncle, Uncle Micheal. I view Uncle Micheal as a really smart person who knows a lot about how math and science works, this only gets furthered by a memory I have with him where we were sitting under the Christmas tree talking about all kinds of different things, by talking I mean I asked him questions about how stuff in science works and why it does and he answered to the best of his ability but every time he would answer he explained it to me like it was basic knowledge. This fuelled my love of science and math by giving me somebody to look up to - somebody that I knew was so smart with these things, and somebody I wanted to be like.

Another person who has had a tremendous effect on me is my Pa, a smart man who has worked extremely hard to get where he is and somebody that always seems to know the right thing to do, somebody you can go to for help no matter what and somebody you can always trust. I want to be like him one day. One of the great memories I have with him was when he explained who his grandfather was and how he effected my Pa to this day. My Pa’s Pa, always supported him no matter what but he made sure my Pa knew the risks and consequences of his choices, a voice of reason, which inspired my Pa to treat people the same way. This is a reason why he is my role model, my father figure, and the person I aspire to be like. Another reason why I look up to him so much as because he inspired me to be the best person I can be and always supported me when I needed it. For instance when my dog George died he called me making sure I was ok and making sure I knew he would help me if I needed it.

## **EARLY HIGH SCHOOL**

I started a new at high school with a passion for my education. In high school I decided I wanted to focus on my learning instead of focusing on socialising. I still made good friends and spent lunches with them and playing Minecraft and games, but I worked really hard in the lessons to understand and develop my understanding of the material. In year 7, I worked so hard, especially at maths and science that I received Principal awards and got put in the top maths and science classes for year 8. English wasn’t quite the same. They dropped me down in English because I was with my friends, and we talked all the time and they had to split us up. I think I got the bad end of the bargain. I do remember asking the teacher for help with the assignment where I was creating a fake nation. I dedicated a lot of time to it – Ducktopia. I am still really proud of it, and I want to show my friends because it’s funny. In year 8, I also joined the drama group. I had been spending lunches more in the art classes which I enjoyed. A few of my friends were in the drama group and they encouraged me to join. I can’t remember what the play was about, but I do remember that I was a ‘chair’ in a performance.

A STEM teacher got me into coding HTML CSS JS (coding languages). She was a very good teacher and noticed that my friends and I were ahead of everyone else in the class in the material so instead of following what the class was doing, using block code, we got a new assignment to use HTML CSS JS and learn about coding websites. This is where I originally found out about all this and found my passion for programming. One of my first projects was to create a Christmas gift for my family with a sappy slideshow website using HTML CSS and JavaScript. There were lots of crying and happy tears from my family members that I gave it to.

## **COOKS HILL CAMPUS**

I learnt about Cooks Hill Campus, the Big Picture Education school from my mother, who was at the time, a casual teacher working at Cooks Hill Campus. Here she learnt about the benefits of the different type of education. From there my sister soon called Cooks Hill Campus her school, which influenced me to finally give Big Picture Education a shot.

I arrived at Cooks Hill Campus not knowing who I wanted to be or what I wanted to do with my life except for wanting to be an engineer, and having experience with HTML, CSS, JS code. Although through many projects I have furthered my portfolio with coding which allowed me to understand what I love most and what I want to be, a programmer. Some of my projects focused on electronics and understanding electronics and mechatronics engineering as at the time that was what I wanted to pursue, but when I started a project where I was designing and developing an Augmentative and Alternative Communication, AAC app. To allow for more AAC programs to be on the market without the mass overpriced cost of typical AAC equipment, I realised my passions more aligned with me becoming a programmer. It was one of the most influential projects I have done that has affected my future.

I love programming so much that even when I started at Cooks Hill Campus my first project was to code a website and given my knowledge at the time and resources I had access to I did a great job. For the project I designed a website based on the limited research I conducted on web design and knowledge I got from a previous internship with a web-design company called Clickk, I created multiple pages each with a different design, colours, and approach to having a website, this ended with a mix match website and me having built skills on web-design.

Currently I am programming my own portfolio where I am designing it, coding it, testing it, on my own. I have loved doing this as it has allowed for further freedom in the design of my portfolio where using a drag and drop website would restrict the freedom. Even the best websites where you can design and make your own portfolio, the ones that cost money, have restrictions on the type of website you can make. Adding programs and addons does make this better but they can only go so far. While coding a website allows you to create, edit, and change it on a fundamental level with the basic components that can’t be reached by an editor.

## **WHO I AM NOW**

I am a very hard worker, because I love doing what I do; programming. It’s something that allows your imagination to come true and something that always has a challenge in it, even if you’re extremely skilled, you can always learn new things. Other things that I love to do are creating electronics. It's just something about having an idea then seeing it come to life in front of you that excites me.

While I do love programming, the projects I tend to complete can be very stressful for me and can have a bad effect on my health. Since I love doing them so much, I tend to overwork myself and push myself to continue doing my work even when I’m exhausted from working on them. Through doing this I have created good quality work and a lot of it, but I have also made myself so exhausted it started to have a really negative effect on my mental health. I do need to improve this behaviour of mine, start to not push myself so hard and allow for rest and recovery from my work, even if I do love it.

## **FUTURE ME (CONCLUSION)**

I have completed many projects in my life so far, and there were many people who have influenced me and my love of learning, like my Pa, my Uncle, my Teachers, and more. My current goals are to become a programmer, because while I do love creating electronics and devices, that is something more suited to my hobbies which allows me to focus on becoming a programmer. My plans to become a programmer are to get a job out of school while pursuing an academic degree in computer science or software engineering at university. This will entail me to work very hard if I want to have a shot.

Once I complete university, I want to follow a career in programming, and I would like to work at a small business, as I find small businesses have a better atmosphere and dynamic with their work and employees, rather than a massive company like Microsoft or Apple.

I can’t wait to continue my path forward and I truly believe that I will enjoy my future career in programming, and having a hobby like creating electronics will be an amazing passtime for me. The only thing that could stop me is my determination to continue forward and my belief in myself, which will not fault for I have an amazing team backing me.