

Unlocking potential

**Empowering young Australians
through education**



Empowering young Australians through education

Every day across Australia, thousands of children wake up with big dreams for their future. But not all have the same chance to pursue them, held back before they even begin by educational inequality.

Education is about possibility – it's the foundation for a future shaped by choice, not circumstance.

Yet not every young person gets the opportunity to make the most of their education. For some, their school journey is characterised by complex barriers beyond their control – like financial stress, housing insecurity and intergenerational disadvantage.

These pressures can erode a student's confidence, motivation and ambition. They undermine learning and make it harder to stay on track. Students experiencing disadvantage are more likely to need extra support to meet minimum literacy and numeracy standards. They're also less likely to finish Year 12 or pursue further study.

That's why we partner with young people and families to help overcome those barriers. Our long-term, evidence-based programs build skills, confidence and connection, beginning early to develop strong foundations before their first day at school.

As they move through the years, we are there with financial assistance, practical resources and tailored learning opportunities. And when it's time for the next step, we link them with career guidance and mentoring to support their transition into further study, training or work. Alongside this, we equip parents and caregivers with the confidence and skills to support their child's learning – after all, families are a child's first teachers.

The right support at the right time makes all the difference.

Education can change a life. It's where potential is unlocked and dreams are nurtured – and where young people gain the skills and confidence to achieve them.

Our approach

Research shows that when children are supported to thrive in their education, it can help them to create a better future for themselves.

Our long-term educational support focuses on helping young people realise their potential, by removing the barriers associated with living in poverty. We support families from their children's pre-school years until they finish their education.

Then, through our *Learning for Life* program, The Smith Family works collaboratively with children and their families throughout primary and secondary school to deliver positive educational outcomes.

Learning for Life provides each student:

- financial assistance to help pay for school essentials like uniforms, textbooks, digital tools and excursions
- support from a Family Partnerships Coordinator
- access to short programs to improve literacy, numeracy and digital literacy outcomes and connections to mentoring and career-related opportunities.

Our strategy

Ambition	We will deepen our impact and empower young Australians experiencing disadvantage to create a better future for themselves. To do this, we will use personalised, evidence-based practice, data and digital. We are committed to growing the number of <i>Learning for Life</i> scholarship recipients to 100,000 and expanding our programs to reach 250,000 children and young people.			
Our goals	IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES MEASURED BY:			
	Attendance at school	Advancement through school from Year 10 to completion of Year 12 or equivalent	Tertiary completion	Engagement in study or work post-school
	WE AIM TO GROW:			
	Scholarships: to 100,000 <i>Learning for Life</i> scholarships	Program reach: to 250,000 program participants	Program participation rates: to 50% of <i>Learning for Life</i> students participating in our programs	Digital inclusion: ensuring 100% of <i>Learning for Life</i> students are digitally included Funding: to \$220 million in sustainable funding

To achieve these goals, we have developed our strategy around nine strategic priorities and foundations.

Our strategic priorities and foundations 	DEEPER IMPACT, THROUGH STRENGTHENED PRACTICE ENABLED BY DATA AND DIGITAL						
		Strengthen impact in <i>Learning for Life</i>	Deepen long-term, evidence-based, personalised practice for <i>Learning for Life</i> participants to improve student outcomes including through programs, enabled by data.				
		Leverage digital and partners	Leverage a greater range of partnerships to deliver short-course programs. Increase digital delivery of short-course programs, with a consistent approach to digitisation.				
		Expand digital inclusion	Ensure all <i>Learning for Life</i> students are digitally included.				
	BROADER REACH						
		Grow reach Grow <i>Learning for Life</i> scholarships and program reach, focusing on existing <i>Learning for Life</i> communities.		Grow influence Grow influence through advocacy in our priority domains to improve the lives of children living in disadvantage. Differentiate ourselves through a refreshed brand.			
	STRATEGIC FOUNDATIONS TO ENABLE DEEPER IMPACT AND BROADER REACH						
	Grow sustainable funding		Empower our people		Be cyber secure and invest in digital, data and AI		Strengthen governance, risk management and compliance focus
Our commitments	 Be a child safe organisation	 Strive for reconciliation and cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples			 Embrace diversity, equity and inclusion		 Improve our environmental sustainability

How we work to make a difference

What we bring

226,365 children, young people and their parents/carers engaged with *Learning for Life* and wraparound programs this year

Practice excellence as frontline team members incorporate evidence-based practice in their work with families to help them set and work towards self-determined goals for their child's education

Partnerships with supporters including individuals, corporates, trusts and foundations, and governments

Our 919 team members and 5,478 volunteers working collectively to achieve our vision

An empowering culture and focus on outcomes

A long history of supporting the education of Australian children and our strong and trusted brand

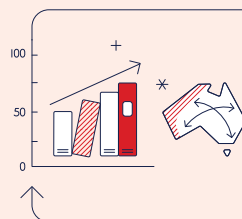
Sound governance and risk management focused on delivering our strategy, in a manner that is aligned with our purpose and commitment to child safety, reconciliation and sustainability

Data and systems including longitudinal data on what makes a difference for children and young people

What we do

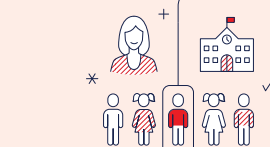
Advocacy and influence

for policy and system change so that every child has the opportunity to change their future



Evaluation and measurement contribution to overall evidence base and adjusting our course for impact

Program delivery to build skills and knowledge and influence attitudes and behaviours. Programs include *Learning for Life*, other wraparound and community programs, and digital inclusion support



Community and school engagement to understand needs and identify families for support

Program development and continuous improvement of our practice framework through research, innovation and data analysis



Creating lasting change

What we deliver >

 Improved outcomes for children and young people

+

 Increased number of students supported by *Learning for Life* scholarships and short-course programs

+

 Advocacy submissions

+

 Strong community partnerships

+

 Strong financial stewardship

+

 Benefits to team members and volunteers

+

 Child safety and strong governance and risk practices, including for cyber security

2024–25 progress >

81.7%
average school attendance of *Learning for Life* students

64.9%
of students in Year 10 advanced to Year 12 by 2024

84%
of students in Year 12 in 2022 were in work and/or study two and a half years after leaving school

90%
of students taking part in our *student2student* program improved their reading

186,499
children and young people participated in our programs

71,818
students on our *Learning for Life* program

8,026
devices issued through the *Digital Learning Essentials* program since 2023

92
advocacy products

>

13 policy submissions
2 publications
1 event

58 external presentations
2 webinars
16 Conversations with The Smith Family podcasts

We partnered with **781 schools in 91 communities** to deliver *Learning for Life*

\$148.3 million donated by individual supporters, bequestors and our philanthropic partners to assist children and young people.

Completed an organisational review to ensure we remain a strong, sustainable organisation capable of delivering enduring impact for young Australians.

Launched our capability framework and phase one of our culture and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion roadmaps.

Modernised our workplace through software and hardware upgrades and increased security with data labelling and cyber security learning for all team members.

Launched a digital attendance tool to reduce the time Program Coordinators spend on administration.

Our progress

234,379 participants

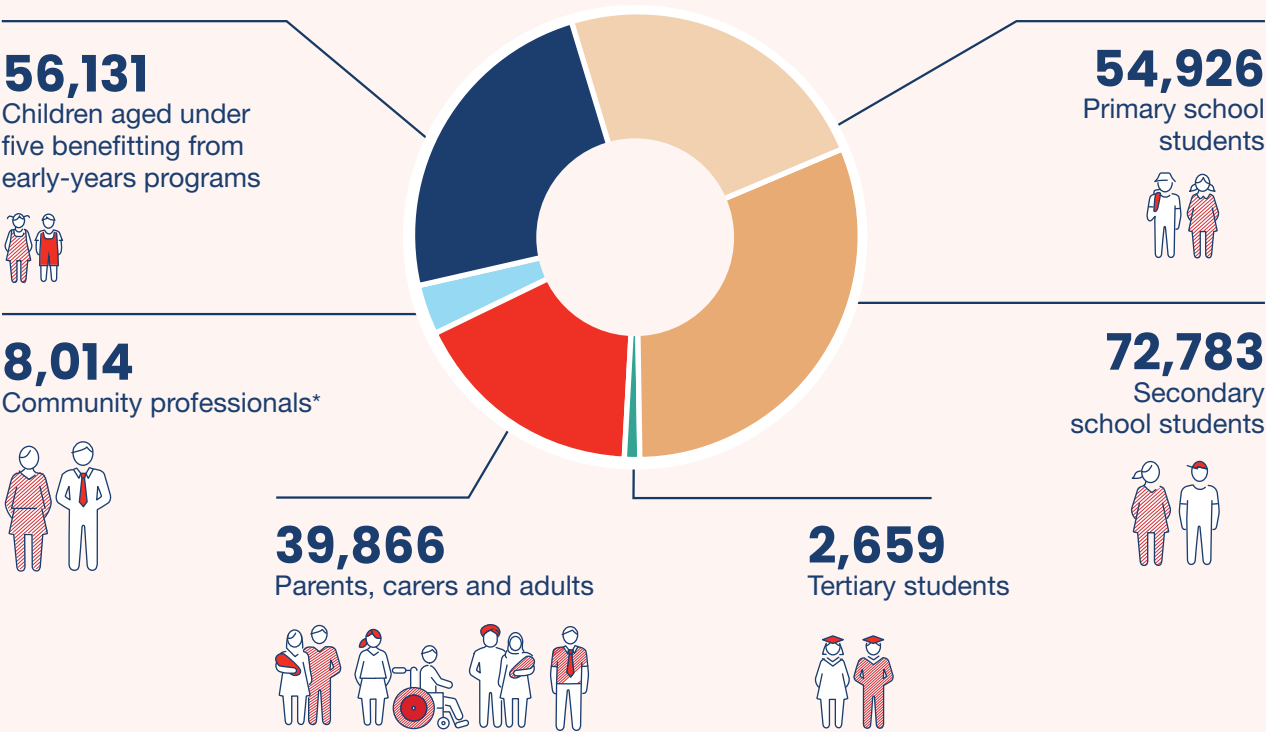
The Smith Family reached 234,379 children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals in 2024–25, up 6.2% on the previous year.

186,499

children and young people participated in our programs in 2024–25

71,818

Learning for Life sponsorship recipients



* Community professionals (not Smith Family team members) include early-years educators and program facilitators in communities.

91 Communities

in which *Learning for Life* programs are delivered



Learning for Life participation

26.1%

of sponsored students (18,715) in 2024–25 identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

We partnered with **781** schools

attended by *Learning for Life* students

215,786 Individual supporters

197,360

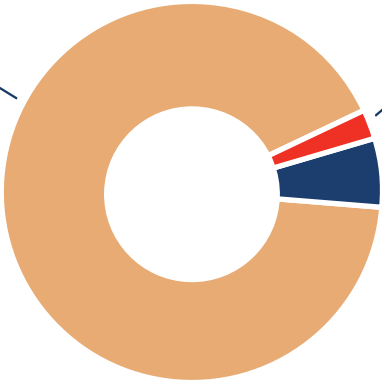
sponsors and donors

67,496

sponsors of *Learning for Life* students

129,864

donors funding *Learning for Life* programs



5,478

individual volunteers

12,948

members in 270 VIEW Clubs of Australia

247 Partner organisations

54 corporate partners **187** trusts and foundations **6** tertiary institutions

We track our results

Students on the *Learning for Life* program work hard to overcome barriers created by poverty, with important support from their families. Programs offered by The Smith Family are designed to help students with four longer-term outcomes: school attendance; completion of Year 12 or its equivalent; completion of tertiary studies; and post-school engagement in education, training or work.

1. Attendance

Regular school attendance is essential for students to achieve positive educational outcomes.

2. Advancement

Each year of schooling a child completes leads to better overall life outcomes, and improves their ability to make economic and social contributions to the community.

Longer-Term Results

81.7%

average attendance for Years 1–10 *Learning for Life* students in 2024.

84.9% for primary school students,
75.7% for secondary school students,
77.3% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

64.9%

of *Learning for Life* students in Year 10 in 2022, advanced to Year 12 by 2024.

Short-Term Results

Improved numeracy

Improved literacy

Increased academic engagement and achievement

Increased self-management and confidence

Program Results

Let's Count

92%

of surveyed participants reported improved capacity to work with parents/carers to support the emergent numeracy of their children.

Let's Read

94%

of early years professionals reported an increased capacity to engage families to foster children's literacy development.

student2student

90%

of students improved their reading, with 71% increasing their reading level by up to two years.

Passport to Success

79%

of students increased their understanding of what to expect at high school.

We track the progress of *Learning for Life* students against these outcomes and also review short-term program results to help young people make the most of their education.



3. Tertiary Completion Rate

Our tertiary completion rate measures the proportion of students who complete a qualification in four years.

4. *Learning for Life* students engaged in post-school education, employment or training

A key indicator of the success of our approach is the proportion of *Learning for Life* students who transition successfully from school to further education, training or employment.

49%

of *Learning for Life* Tertiary Scholarship students who commenced study in 2021 had **completed a qualification** by 2024.

National four-year Bachelor completion rates for low socioeconomic students, was 35% (2020–23).*

*Department of Education, 2025

84%

of students who were in Year 12 in 2022, **were in work and/or study two and a half years after leaving school**

Enhanced learning and development skills

Improved knowledge and understanding of study options and career paths

Increased awareness of the world of work

Learning Clubs

77%

of students increased their self-confidence at school.

Work Inspiration

78%

of students reported increased awareness of core employability skills needed in the workplace; e.g. teamwork and communication.

Future Seekers

82%

of students developed an understanding of the diversity of work.

IMPACT IN ACTION

A safe space when it's needed most

"I remember in primary school, I was hungry and had no lunch. I went to the tuck shop and asked for food, but I had no money. The tuck shop lady gave me a Vegemite scroll. The school sent my mum a bill. I got in so much trouble. I learnt quickly not to bring up to anyone that I was hungry.

When it came to school camps or activities, there was no way we could afford for me to go. As a child who already felt isolated – I was severely bullied by my peers – not being able to attend activities that allowed for crucial bonding made me feel even more alone.

When I was selected to be a part of The Smith Family program, I remember feeling for the first time like I was part of a group. It was nice having something in common with the other kids and I felt like we were part of something special.

The weekly catch-up was something I looked forward to. There were a lot of days when I didn't want to go home. Being able to stay at school in a safe space where we all got along and had supportive teachers and supervisors was special. The Smith Family ladies, Jane and Annie, were amazing and inspiring.

I have always known I want to help people; be a positive influence on the generations to come who may have gone through similar things. In work and in life, I make sure community and giving back are at the forefront of everything I do.

My goal would one day be to sponsor a child through The Smith Family and give back to the organisation that made an impact in my life."

Tabitha

Former *Learning for Life* student



IMPACT IN ACTION

Nurturing creativity in young people



Liverpool Girls High School students at Ensemble Theatre's week-long *SmArts* theatre workshop. Photo Credit: Karen Watson

Ensemble Theatre, a well-known professional theatre company in Sydney, partnered with *SmArts* to deliver immersive, theatre-based experiences for students in Smith Family partner schools.

Since the partnership was launched in 2020, Ensemble Theatre has provided countless young people with opportunities to engage in the performing arts space, offering students rare glimpses into the world of theatre through

post-show Q&As, performance opportunities, backstage tours, playwriting, set and costume design workshops, and career talks by industry professionals.

In 2025, The Smith Family continued its collaboration with Ensemble Theatre, offering schools in Sydney's west opportunities to take part in a week-long series of workshops on set design, directing, stage management, and performance.

The *SmArts* experience helps students form ideas around life beyond the school gate. The program is pivotal to helping young people understand the variety of pathways to pursue a career in the arts. Across a breadth of artistic mediums, students can build their technical skills base while learning from professionals who have overcome barriers in their own careers.

In 2024–25, 1,244 students took part in *SmArts* programs around Australia.

“We see our partnership with Ensemble Theatre as an exciting collaboration that is providing young people living in low-socioeconomic or marginalised communities access to live theatre,” said Anne Samonte, Program Coordinator at The Smith Family.

Supporting a child's educational journey

Early years

When starting school, more than one in three children in Australia's most disadvantaged communities are developmentally vulnerable in at least one of five key areas, including language and cognitive development. In the most advantaged communities, this figure is around one in six.¹

The challenge

Starting school is a significant milestone for every child and their family. The abilities children can draw on when they begin school affect their engagement in learning and their academic success. Concerningly, from 2021 to 2024, the percentage of children developmentally vulnerable when starting school has increased across all five key areas measured in the Australian Early Development Census, particularly for children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.² This makes it even more critical for every pre-schooler to have the chance to develop the basic language, numeracy, physical, social, and emotional skills they need to achieve positive educational outcomes later in life.

How we help

This year, following a review of The Smith Family's role in the early years, including consultation with parents and carers of children under five, we identified opportunities to add greater value in supporting school transition. As part of this, we conducted a proof-of-concept initiative in Mirrabooka, Western Australia, building on the strong foundations and relationships established through our Child and Parent Centre in Westminster.

Over four weeks, we hosted four sessions during which parents and carers came together to explore transition-to-school topics and engage directly with various experts. The sessions were well attended and highly engaging, with positive feedback from participants. Further scoping and development work will continue to build on these insights and explore broader implementation opportunities.

The revision of our *Let's Read* program is progressing well. In partnership with United Way Australia (UWA), we trialled a session that incorporated Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (DPIL), for which UWA is the Australian licensee. This trial enabled us to explore the combined impact of *Let's Read* and DPIL on families and children, particularly in increasing the number of books in homes. It also provided an opportunity to test the updated pedagogy and practices within the *Let's Read* program. Initial feedback indicates that early-years professionals have found the revised approach effective in engaging families and supporting young children's literacy development.

Key initiatives include *Communities for Children* (3,894 participants), *Let's Count* (26,225 participants), *Let's Read* (25,018 participants) and *Child and Parent Centres* (943 participants).

56,131

children aged under five participating in early-years programs

1 Australian Government, Australian Early Development Census, AEDC National Report 2024: *Early childhood development in Australia*, Department of Education, Canberra, 2025.

2 Australian Government, Australian Early Development Census, AEDC National Report 2024: *Early childhood development in Australia*, Department of Education, Canberra, 2025.

Primary years

One in three (33%) Year 3 students whose parents have not completed Year 12 need additional reading support, compared to only 4% of Year 3 students whose parents have a university degree.³

The challenge

Children and young people experiencing disadvantage often face complex socioeconomic challenges that make it difficult for them to remain engaged at school. They are more likely to encounter systemic barriers within the education and broader human services systems than other young people. Those experiencing disadvantage are also more likely to enter school developmentally behind their more advantaged peers. Families also often struggle to access essential services such as housing, health care and appropriate disability support services. Lack of access to support networks can directly affect children's educational outcomes.

How we help

Through *Learning for Life*, we help young people access opportunities to build the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that help with their school engagement and educational outcomes.

As students move through primary school, we work with their families to provide a range of educational supports. These include funds that help buy school essentials such as uniforms, shoes and stationery and help pay for extracurricular activities. Our programs in the primary years assist students to improve their literacy and learning and transition to high school.

Our Family Partnerships Coordinators work closely with families to support students to prepare for high school and address any issues they may face. These family check-ins provide an opportunity to build trusting relationships.

This year, our *Passport to Success* program helped more than 5,000 students successfully transition to high school – a pivotal milestone in their educational journey.

Key programs include *Communities for Children* (10,492 participants), *Passport to Success* (5,138 students) and Learning Club (2,421 students), *student2student* (911 students) and Adaptive Learning Platforms (1,485 students). 35,362 primary years students are sponsored through *Learning for Life*.

54,926
primary years students
participating in programs

3 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2025), [NAPLAN national results](#)

Secondary years

Almost a third (31%) of Year 7 students whose parents have not completed Year 12 need additional support in numeracy, compared to only 3% of Year 7 students whose parents have a university degree.⁴

The challenge

The secondary school years can be challenging for young people as they navigate physical, social and emotional changes. During this time, they are also expected to take on more responsibility, as teacher support decreases and schoolwork increases. Young people need skills and support to manage a larger, more complex school environment, complete Year 12 and smoothly transition to post-school pathways. Experiencing disadvantage, financial hardship, complex relationships and family health issues can make these years especially challenging.

How we help

Research shows that evidence-based career education in schools boosts productivity by improving skills and reducing disengagement. When students receive quality career education, they are more likely to choose a career path earlier and transition to work faster. However, students experiencing disadvantage in Australia are significantly less likely to access this support compared to their more advantaged peers.

Through the Growing Careers Project, and in partnership with around 60 schools nationwide, we are offering more than 86,000 career program places to students in Years 7-12 from January 2021 to December 2026.

Funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education, the Growing Careers Project applies a structured approach to deliver sequential career learning throughout young people's secondary school journey, adapting programs to suit students at each stage:

- Discover and Explore (Years 7–8)
- Focus and Plan (Years 9–10)
- Decide and Apply (Years 11–12).

In 2024–25, most of our target cohort were in Year 10, 11 or 12 (that is, between Focus and Plan and Decide and Apply). Our careers learning offerings include many hands-on opportunities to engage with local employers and businesses to explore a range of post-school options aimed at broadening students' career horizons and equipping them with practical skills for their futures.

Our key programs include *Career Activities* (33,318 students), *SmArts* (1,244 students) and *Work Inspiration* (1,588 students). 35,000 secondary years students are sponsored through *Learning for Life*.

72,783
students participating
in programs

4 Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2025), [NAPLAN national results](#).

Post-school years

Almost half (49%) of 24-year-olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not fully engaged in work or study, compared to just 18% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds.⁵

The challenge

The post-school transition into work and further study is critical for young people. For those experiencing disadvantage, the cost of transport, textbooks and other necessities can exacerbate the financial pressure on their family. At the same time, students must adjust to a self-paced workload and timetable, along with a wider range of academic choices. In families in which a student is the first member to participate in tertiary education, access to mentors and other support may be limited.

How we help

We invest in post-school educational support because we know it is critical to redress financial disadvantage. Tertiary continuation and completion is one of the four key outcome measures of our *Learning for Life* program. It reflects the well-established link between higher education, sustained employment and long-term financial independence. Yet young people experiencing disadvantage face significant barriers to starting and completing tertiary qualifications.

To address these challenges, our Tertiary Coordinators provide targeted relational support, guided by our Family Practice Framework. Through early intervention, they engage students collaboratively to help them navigate education barriers and transition to tertiary studies. They

also support students' continuation and completion of their higher education journey into their chosen post-tertiary career pathways.

In 2024–25, we supported 1,456 tertiary students through our Tertiary Scholarship, including 127 who identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Building on this, we piloted a new initiative, the Tertiary Support Offer, which provides tailored assistance to an additional 174 students. Of these, nine identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Alongside these efforts, this year also marked the launch of a new Try, Test and Learn project, designed to explore how we might extend our support to even more *Learning for Life* students pursuing tertiary study.

A total of 2,659 tertiary students are participating in programs such as the *Learning for Life* Tertiary Scholarship (1,456 students), *Job Read-e* (92 students) and *Cadetship to Career* (21 students).

2,659
tertiary students
participating in programs

5 Lamb, S., Huo, S., Walstab, A., Marie, Q., Doecke, E., Jackson, J., and Endekov, Z. (2020). [Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out](#). Melbourne: Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University for the Mitchell Institute.

Our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

In 2024, the school attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in Year 10 was 65.5%, compared to 85.3% for non-Indigenous students.⁶ This disparity highlights the significant impact of socioeconomic disadvantage on educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The challenge

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students often face complex social and systemic challenges that can impact their educational outcomes. While families, communities, organisations, governments and education providers continue to work hard to support these students, disparities in outcomes compared to non-Indigenous students persist.

We understand that changing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people requires a fundamental shift in how systems operate and interact with them, their families and communities. Building strong partnerships with communities and delivering consistent, culturally appropriate and targeted support can make a meaningful difference in students' learning journeys.

18,715

**Learning for Life students identify as
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**

How we help

This year, 26.1% of our *Learning for Life* program students identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are working on our 2025–2028 Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) which sets out the range of actions we will take to continue contributing to reconciliation in Australia. This plan sets out three key focus areas:

- developing a business unit within our Finance and Corporate functional area to progress work in self-determination and cultural governance
- recruiting and retaining team members who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with an initial focus on improving our systems and processes to enhance team members' experiences
- increasing cultural learning for all team members to expand our understanding, value and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights.

We continue to be grateful for the advice and generous support provided by our National Advisory Group members on issues concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our internal working groups, which form part of our RAP Governance Structure.

We are continuing our work on our Puzzle Project, which provides a framework to better understand and improve our services to families who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

6 Australian Government, Productivity Commission, [Closing the Gap Data Dashboard](#)

The power of mentoring



Girls at the Centre students

The hard work and dedication of *Girls at the Centre* students was recognised with a prestigious Victorian School Sports Award in April 2025.

The Outstanding School and Community Partnership Award acknowledged a collaboration between students from Bairnsdale Secondary College and Bairnsdale West Primary School to deliver Australian rules football and netball programs, Auskick and NetSetGO.

Through this initiative, secondary students from *Girls at the Centre* mentor and support younger students, encouraging participation in the two sports. It reinforces the importance of sport as a pathway for leadership, personal growth, and community connection.

Girls at the Centre supports girls – particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 7 to 12 – to stay at school and helps boost their educational achievements through cultural and social activities.

The Victorian Department of Education awards, established in 1994, are the highest sporting accolades for the state's public schools. The partnership award highlights programs that create meaningful opportunities for students to take part in school sports through collaborations between schools and community organisations.

Each year, about 200 primary school students from Bairnsdale join Auskick and NetSetGo, which provides coaching along with umpiring accreditations, in collaboration with AFL Victoria and Netball Victoria. The programs empower young female leaders to develop skills they can benefit from, on and off the sports field.

Creating meaningful opportunities

“This award is a testament to the dedication of our students, teachers, and community partners in ensuring that young girls have access to sport and leadership opportunities.”

“We are incredibly proud of the impact this program has had on both the primary and secondary students involved.”

Simone Forster

Girls at the Centre Program Manager

Volunteering to build brighter futures



Luke, Learning Club volunteer

“I started tutoring when I was in Year 11, and when I found The Smith Family’s Learning Club, it felt like the perfect fit. It combined my passion for teaching with the opportunity to support students experiencing disadvantage. I’ve always valued education and wanted to give back to my community. I believe in equality of opportunity, and The Smith Family works hard to make that a reality.

I’ve lived in the Wyndham area of Victoria my whole life, and volunteering has been a great way to connect with my community. It’s inspiring to see students show up each week with curiosity and determination, even after a full day of school. You can see the shift in their confidence when they start to understand something new – especially in maths. Some even explain it to their friends, which is amazing to watch.

Support can be the catalyst for students to set goals and believe in their potential. I’ve seen students who might otherwise feel overlooked start to thrive when someone shows up and cares.

One of my students told me that he aspired to become a nurse, so he could help other people within his community. He wants to get the best possible marks at school so he can eventually enter a nursing course. This desire was evident in his request for more challenging

work in class. He would come to every lesson smiling, interacting with his peers and always contributing to discussions.

Young individuals, especially those with such admirable and selfless goals, should be nurtured and encouraged to reach for their dreams.

Volunteering doesn’t just help students – it helps us too. It’s a chance to connect, contribute and be part of something bigger. The Smith Family creates a space where everyone – students, volunteers, staff – feels valued. I’d encourage anyone to get involved. It’s a great feeling knowing you’re helping someone take a positive step toward their future.”

Luke

Learning Club volunteer

Fundraising performance

Investing for impact

At The Smith Family, we are committed to supporting young Australians to overcome educational inequality caused by poverty. Our investment decisions are aligned with this purpose, guided by evidence and focused on delivering measurable outcomes for the communities we serve.

Our goal remains to deepen our impact and grow our reach by building and growing sustainable funding streams that enable investment in lasting social impact.

Accountability for every dollar entrusted to us by our supporters is a high priority. This year, our supporters generously donated \$148.3 million. Combined with government support and other contributions, our total revenue of \$185.5 million enabled us to deliver vital community programs and also invest in the people, systems, technology, fundraising and governance that make those programs effective, scalable and sustainable.

In the past year, for every \$1 invested in fundraising, we raised \$3.35 to invest in sustaining and expanding our impact, both through our community programs and strategic investments in our organisation. For example,

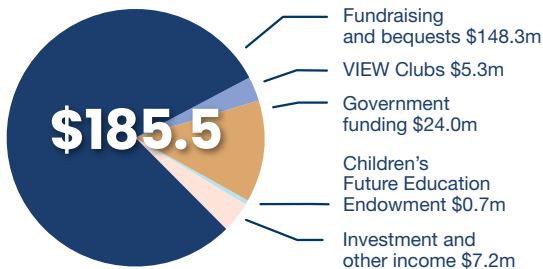
we have concentrated key investments in cyber security, including supporter and family data security, business continuity planning and working towards all our essential systems achieving an elevated security standard.

We are undertaking ongoing work to increase the transparency of our overhead costs, and we are pleased to see our funders and partners becoming more actively involved in working with us to find the best ways to support our vital services. Our commitment to our donors is to use gifted funds efficiently to deliver impactful programs with outcomes measured and reported publicly. This approach positions us to rapidly adapt to evolving circumstances for our beneficiaries and to ensure the strong governance and sustainability of our work.

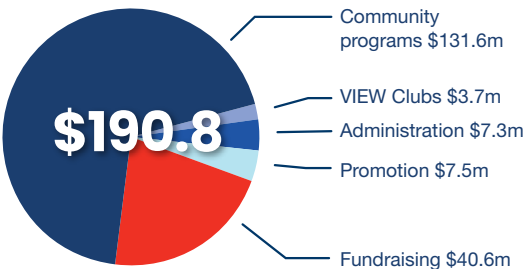
Fundraising to invest in our programs

For every **\$1** invested in fundraising > **\$3.35** was invested in programs > Helping young Australians

Where we obtained our financial resources 2024–25



How we applied our financial resources 2024–25



IMPACT IN ACTION

Trialling new ways to support primary school students and their families

The *On PAR* program is about personalised partnerships, working side by side with families and young people to create better educational outcomes. This early intervention pilot has already helped 345 primary school students experiencing complex, compounding disadvantages.

Designed for students from kindergarten to Year 5, each young person and their family is partnered with a dedicated team member to set goals and develop a plan that responds to the barriers affecting their education. Challenges like financial stress, housing instability, and health issues, can have a major impact on wellbeing and also school engagement, attendance and achievement.

Working with schools and local partners, we create a support system around each child's strengths, needs and aspirations. Assistance is provided for up to two years. It can include tutoring, access to digital technology, health checks,

activities that develop coping skills and parent engagement initiatives.

Primary school student Amber* was struggling with mental health and behaviour challenges when she joined *On PAR*. At home, her family was dealing with financial stress, housing issues and domestic violence.

Our team worked with Amber and her carer to help Amber feel safe at school – this included building understanding around emotions and learning style, alongside fostering a positive attitude to education. Seeing the need for extra support, we helped arrange an autism assessment and guided the family through the National Disability Insurance Scheme process. We also connected them with services and financial support they were eligible for.

Today, Amber is doing much better. Her outlook on school has improved, and she has attended camp with her classmates for the very first time. She now has a tailored learning plan and receives professional support for her autism.

Meanwhile, her carer's confidence and independence have grown.

Amber has moved on to our flagship *Learning for Life* program, where she has joined one of our after-school Learning Clubs, our peer support reading program, *student2student*, and has also received a laptop to support her education.

This move marks an exciting new chapter for Amber and her family. With ongoing long-term support in place through *Learning for Life*, they are now better equipped to thrive in the years ahead.

On PAR, a six-and-a-half-year pilot, is available in two communities, one in New South Wales and one in South Australia. It is now in its fifth year, and we continue to learn and adapt as we advocate for the best outcomes for students and families.

On PAR is supported by an individual donor and the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

**Name changed to protect the young person's privacy.*



Joining forces with HCF to build brighter futures



HCF team members write holiday cards to young people they support through the *Learning for Life* program.

The Smith Family was pleased to announce a new strategic partnership with HCF last year. The partnership enables us to empower more young Australians experiencing disadvantage and reinforces the importance of education in building healthier, more equitable communities.

HCF's generous support over three years will help 1,500 children on our *Learning for Life* program reach their

full potential, by providing long-term financial, personal and practical educational support.

"We believe that education is essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving long-term health outcomes, which is why we're supporting The Smith Family and the *Learning for Life* program," says Lorraine Thomas, HCF's Chief Executive Officer.

"This collaboration is a powerful example of how two trusted Australian not-for-profit organisations can come together to make a lasting impact."

We are grateful to HCF for its commitment and belief in what we can achieve together for young Australians in need.

We're also thankful for the enthusiastic support of HCF team members who have embraced the opportunity to get involved in our work and volunteer across a range of activities. This includes writing holiday cards to each of their sponsored students and hosting 15 students from a school in Western Sydney at their offices as part of our *Work Inspiration* program. This program allows students to learn about different industries and connect with HCF staff members to broaden their career aspirations and increase their awareness of different pathways beyond school.

Growing Careers Project



Careers Advisor Sarah and The Smith Family team members

Research shows that young people who experience four or more encounters with the world of work while at school are more likely to be in work, training or study in their 20s. Building on this evidence, the Growing Careers Project creates career-related opportunities for students from their first year of high school through to graduation.

Opportunities range from short activities and workplace visits to mentoring and work experience, giving students the chance to explore pathways. By connecting students with different industries and experiences, the Project supports them to make informed decisions, build confidence and plan for life after school.

Funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education for six years until December 2026, the project will provide more than 86,000 career-related opportunities to students at selected Smith Family partner schools.

Meaningful careers education

“The Growing Careers Project has significantly expanded our offering of careers programs and activities. We’ve been able to broaden our reach and deepen the impact of our career education.

By working closely with the same cohort of students, we’ve witnessed genuine growth. Some students who lacked direction or confidence are now more self-aware and actively

thinking about their future pathways. Others, through exposure to different industries and mentoring, have discovered passions they didn’t know they had. Several have done further training and work experience or secured part-time jobs in fields introduced through the program.

Students who were previously disengaged or at risk of leaving school early have been motivated to stay, knowing more about their pathway. Students are setting long-term goals and taking ownership of their future in ways they may not have without this project.

It has made career education meaningful, personal and empowering by connecting students with industry professionals and providing hands-on experiences and guidance.

Seeing students benefit from such rich and varied career experiences has been incredibly rewarding.”

**Sarah, Hunter River High School
Careers Advisor**

BEYOND THE GAME

Investing in futures through education

“The Smith Family is a really appealing charity to me. I have great respect for how they operate, their integrity, and the amount of support they can deliver nationwide to deserving recipients who are experiencing disadvantage.

It’s so rewarding being a *Learning for Life* sponsor. Being able to help to a young Australian who is doing it tough and assist them in having the same educational opportunities I had as a young person – it’s the best feeling you can have.

I take great satisfaction in knowing I’m helping a young student. For me, growing up, professional sport was never a guarantee.

I never made any representative teams coming through [as a young footballer], so there was always a big focus on my education.

You look at the statistics of NRL players and the average career is three to four years. So, it has always been important for me to have a long-term plan and to find a passion I’m interested in – because you never know when the sporting journey is going to end.

Education and equity of opportunity is so important for young kids experiencing disadvantage. The Smith Family gives children a chance to study and upskill, empowering them to break that vicious cycle of poverty.

I have a lot of trust in The Smith Family, and I know my sponsorship is helping. I get feedback and updates regularly from my sponsor child, and it’s wonderful to see their growth and be a small part of their journey.

The Smith Family is an amazing charity and provides crucial support that can make such a big difference for these young students.”

Christian Welch

Former National Rugby League player for the Melbourne Storm and *Learning for Life* sponsor

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