

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The *SmArts* program supports students' engagement with school by increasing their creative skills, self-confidence, social networks, and knowledge of post-school options. Students in years 8 to 12 with a demonstrated interest in the creative arts are provided with opportunities to participate in evidence-based creative enrichment programs. These programs have been shown to boost not only students' creativity and skills but also their engagement in learning. Any form of creative activity can be included in *SmArts*, such as: visual arts, media arts, dance, drama, music, or animation.



THE CHALLENGE

Young people experiencing disadvantage require greater access to social networks, resources and opportunities, including creative enrichment programs. Research shows that students who participate in creative enrichment programs have improved confidence and higher academic performance, engagement and retention rates, as well as increased aspirations for further education or work (Fancourt and Finn, 2019; Patternmakers, 2022).¹ *SmArts* is designed to provide young people growing up in areas of disadvantage with opportunities to build their creative skills, self confidence and social networks, and to develop greater knowledge of post-school options.



HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Programs are made up of four components: creative practice sessions; visits to or from arts related organisations; opportunities to engage with professionals to gain further knowledge to inform post-school plans; and further information to support ongoing engagement with creative activities including referrals to art related community experiences.

Creative practice is the main focus of the program. Engaging with professionals provides students with an understanding of how creative practice can be applied to their futures, with the aim of inspiring students to complete their education and choose a career path. The program enhances the relevance of learning to career aspirations.

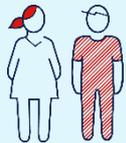
SMARTS IN 2024

In 2024, The Smith Family **supported 1,325 participants** in *SmArts*, an increase from 1,285 participants in 2023. The high number of student participants was in part due to the delivery of *SmArts* programs within The Smith Family's Growing Careers Project. Funded by the Commonwealth Government, Growing

¹ Fancourt, D. and Finn S. (2019) *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review*. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; (Health Evidence Network (HEN) synthesis report 67).
Patternmakers (2022) *The Power of Youth Arts: What the research tells us about the benefits of performing arts participation for children and young people*. Patternmakers/ATYP, December 2022

Careers is a large-scale, evidence-based initiative delivering career education to students in 59 schools across all Australian states and territories over a multi-year period (2021-2026).

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS



1,325

STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN
SMARTS DURING 2024

- **1,325** students participated²
- **72%** female students, **26%** male students³
- **25%** were from *Learning for Life* scholarship families
- **13%** of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

KEY PROGRAM OUTCOMES RESULTS⁴

Key program outcome results based on feedback provided by students who participated in SmArts during 2024 include:

84% stated that the creative arts professional they met during SmArts encouraged them to continue with their creative activities.

80% reported they now have more information to continue with their creative interests on their own.

85% agreed they have increased their enjoyment of working with others on creative works.

80% agreed they have increased their creative skills through participating in SmArts.

69% agreed that the people they met during SmArts helped them think about their future study and career plans.

58% stated they feel more confident about their career goals after participating in SmArts.

53% stated they have new ideas about what they want to do after finishing school.

²In 2024, 1,325 students participated in SmArts. Some of these students participated in multiple SmArts programs during 2024, enabling them to hone their creative skills across the arts and deepen their experience. As such, there were 1,351 SmArts 'participations' (or program places) filled in 2024.

³An additional 2% of participants did not specify their gender (n=19), or identified as X (n=7).

⁴There were 884 student survey responses, representing a response rate of 67%.

STUDENT TESTIMONIALS

The best thing about the program was...

"How fun and interactive it was but also how informative it was about possible future career paths."

"Working with others and helping create an incredible piece of artwork."

"Everything. Doing the projects myself and having creative liberty while being helped was great, everyone was super helpful and lovely and enthusiastic about what we were doing."

"Getting further knowledge and insight about the performing arts industry and how I can achieve that."

"The program has lots of benefits like boosting confidence; being able to do public speaking; communication skills and so much more. It has been the highlight of my school year."

"Everything. Meeting the professionals and hearing their stories, and how far they've come and where they've started."

"It was a very informative program. I learned a lot and enjoyed participating in the program. It also helped me to explore things that make me excited to do architecture/modelling designs in the future."

"Having the opportunities to independently work on my own ideas with one-on-one support."