

**STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1**  
**TO PROVIDE LONG-TERM SUPPORT THROUGH**  
**INNOVATIVE, QUALITY PROGRAMS**

**OUR WORK  
HAS LASTING  
BENEFITS**

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# OUR APPROACH

The effects of family disadvantage go beyond the home environment. It can negatively affect a disadvantaged child’s school life and mean they are less likely to achieve the educational outcomes they need to build a better future for themselves.

Gaps in educational achievement between disadvantaged students and their more advantaged peers start to appear in the first year of school. These gaps continue to widen as children move through school.

The level of educational attainment a young person achieves is an important predictor of their future life prospects. Young people who complete Year 12, for example, have a better chance of being employed throughout their adult life and are less likely to be dependent on welfare than their peers who do not complete school.

Reaching and completing Year 12 is significantly harder for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. However,

research shows that providing targeted long-term educational support at every stage of a child’s education journey can help students growing up in disadvantage to achieve better educational outcomes.

We start when children are young, working with families and community providers to help parents gain skills to nurture their children’s early literacy and numeracy and prepare them for school. Then during the primary and secondary school years, we provide targeted support to students with financial assistance to help with education-related expenses and access to extra personal support and learning programs.

This wrap-around approach helps disadvantaged young people to overcome the barriers they face that can negatively affect their educational and life outcomes.

For every student on the *Learning for Life* program we measure progress against three key longer-term outcomes: school attendance, Year 12 completion, and post-school engagement in employment, education or training.

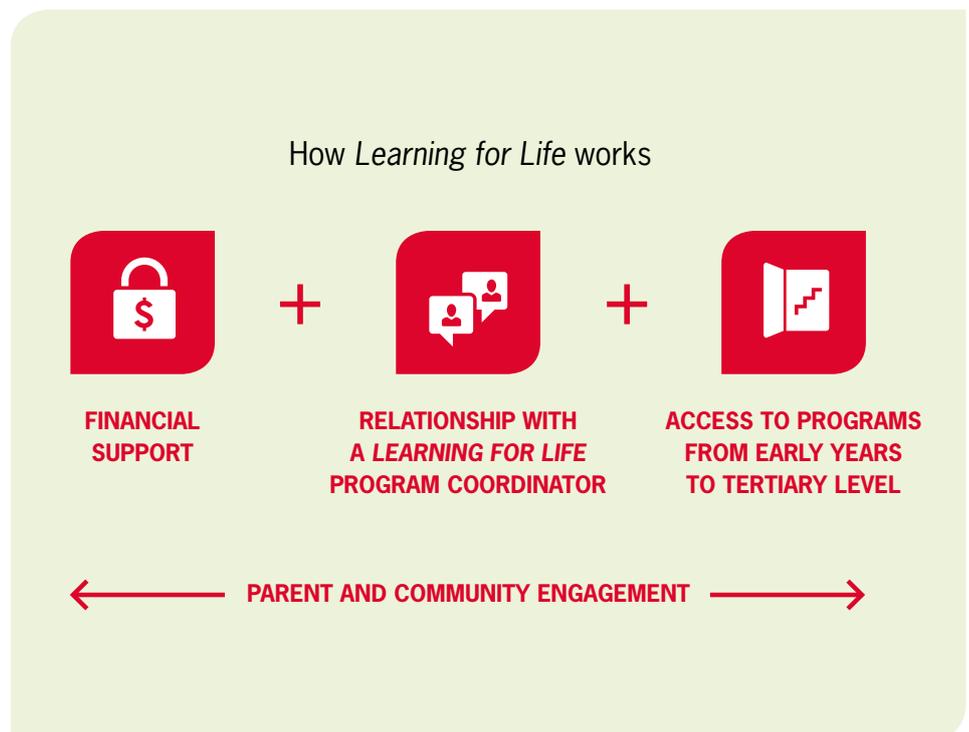
Analysis of this data plus feedback from practitioners helps us to refine our policy and practice to ensure we continue to make a positive difference to the children and families we support.

## LEARNING FOR LIFE SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

*Learning for Life* is our flagship educational support program, which this year reached 33,195 students in need.

*Learning for Life* comprises three integrated components that support disadvantaged students to fully participate at school and ultimately improve their educational outcomes.

Students on the program receive financial support from sponsors to help cover the cost of education-related expenses, such as uniforms, books and excursions. Each sponsored student is also linked to a Family Partnership Coordinator who connects them with outside-of-school learning programs. Family Partnership Coordinators work closely with families, their schools and communities so that parents – the biggest influencers on children – can gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to effectively support their child’s learning journey.





## CASE STUDY – FAMILY PARTNERSHIP COORDINATOR

### FOCUSED SUPPORT TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES

“Parents ring me and share their pride and happiness in seeing their child improve after participating in our programs.

Being a Family Partnership Coordinator brings many rewards. I love seeing the students we support grow and progress. I've been at The Smith Family for seven years and this is the greatest highlight of my role. It's a very different scenario to my time as a youth worker when I didn't get to see how the story ended for the students I was helping.

I currently support 600 students on our *Learning for Life* program to reach their full potential. This means supporting them to reach at least Year 12 and then move into work or further study. It's not just financial assistance we are providing, but long-term wrap-around educational support through our suite of programs.

A big part of what I do is building relationships with families, students and school staff. I monitor attendance, review student school reports to see who needs extra learning support, and provide families with external referrals as needed. I also hand out attendance certificates, stationery packs, library and book packs, hold sponsor

writing days and invite families for morning tea catch-ups.

I am very passionate about the work I do and believe that it can make a real difference. Every time I see or hear about one of our students doing well, I feel like a proud parent! It's great being able to build up that kind of relationship with students and their families.”

**Mara**, Family Partnership Coordinator,  
The Smith Family, Victoria

# 39,286

children under five participating in early years programs

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 25,046

children aged from birth to five years participating in *Let's Read*

### 9,809

children participating in *Let's Count*

### 3,016

children under five participating in *Communities for Children*

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# EARLY YEARS



One in three children from Australia's most disadvantaged communities does not meet one or more key developmental milestones in their first year of school. This compares to 16% of children from the most advantaged communities.<sup>1</sup>

Research has shown that investing time, effort and resources in the early years of a child's life has significant impacts on their ongoing behaviour, learning, health and wellbeing. Supporting children's early development thus lays the basis for them growing up with the skills to succeed, bringing benefits for them and the community as a whole.<sup>2</sup>

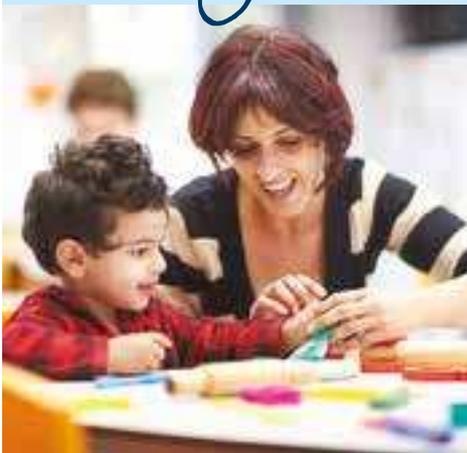
1 Australian Government (2016), 'Australian Early Development Census National Report 2015: A snapshot of early childhood development in Australia', Department of Education and Training, Canberra.

2 Ibid.

## CASE STUDY – CHILD AND PARENT CENTRES

### SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Areeg



"The *Child and Parent Centre* is like my home. I can find everything here. I found peace, I found safety and an inviting place for my kids.

When I came to Australia from Jordan four years ago with my husband and baby, I had no friends and no family. It was very lonely. I didn't know where to go; I didn't know any places in the area.

It wasn't until we settled in a new area that I found out about the *Child and Parent Centre* through the school and started going to the playgroup with my youngest son, Peter.

It was here that I met my best friend. This changed my life. I was always thinking, "Where do I go and what can I do with the kids?"

Areeg and her son Peter at the playgroup run by the *Child and Parent Centre*.

At the centre they told me: 'We're here for you, you can come here with the children instead of sitting at home.' So I took my children lots of times and they played and I talked with other parents.

My confidence in myself and my parenting has increased so much since coming to the centre, and it has helped me to understand my children better. It has helped me feel part of this community.

The centre is not just a place for children to come and make friends, play and learn; it is so much more. Here I have found everything I have been looking for."

**Areeg**, mother

*Child and Parent Centres* are an initiative of the Western Australian State Government to ensure children get the best start in life. The Smith Family operates *Child and Parent Centres* at Westminster Junior Primary School and Roseworth Primary School.

## THE CHALLENGE

Ensuring young children develop basic language, numeracy, literacy and cognitive skills before they start school is vital for their long-term health and wellbeing. One in three children from highly disadvantaged communities are not achieving key developmental milestones before they even begin school. Starting school already behind their more advantaged peers, increases the likelihood that they will struggle to catch up and will fall behind over time. Supporting parents to develop the skills to help their child's learning and development from an early age is crucial for improving a disadvantaged child's educational and life outcomes.

## HOW WE HELP

We work with young children, their families and community professionals to help children be ready for school so they can make the most of their time there.

Early exposure to important foundational skills is crucial in preparing a child for school and educational achievement further down the track. Our programs, *Let's Read*

and *Let's Count*, provide training, tools and support for early childhood educators and parents on how to develop reading and maths skills in young children. They help parents to gain the ability and confidence to support their children's learning and development at home.

We are grateful to PwC's 'Innovation Acceleration' consultants who guided us through a project to extend our early maths program *Let's Count* through social enterprise activities. This included running *Let's Count* workshops on a fee-for-service basis for parents of our corporate and independent school partners. The funds raised from this activity helped us extend the reach of *Let's Count* in the disadvantaged communities where we work.

This year we continued our work in nine Australian Government *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner* sites. As the facilitating partner, we worked with the local child and family service system to ensure that it is able to provide targeted support that helps strengthen children's development and wellbeing.

Our *Child and Parent Centres* in Western Australia, funded by the State government, provided early learning programs and maternal and child health services for families with children up to eight years old.

## HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Child and Parent Centres*
- *Communities for Children*
- *Let's Count*
- *Let's Read*
- *School Community Hubs*

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Parents have the skills and resources to support their children's early language, literacy and numeracy development

## CASE STUDY – LET'S COUNT

### BUILDING MATHS SKILLS EARLY

"When I first talked to my daughter Sienna's kindy teachers about the *Let's Count* program, I thought it was a fantastic idea. I think introducing maths at a kindy level, so that it is fun and a game, changes the children's perception of maths. It becomes fun rather than something boring or something they have to do.

I'm raising four children and it can be difficult to devote time for learning with each of them. *Let's Count* has helped me find ways to include maths in our everyday activities. We play snakes and ladders, and little number recognition games. We practise counting. It's fantastic that Sienna can count to 100 now, and she's only five.

I do think it's too late to start introducing maths to children only when they reach primary school. I work in schools as an integration aid and I've seen children come

into Prep not knowing any of their numbers. I know many of these children will be spending all of their school days trying to catch up. They are already behind before they start.

What *Let's Count* has helped me to do is see maths in lots of fun games that Sienna can play every day. It's helping parents to keep maths fun and simple, and helping children prepare for maths at primary school."

**Oriana**, *Let's Count* participant

*Let's Count* was delivered in 35 communities this year. The program was developed by Professor Bob Perry (Charles Sturt University) and Professor Ann Gervasoni (Monash University) with the support of the Origin Foundation and BlackRock Investment Management (Australia) Limited.



Oriana (R) and Sienna (L) play Snakes and Ladders to help develop Sienna's numeracy skills.

Oriana  
& Sienna

# 33,056

primary school students participating in programs

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 13,756

primary school students sponsored through *Learning for Life*

### 12,680

primary school students participating in *Communities for Children*

### 3,192

Learning Club primary school-aged participants, with 1,119 tutors in 194 Learning Clubs

### 1,155

student2student program participants supported by 1,103 reading buddies, with 118 volunteer buddy supervisors

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# PRIMARY YEARS



Even when students from disadvantaged backgrounds have the same capabilities as those from advantaged backgrounds, they do not make the same academic progress as they move through school.

By the time students who have high Year 3 NAPLAN scores reach Year 9, those from disadvantaged backgrounds will be one and three quarter years behind their advantaged peers.<sup>1</sup>

Ninety-four per cent of Year 5 students who have parents with a university qualification achieve above the national minimum numeracy standard. The figure is 61% for students whose parents have not completed Year 12 or equivalent.<sup>2</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE

From their first day at primary school, disadvantaged children may need extra help to regularly attend school and stay motivated. Many start school lacking basic numeracy and literacy skills and the confidence to catch up and keep up in the classroom. Factors at home, such as unemployment or low incomes, low education levels of parents, work

1 Goss P., Sonnemann J., Chisholm C. & Nelson L. (2016), 'Widening gaps: What NAPLAN tells us about student progress', Grattan Institute, Melbourne.  
2 ACARA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority) (2015), 'National Assessment Program – ICT Literacy Years 7 & 10: Report 2014', ACARA, Sydney.



Shelby attends a Smith Family Learning Club once a week.

Shelby

### CASE STUDY – LEARNING CLUB

## HOMEWORK SUPPORT TO BOOST LEARNING

"I didn't used to like doing homework but now I like doing it even when I'm not at Learning Club. I go to Learning Club once a week after school and I get to go with my friends from my class.

My school work has got much better since I joined the Learning Club. We don't have the internet at home and I have to do 30 minutes of homework on the iPad a day. I get to do my iPad homework at Learning Club.

If we do well with our homework throughout the year then we get a reward in Term 4. I want to do all my homework so that I get a reward.

The volunteer who helps me at Learning Club is called Elisa – she is great. When I have done all my homework she tests me on my numeracy.

My favourite part of going to Learning Club is playing the learning game. I like playing this and I like winning. I have won the game lots of times.

I also do the reading program with The Smith Family where I read to my buddy over the phone once a week. I really enjoy reading."

**Shelby**, 9, Learning Club participant

commitments and limited learning resources affect a disadvantaged child's ability to participate fully in education and achieve positive outcomes. Financial hardship can also mean school essentials, such as uniforms, textbooks, a computer or internet access at home, or the money to afford an excursion, are hard to come by. Without these items, students may be more likely to struggle at school and find it hard to fit in, making it even more difficult for them to stay motivated at school.

#### HOW WE HELP

Our *Learning for Life* sponsorship program can begin when a child starts school. Students are linked with sponsors who provide financial assistance to help pay for education essentials. Each family is also connected with a Family Partnership Coordinator and learning and mentoring programs that provide the extra support disadvantaged students need to increase their educational outcomes. For primary school students, our *student2student* reading program and before- and after-school

Learning Clubs offer access to crucial one-on-one learning support.

Positive parental support is an important factor in a child's success at school. Our Coordinators link parents with opportunities in their community to help them gain skills to effectively support their children's learning at home.

Through the *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner* initiative we work with local communities to connect parents to other programs that will help strengthen their skills and build positive networks.

Our *Tech Packs* program provides disadvantaged families with affordable, internet-ready computers for their homes, and the training and technical support parents need to develop their digital skills. Research shows that students growing up in low socio-economic households are at risk of being left behind in the technology race. Without access at home to hardware, software and the internet, disadvantaged students will struggle to develop their digital capabilities, confidence and motivation.

Limited technology skills means they may be locked out of the jobs of the future. We work with our partners to help improve and increase access and digital literacy levels for students and their families.

#### HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Communities for Children*
- Learning Clubs
- *School Community Hubs*
- *student2student*

#### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved confidence, knowledge and understanding
- Improved literacy and numeracy skills

#### CASE STUDY – STUDENT2STUDENT

### BUILDING A LOVE OF READING

"It is so hard for me to find the time to read with the girls in the evening, so having them read to their buddy makes such a difference to us.

I have seven children. Two of my girls are in the *student2student* program – Jillian, who is nine, and Leena, who is 10.

Both girls really enjoy reading with their buddy. Jillian reads to her buddy three times a week and Leena reads twice a week.

I like that we can see what level they are both on and when they move up the levels. I have seen a big improvement with their reading since they started.

Four of my kids are on the *Learning for Life* program – Andrew, Kate, Leena and Jillian. When we were asked if they wanted to join the reading program, I knew that it would be good for Leena and Jillian as they had been struggling with their reading.

Leena's reading is really good now and she is reading long books all by herself. She says that reading is her new hobby.

Leena and Jillian both started the reading program last year and this year we were offered the opportunity to do it again. I thought it was great for both of them so we are glad that they have the chance. They just love it."

**Donna**, *Learning for Life* parent

Our major corporate partner, Optus, has enabled the ongoing delivery of the *student2student* mobile reading program across Australia, and we thank Optus for their much valued support.

The support of Optus is delivering a tangible outcome of improved reading skills for thousands of children in need.

Jillian  
& Leena

Sisters Jillian (L) and Leena (R) are improving their reading skills with help from their *student2student* reading buddies. Photo: Bev Lacey / ARM.



# 32,327

secondary school students participating in programs

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 18,089

secondary school students sponsored through *Learning for Life*

### 8,057

secondary school students participating in post-school planning activities, including careers workshops and university experience days

### 2,425

participating in *Work Inspiration*

### 845

secondary school-aged participants, with 282 tutors in 51 Learning Clubs

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# SECONDARY YEARS



Around 60% of young people from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds complete Year 12. This compares to around 90% for those from the highest socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

Young people who attain Year 12 have a greater likelihood of continuing with further study, entering the workforce and being employed throughout most of their adult life. Year 12 completion is also associated with better health outcomes, a reduced likelihood of welfare dependency and an increased ability to participate in the community.<sup>2</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE

Keeping secondary school students working towards positive post-school options

and engaged in their education is one of the biggest challenges of this life stage. Teenagers are influenced by a range of factors that can cause them to lose interest in learning and drop out of school before reaching Year 12. Without a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, a young person's ability to find and keep employment, contribute to their community and achieve positive life outcomes is significantly reduced.

For young people, factors such as family income, parental support, positive role models, early achievement, motivation, perseverance and mindset can also influence school completion and educational outcomes. For disadvantaged young people, heightened awareness of the financial strain education costs can place on their already struggling family can also play a part. To

1 Lamb S., Jackson J., Walstab A. and Huo S. (2015), 'Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out', Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.  
2 Ibid.



Vijitra (right) attended a *Work Inspiration* event at a Hilton Hotel. Photo: Katrina Bridgeford, Newspix.

Vijitra

## CASE STUDY – WORK INSPIRATION

### OPPORTUNITIES THAT INSPIRE

"*Work Inspiration* at the Hilton Hotel opened up my mind about career choices and lifestyle. It really inspired me to do better at school and home.

I wanted to take part in *Work Inspiration* so I could have a new experience, get skills for my future and also because it would benefit me for jobs, work interviews and my resumé.

In the program I learnt about independence and teamwork, and that I have more options if I decide to change my career goals.

One of the ladies who worked in beverages at the hotel talked to us about careers. From that I learnt that I can always get into different jobs and that it's okay to change my mind, and to use jobs as stepping stones.

My favourite part of *Work Inspiration* was the tour through all the departments in the hotel. Some of the other great activities were getting to design the pavlovas, waitressing, coffee making, folding napkins and making napkin swans.

From the start of middle school I've always been really interested in the Australian Defence Forces or getting a degree in architecture. After *Work Inspiration* I had a really good think. Maybe I could get a job in hospitality before I make that big step.

I would encourage any kids who get the chance to do *Work Inspiration* because it is really good and a fun way to learn stuff that can benefit them."

**Vijitra**, *Work Inspiration* participant

*Work Inspiration* provides students with the opportunity to undertake meaningful and inspiring work experiences with a range of organisations, including Hilton Worldwide.

lessen the financial burden on their parents, a disadvantaged student might choose a low-cost elective subject, regardless of their interest levels. This can lead to a lack of motivation and engagement with their learning, lower educational performance, decreased self-esteem, and ultimately poorer educational outcomes.

Many young people we support can see the benefit of completing Year 12, but their circumstances make it much harder for them to achieve this. Having to overcome barriers such as access to technology, resources and networks of support can reduce their motivation and self-belief to do well.

#### HOW WE HELP

We work with students, families and our partners to help disadvantaged young people complete Year 12 and make a smooth transition to work, higher education or training.

Our Program Coordinators connect students with opportunities that show them the options available to them for their futures; these might be opportunities that nurture their creative or artistic talents. We also offer students access to meaningful work experience opportunities, as well as

supportive mentors who help them explore potential careers and develop aspirations for their futures.

Through our online mentoring program *iTrack*, students in Years 9 to 11 are matched with volunteer adult mentors working in their field of interest. This exposes students to positive role models and to career conversations to which they otherwise may not have access at home or within their own social network. Our experiential career days, university campus visits and *Work Inspiration* program provide opportunities to visit workplaces and universities to help prepare students for the world of study and work beyond school.

Supporting disadvantaged students to develop positive attitudes and behaviours can also influence their educational outcomes. Our *Certificate I in Financial Services* program teaches high school students skills to better manage their money, make informed financial decisions, and to set and achieve financial goals.

Through our Digital Futures for Families and Students project, this year we looked at harnessing the potential of technology to

help us reach as many disadvantaged students and families as possible. And with education and employment prospects becoming more dependent on technology and digital skills, we worked with our partners to help disadvantaged young people and their families access and participate in the digital world.

#### HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- Financial Literacy programs
- Girls at the Centre
- Indigenous Youth Leadership Project
- *iTrack*
- Learning Clubs
- School Community Hubs
- SmArts, including Bella Art Workshops
- Work Inspiration

#### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Greater understanding of available career options
- Increased knowledge regarding pathways to further study/careers

#### CASE STUDY – *iTRACK*

### MENTORING FOR THE FUTURE

“My *iTrack* mentor has made me realise that I can be myself and whatever I want to be in the future. She’s helped me a lot and given me some new interests and career paths to follow.

I’m interested in becoming a doctor, nurse or paramedic, and I think the online format of *iTrack* gives me the freedom to talk about my hopes for the future, without feeling like I’m being judged.

I think it’s a very different but refreshing experience to have a mentor online. I wasn’t sure what to expect when I started *iTrack*. I was so surprised to see how much I could bond over the internet with my mentor.

I have had many conversations with her about career paths I hadn’t thought about before, such as working as a health professional. I was really curious about that. We had a really long and awesome conversation about that.

Susana

Whenever I explain that I need more information on a particular topic to do with careers or study, my mentor will come back with handy tips and resources at our next *iTrack* session.

She is very smart and experienced, and it’s been really good mentoring for me. She has a lot of good phrases to help motivate me in school.”

**Susana**, *iTrack* participant



*iTrack* participant Susana is interested in becoming a doctor, nurse or paramedic.

# 1,350

tertiary students sponsored through *Learning for Life*

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 362

members of the Young Leaders' Network

### 209

tertiary students in the *Tertiary Mentoring* program

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Only 59% of 24-year-olds from the lowest socio-economic backgrounds are fully engaged in education, training or work. This compares to 83% of those from the highest socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>1</sup>

Young people who do not enter any form of post-secondary education or training face long-term labour market risks, with potentially lifelong social and economic impacts.<sup>2</sup>

## THE CHALLENGE

Compared with their more well-off peers, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who decide to pursue further education or training after completing Year 12, face a tough path when it comes to completing their qualification.

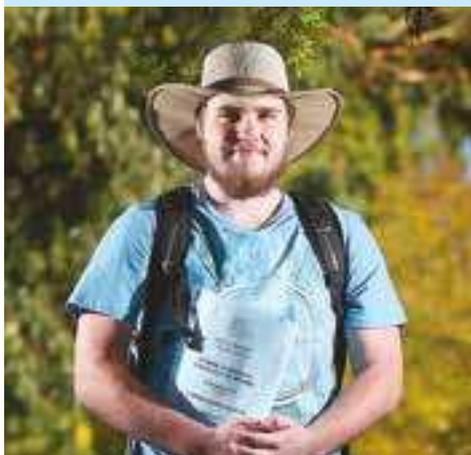
Many are the first in their family to go to university or, in some cases, to complete Year 12. This can mean they may have limited access to supportive adults who can provide career guidance and study advice to help with managing university life.

1 Lamb S., Jackson J., Walstab A. and Huo S. (2015), 'Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out', Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.  
2 Cuervo H. and Wyn J. (2011), *Rethinking youth transitions in Australia: A historical and multidimensional approach*, Youth Research Centre, University of Melbourne, Melbourne.

## CASE STUDY – TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP

# CHANGING YOUNG PEOPLE'S LIVES

Keenan moved from rural Tasmania to Hobart to go to university.  
*Photo: Nikki Davis Jones, Newspix.*



"I feel really privileged to have had this opportunity. I'm the first person in my family to ever go to university.

When I was in Year 10 my mum was unable to work because of a back injury and my dad was also out of work. That time was a real struggle for us as a family and it was really hard for my parents to get back on their feet.

I know it was a real relief for my mum when my two siblings and I started receiving support from The Smith Family.

The Smith Family provided a lot of financial support for my education through high school; they have helped with books and uniforms and it's taken a lot of pressure off.

At the start of 2016 I moved from rural Tasmania to Hobart to go to university. I'm now living with my grandparents while I complete my study.

I've always really wanted to go on to university, but without The Smith Family's help it would not have been possible.

Now that I'm at university I've really noticed how much the support makes a difference. It would be a lot harder to succeed in my course without The Smith Family's support.

After completing about seven years of study, I would like to work in biotechnology. I'd really like to get into stem cell and medical research."

*Keenan*

**Keenan**, *Tertiary Scholarship* student

The cost of travel, textbooks and other resources can place an extra burden on a family already struggling financially. Inadequate technology in the home makes it harder for disadvantaged tertiary students to satisfactorily complete their studies. Additionally, the benefit of taking on paid work to help their family may become more important, placing additional strain on the time available for a student's studies.

#### HOW WE HELP

Our tertiary scholarship program supports disadvantaged tertiary students to continue with and complete higher education or training. To ease the strain of tertiary studies on families, financial assistance from sponsors helps cover education-related expenses such as textbooks and travel to university or TAFE.

Our Family Partnership Coordinators help students stay engaged with their studies and develop skills to manage university and adult life. This includes linking them to supports available through their university. Leveraging our relationships with our

corporate partners, we connect students with employers and their staff. Linking sponsored students to working professionals helps them understand their job prospects, build networks and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Through our informal Young Leaders' Network, we offer skills development and networking opportunities (thanks to our corporate partners), which support current and former *Learning for Life* with their study and careers.

This year we introduced a refreshed model of tertiary scholarship support, informed by feedback from our students, *Learning for Life* Program Coordinators, research and our university partners. This model is designed to help students establish and grow connections within their tertiary institution during the first year of study, with encouragement to become more involved in university and community life over the next two years. In the fourth year, a mentor is matched to students to help guide their transition from study to work.

#### HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- Tertiary Scholarship
- Young Leaders' Network

#### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Enhanced networks and relationships
- Enhanced skills

#### CASE STUDY – YOUNG LEADERS' NETWORK

### TURNING STUDENTS INTO LEADERS

"The Smith Family has been an important source of encouragement for me for over 10 years.

I've now graduated with a Commerce Degree and will soon start a career in an industry I'm really passionate about. I'm eager to stay involved with The Smith Family and give back as much as I can.

While I was at university, I went to two workshops organised through the Young Leaders' Network, run by Accenture. The workshops were outstanding and became pivotal in helping me establish my own career. I learnt valuable skills for the workforce and made important connections with Accenture, which led me to gain a graduate position with the company.

Where I grew up, there was a lot of disadvantage and not many people encouraging me to do great things with my

education. But I did have The Smith Family and my teachers—and that was enough to make the difference for me."

**Brett**, former *Learning for Life* recipient and member of our Young Leaders' Network.

Accenture Australia has been our major partner for the Young Leaders' Network helping young people to develop their employability skills and confidence.

"Many Young Leaders' Network members have been equipped with skills in communication, resumé writing, interview techniques and how to use social media during the job-seeking process, by attending our *Skills to Succeed* workshops that are facilitated by Accenture employees who are volunteering their time. We're thrilled that Brett is joining Accenture Australia under the Graduate Recruitment Program. Brett's dedication to education and finding the right job is admirable, and we wish him all the very best for a bright and fulfilling career."

Corporate Citizenship,  
Accenture Australia and New Zealand

Former *Learning for Life* student Brett, is now a member of the Young Leader's Network.



# 17,444

parents/carers/adults participating in programs

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 5,160

Let's Count parents and carers participants

### 2,004

Saver Plus program participants in 24 locations

### 1,513

parents participating in School Community Hubs

### 482

Home Tutor Scheme program participants

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# PARENTS AND CARERS



Parental engagement in learning can help close the gap in achievement between children of different socio-economic backgrounds. It contributes to a range of short- and longer-term outcomes for children, primarily influencing children's orientation to learning, including their motivations, engagement, confidence and beliefs about learning.<sup>1</sup>

Parental engagement has been shown to have a consistent impact on children's learning outcomes. This is not just in the early years of a child's life. Parents are also an important influence on the educational and occupational aspirations of adolescents.<sup>2</sup>

Parents can encourage their children to work hard in school, read to them at home, help them with schoolwork and take time to talk with them about their daily activities. They can become involved in their children's school and be aware of and interested in additional education opportunities for their children.<sup>3</sup>

1 Fox S. and Olsen A (2014), 'Defining parental engagement', ACT Department of Education and Training, Canberra.

2 Gemici S., Bednarz A., Karmel T. and Lim P. (2014), 'The factors affecting the educational and occupational aspirations of young Australians', Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, Research Report No. 66, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

3 OECD (2016), 'Low-performing Students: Why they fall behind and how to help them succeed', PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris.



Christine with her children (L-R) Winnie, Nelson and Alex.

christine

## CASE STUDY – LEARNING FOR LIFE FAMILY

### WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN NEED

"My family was struggling and going through a really hard time. Then we joined the *Learning for Life* program and our lives changed for the better.

I'm from the western equatorial region of South Sudan. I came to Australia through the humanitarian visa system in 2005. I am 29 years old and have three beautiful children, Winnie (9), Nelson (6) and Alex (2). Winnie and Nelson are both supported through the *Learning for Life* program.

Our Family Partnership Coordinator provides us with positive support and guidance. She respects us and cares for my children's wellbeing. She has helped me build a network and be part of the community. Through some of the activities The Smith Family has offered my children, I've been able to make new friends, which is good for both my health and my little ones.

The *Learning for Life* program has provided my children with financial support for school shoes, text books, the *student2student* reading program, access to swimming lessons, tickets to local events and Christmas gifts. These are things I could not afford to provide for them as I'm a single mum and student myself.

I never had good schools or good learning environments due to the continued war in South Sudan, but today my children are very lucky. Education is a human right and I believe it holds the potential of my children.

I'm currently studying a Bachelor of Psychology. After I complete my studies I will use my knowledge and life experiences to help those who might need it."

**Christine**, *Learning for Life* parent

## THE CHALLENGE

Most parents from disadvantaged backgrounds want to be actively engaged in their child's learning, but some lack the knowledge, skills and confidence to know how to do this. They may not have completed Year 12, or because of their own negative experiences with school, are not aware of the important role they play in supporting their child's educational outcomes. Financial hardship, low levels of literacy and numeracy, and their work and caring commitments can also make it hard for parents to provide the right resources and be available to support learning and development in the home.

For disadvantaged families, lack of access to a computer and the internet at home, as well as limited technology skills, can make it difficult to properly support children's education away from the classroom.

## HOW WE HELP

When a family joins the *Learning for Life* program, they enter into a Partnership Agreement with The Smith Family that acknowledges a shared goal of supporting the child's long-term participation in education and the importance of parental engagement in helping to achieve this.

Our Family Partnership Coordinators work closely with parents and carers to help them take on an active and positive role in their child's education. We run programs that connect parents and carers to learning opportunities in their community and at the school so they can be more involved in their child's learning.

Our proven programs *Let's Read* and *Let's Count* specifically target parents of younger children, so they support their child's early learning and development prior to starting school. Other programs, such as *Saver Plus* and *Financial Literacy*, teach parents basic money management skills to help with home life. To address the growing problem of access to technology and poor digital skills, our *Tech Packs* program provides families

with a computer and internet access, plus training and support. This helps parents develop their digital skills so that they can help their children use the technology at home for schoolwork.

### HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Home Tutor Scheme*
- *Let's Count*
- *Let's Read*
- *Parent and Community Engagement*
- *Ready Set Go Project*
- *Saver Plus*
- *School Community Hubs*
- *Tech Packs*

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved confidence and increased skills
- Enhanced networks and relationships
- Improved knowledge and understanding

## CASE STUDY – SAVER PLUS

### SAVINGS HABITS TO SUPPORT EDUCATION

"My family desperately needed a new laptop for my children to use for school work so the opportunity to take part in *Saver Plus* couldn't have come at a better time. Every day my children, Madison and Harrison, need to use a laptop. Whether it's to do homework, research assignments or to access learning apps.

Doing *Saver Plus* was a great way to share information and learn budgeting tips. There were so many different discounts and saving tips that I wasn't aware of!

In a few months I will have enough saved to buy a new laptop, which is really exciting. After that, new school shirts are on the list. Usually I buy second-hand shirts but I hope to buy them brand-new shirts by the end of the year, something they haven't had since they started school.

My children are very good savers themselves and I've shared with them what I learnt from *Saver Plus*. They understand the need to save for nice things and really appreciate the things they are given. I think it's so important to teach children the value of money and not to take it for granted."

**Megan**, *Saver Plus* participant

Megan

Megan has learned how to budget through *Saver Plus*.

*Saver Plus* is a matched savings and financial education program, helping participants to develop positive money-management skills and save towards their own, or their children's, educational goals. It is an initiative of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ. Funded by ANZ and the Australian Department of Social Services, *Saver Plus* is delivered in partnership with Berry Street, The Benevolent Society, The Smith Family and other local community agencies.



# 26,849

participants supported through government funding for community programs

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 9

Communities for Children Facilitating Partner sites in NSW, NT, QLD, VIC and WA supporting 15,696 children aged from birth to 12 years; 307 aged 13 to 17 years; 6,316 parents and 1,363 community professionals

### 7,853

participants in *School Community Hubs*, made up of: 930 children aged 0–5; 4,615 students; 1,513 parents and 795 community professionals

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# WORKING WITH COMMUNITY

Attitudes, relationships and decisions in the wider community have a powerful influence on what students get from education and which resources a school can access. Building stronger relationships with the communities that surround schools leads to higher student achievement.<sup>1</sup>

### THE CHALLENGE

There are communities in Australia where disadvantage is intergenerational and entrenched. In these areas, where there are concentrations of people with low education levels and high unemployment rates coupled with poor infrastructure, facilities and job prospects, it is difficult for young people to achieve their potential.

With fewer educational and employment opportunities, as well as limited learning support at home, young people from highly disadvantaged areas need extra help and resources to motivate them to go to school and stay there to complete to Year 12.

<sup>1</sup> Bentley, T. and Cazaly, C., *The Standard Work of Learning: Lifting educational achievement through collaboration*, Mitchell Institute Research Report No. 01/2015, 2015.



The Jakins family planting a tree to celebrate National Tree Day hosted by the Lakes Entrance School Community Hub.

### CASE STUDY – SCHOOL COMMUNITY HUB

## CREATING SCHOOL COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

“The Lakes Entrance School and Community Hub team has been able to connect with all elements of the local community and involve everyone in supporting the education of our children. Through their work we now have local business, community volunteers, service clubs and local agencies creating additional learning opportunities for our students,” says Simon Prior, Principal at Lakes Entrance Primary School.

Research shows that strong school–community partnerships can positively affect students’ experiences and outcomes at school. Our *School Community Hubs* bring families, schools and community organisations to work together. Stakeholder consultation identifies local needs and priorities in each hub. In this way, enhanced services can be provided to students as

they need them and in a coordinated way, with everyone working together. Our goal over time is to build the capacity of schools and communities to ensure improved educational outcomes for children.

In the small Victorian community of Lakes Entrance, we work with three primary schools and one secondary school and create partnerships with local organisations aimed at engaging students, parents and the community in learning and development opportunities.

One initiative is the ‘Small Conversations’ program for local Indigenous families. Small groups of parents and school staff come together informally to talk about anything related to children’s education. The program gives parents a voice and helps them to feel more comfortable in the school setting.

We have also established homework programs in three schools to provide students with educational support outside of school hours. The 40 students who attend are supported by community volunteers as well as school staff.

Wrap-around and tailored support involving students and families, their schools, communities, local businesses and support services can help mitigate these challenges. Where services and people are connected and working collaboratively together, young people have a better chance of achieving improved educational results and life prospects.

#### HOW WE HELP

At the heart of our presence in 94 highly disadvantaged Australian communities, are our strong partnerships with families, schools and community professionals. These begin before a disadvantaged child starts school as we bring in resources to help families better support their young child's learning and development. Later, once a child starts school, we connect our sponsors with families to help them afford their child's school essentials. Our focus is on supporting them to achieve strong school attendance levels and ensuring positive parental engagement in their child's education.

Through initiatives such as *School Community Hubs* and *Child and Parent Centres*, we connect primary and secondary schools, local agencies and community services so all stakeholders can support parents and positively influence children's educational outcomes.

In nine *Communities for Children* sites, we help build community capacity and provide evidence-based service responses that improve outcomes for children aged from birth to 12 years, and their families. We leverage local resources and infrastructure and build partnerships with stakeholders across education and training, business, industry, government and the community sector. Since 2015, we have supported our 70 community partners to collect outcomes data and report results to the Australian Government's Department of Social Services. Collecting and sharing outcomes will ensure better knowledge of community trends and enable more responsive service delivery.

By providing effective wrap-around support involving the child, their parents, schools and communities, a disadvantaged young person has the best chance of breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

#### HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Child and Parent Centres*
- *Communities for Children*
- *Parent and Community Engagement*
- *School Community Hubs*

#### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved service collaboration and integration
- Increased access to and use of community resources
- Enhanced cross-sectoral partnerships

#### CASE STUDY – COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

### HELPING COMMUNITIES SUPPORT FAMILIES

"We recently moved to Townsville, and *Giggle'n'Grow* has been a fantastic way to meet people. We look forward to coming each week and are receiving a lot of support," says a parent who attends the program with her children.

*Giggle'n'Grow* is a mobile playgroup targeting families with children aged from birth to five years old living in hard-to-reach areas. It connects parents and carers with support in their local communities, helping them develop their parenting skills, learn child behavior-management skills and build connections and support networks.

Through *Communities for Children*, The Smith Family has been working in Townsville since 2005, providing targeted support to enhance early childhood development and wellbeing. This year, with our community partner, Australian Red Cross, we delivered *Giggle'n'Grow*.

"*Giggle'n'Grow* playgroups provide high-quality learning opportunities and support for children and families. It helps build skills by teaching parents how to handle children's emotions and behaviours, and how to interact and build healthy relationships with their children through play-based activities," says Corinna, Program Team Leader.

"Children also have the opportunity to play and socialise together with free arts and crafts, physical activities, sensory play and enjoy a healthy morning tea."

In 2015–16, *Giggle'n'Grow* supported 410 parents and children.



Baby Ahren enjoys the *Giggle'n'Grow* playgroup with Mum and Dad.

# 14,302

participants in programs who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

## PROGRAM PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

### 6,170

students sponsored through *Learning for Life* who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

### 3,621

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants in *Communities for Children*

### 200

participants in the *Indigenous Youth Leadership Project*

## STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1

# OUR WORK WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

In 2015, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were twice as likely as non-Indigenous children not to meet key developmental milestones in their first year of school. Two in every five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were considered developmentally vulnerable, compared with one in five non-Indigenous children.<sup>1</sup>

In 2015, 77% of non-Indigenous Year 9 students achieved above the national minimum reading standard. The figure was 41% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 9 students.<sup>2</sup>

In 2011, the proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people (aged 17–24) not fully engaged in work or study after leaving school was 61%, more than double the rate among non-Indigenous young people (26%).<sup>3</sup>

1 Australian Government (2016), *Australian Early Development Census National Report 2015: A snapshot of early childhood development in Australia*, Department of Education and Training, Canberra.

2 ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) (2015), *NAPLAN Achievement in Reading, Persuasive Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy: National Report for 2015*, ACARA, Sydney.

3 COAG Reform Council (2013), *Education in Australia 2012: Five years of performance*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

## CASE STUDY – LEARNING FOR LIFE

### SUPPORTING ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

*Learning for Life* student Brayden has always wanted to become a chef.



“My Family Partnership Coordinator, Kelly, has been such a big help. I don't think I'd be where I am today, doing my apprenticeship, if it wasn't for her.

Being a single parent, and looking for work, my Dad was finding it a bit hard with money when my brother, sister and I were in high school.

The money from The Smith Family helped Dad a lot, but it's the help from Kelly and the Learning Clubs that I've noticed the most. My brother and I would go to Learning Club every Wednesday after school. It was better for me to do my work there. The tutors would read through my work and help me. It really motivated me.

*Brayden*

In Year 11, I wasn't doing well at my school. Kelly saw how much I was struggling so she set up a meeting with the local trade school, because she knew I wanted to be a chef.

They offered me a school-based apprenticeship in food and hospitality and the opportunity to work at a restaurant. Being a chef is something that I've always wanted to do. I've been doing my apprenticeship for just over a month now and I'm really enjoying it.

My goal is to become a qualified chef and learn all different kinds of cooking. I also want to travel to see different ways of cooking, and then one day own a restaurant.

Kelly does the most amazing job. I can't thank her and The Smith Family enough for what they have done for me and my family.”

**Brayden**, member of the Dharug people and *Learning for Life* student

## THE CHALLENGE

In general, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve significantly poorer educational outcomes than their non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peers.

Many of these young Australians face multiple and complex social challenges that can affect their ability to succeed at school. For some, their school readiness, attendance rates and educational achievement levels are below those of other disadvantaged young people, resulting in large gaps in educational outcomes and subsequently poorer life outcomes.

When communities, educational providers and governments work together, these students can be better supported to achieve improved educational outcomes.

## HOW WE HELP

Our approach for supporting improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is underpinned by our 2013–16 Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Expert support and guidance is provided by members of our

Advisory Group on Issues Concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The group includes members with cultural knowledge and strong expertise in working with communities.

Around 6,000 (19%) students participating in our *Learning for Life* program are of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background. Each receives financial assistance and access to learning and mentoring programs where required, as well as opportunities to participate in experiences outside their local communities. This support helps them to stay motivated at school, learn about their post-school options and develop aspirations for their futures.

This year we continued to facilitate the *Indigenous Youth Leadership Project* (IYLP) funded through the Australian Government Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's Indigenous Advancement Strategy. IYLP supports secondary students from remote communities to attend high-performing academic schools. Here they are exposed to opportunities and experiences that help them learn about career pathways and develop positive aspirations for their future.

The principle of working collaboratively with communities and families is critical to the success of any support provided. An example is *Ready Set Go*, which focuses on improving school readiness and success for Aboriginal children by increasing the capabilities of stakeholders involved in a child's life, such as families, schools and local services.

## HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Learning for Life*
- *Girls at the Centre*
- *Indigenous Youth Leadership Project*
- *Ready Set Go*

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding
- Improved school attendance
- School completion
- Post-school engagement in work and/or further study

## CASE STUDY – READY SET GO

### SCHOOL READINESS AND SUCCESS

"I am passionate about *Ready Set Go* because I strongly believe that Indigenous children have so much to offer and very often it doesn't come to pass because of lack of education and support," says Raja, a member of the *Ready Set Go* coalition and a recent Year 12 graduate.

"I believe that we need to increase the capabilities of families, communities and services so children can be supported and given the best opportunities to achieve their goals, aspirations and dreams."

*Ready Set Go* supports school readiness and the success of Aboriginal children. The Smith Family offers the program in the Hunter and Great Lakes regions of NSW.

The program brings together a coalition of stakeholders, including government departments, local community Elders, not-for-profits, and Aboriginal community members with lived experience of disadvantage, like Raja.

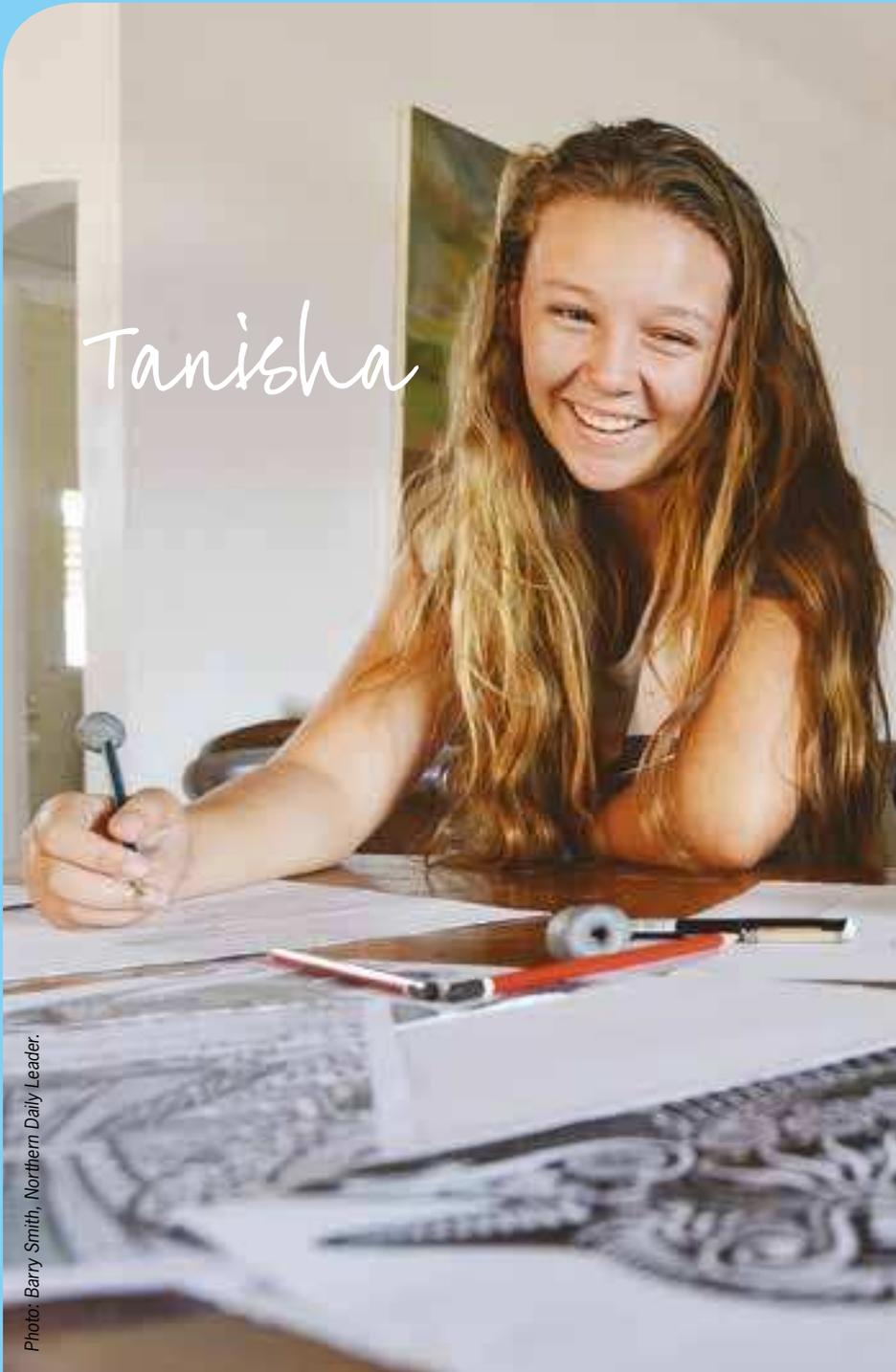
Using a collective impact approach, The Smith Family facilitates collaboration between stakeholders with the aim of improving the environments around children. A set of mutually agreed guiding principles, including *We keep culture at the heart of our practice* and *We face big decisions with collaborative leadership*, underpin the program's drive to create long-term change for Aboriginal children.

**Raja** is currently enrolled in a Diploma of Community Services and has aspirations to study medicine at Newcastle University, with a particular focus on mental health.



Raja is a recent Year 12 graduate and coalition member of *Ready Set Go*.

Raja



Tanisha

Photo: Barry Smith, Northern Daily Leader.

## CREATING AND SUPPORTING ASPIRATIONS

"I'm in Year 9 and I don't yet know what I want to do when I finish school. I know The Smith Family is there helping me and my little brother and sister along the way with our education.

The *Learning for Life* program helps my mum to buy new school things for us. My brother Kyson and sister Isabella go to Learning Club each week.

*SmArts*\* gave me the chance to learn different creative techniques and make some new friends.

It was lots of fun trying out sketching, sculpture and painting on canvas. Painting an elephant on canvas was my favourite activity and I liked the challenge of using different mediums to create a sculpture.

At the end of *SmArts* there was an exhibition where everyone's friends and family could come along. Mum was impressed with what I created and says she's proud of me for trying something new."

**Tanisha**, *Learning for Life* program

\**SmArts* is a hands-on program to encourage *Learning for Life* students to recognise their potential to study arts/design at university, and work in arts professions and trades.