

How can the national education agenda respond to the challenges faced by young people, particularly those experiencing disadvantage?

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Outline

1. Australia's dynamic economic, social and cultural contexts
2. What does research say about young people's outcomes?
3. Reflection and discussion
4. Using evidence and practice to improve the educational outcomes of disadvantage young Australians
5. Reflection, discussion, questions?

OUR VISION

A better future for young Australians in need.

OUR MISSION

To create opportunities for young Australians in need by providing long-term support for their participation in education.

OUR BELIEF

Every child deserves a chance.

OUR HISTORY

Established in 1922 by a group of businessmen

OUR SCALE

- National organisation
- 94 communities across all states and territories
- Support 127,000+ children, young people and their parents/carers a year.
- Annual gross revenue \$107.9m.

AUSTRALIA'S DYNAMIC ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Australia's dynamic contexts include

1. Transformed **employment** landscape



2. Changing **demographics** - cultural diversity, aging, entrenched disadvantaged



3. Ubiquitous **technology**



1. Transformed employment landscape

- Many **low** and **medium skill** jobs automated or contracted offshore
- Of **1 million new jobs** to be created in Aus 2016 – 2020, 483,000 require **Bachelor** degree or higher and 438,000 **VET** qualification
- 75% of fastest growing occupations require Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (**STEM**) skills
- **Employment growth** in sectors which don't have well-developed career structures and characterised by **insecure** employment.
- Decline of traditional labour market **entry point** positions for young people.



New requirements in the world of work

- Constant **reskilling** and **upskilling**
- **Creative, critical thinking** and **collaborative** skills and attributes such as **mindfulness**, **curiosity**, **courage** and **resilience** (Schleicher, OECD)
- **Entrepreneurial mindset** – ability to turn ideas into action, initiative, intelligent risk-taking, collaboration and opportunity recognition
- Likely 17 **changes** in employers across 5 **different careers**



Young Australians and employment

- High **youth unemployment** – 12.7%
- Fewer in **full time work** – 25% of 15-24 yr olds who aren't studying are employed full time
- Traditional **pathways** to permanent jobs not providing outcomes they once did – FT employment rate for **Bachelor** graduates 71% in 2016 cf 85% in 2007
- High % of YP doing **unpaid work experience** to get foot in door
- High % of young people **not fully engaged** in employment, training or study
- **Mismatch** between **study decisions** and **employment opportunities** – in 2016, 1 in 3 VET graduates were employed in occupation they trained in.



2.Social and cultural contexts

- Age of **longevity**
- Increasing **cultural diversity** and **global citizens**
- **Young** and **growing** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population
- **1.1 m** children and young people living below **poverty** line
- **Spatial concentration** of disadvantage and **enduring** social disadvantage in relatively small number of localities.
- Highest risk of **deep or multiple disadvantage** for those who are: dependent on income support, UE, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, living with a long-term health condition or disability, lone parents, people with a low educational attainment.



3. Technology

- **Ubiquitous** and assumed for economic and social participation
- **Rise of the mobile** – a super computer in our pocket
- 90% of future jobs involve **digital literacy**, 50% advanced skills
- Stronger relationship with **personal identity** – eg social media
- Ability to **capture** and **use data**
- Narrowing but deepening **digital divide**
 - 1 in 4 15 yr olds have low **digital literacy** proficiency
 - 1 in 3 children in disadvantaged communities don't have the **internet** at home
 - low SES students less likely to be positive re ICT
 - **Users** or **creators**?



SOME EDUCATIONAL STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES

- Increase % of children in **early learning** and care settings
- Boosted **Yr 12** completion
- Results in **international tests** show:
 - Relatively strong performance but declining
 - **Below average** levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement
- Concerns re student **wellbeing, engagement in learning** and **learning confidence**, particularly as young people progress through school
- Ongoing discussions re the **purpose** of education



Disadvantaged young people are behind at each stage

EARLY YEARS



Developmentally vulnerable

One in three children in most disadvantaged communities is developmentally vulnerable in one or more key areas when they start school.

PRIMARY YEARS



Numeracy

94% of Year 5 students with a parent who has a uni qualification are above the national minimum standard, compared to **61%** of children whose parents did not complete Yr 12.

SECONDARY YEARS



Year 12 completion

Around **30%** difference based on socioeconomic status of students.

At age 15, low SES young people are 3 yrs behind their high SES peers in reading, maths and science.

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Post-school engagement

41% of 24 year olds from most disadvantaged backgrounds were not fully engaged in work or study, compared to **17%** among most advantaged.

WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S OUTCOMES?



No silver bullet....multiple factors impact children and young people's development

1. Personal characteristics

eg intelligence, social skills, health, self esteem, aspirations

2. Family

eg resources, parental aspirations, engagement in child's learning

3. Peers

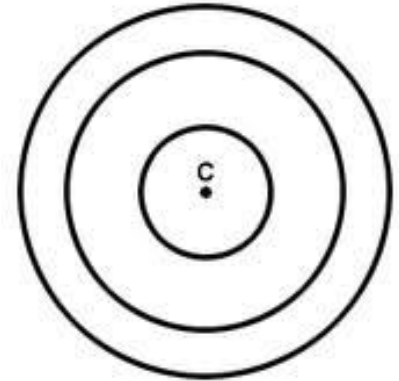
eg aspirations, attitudes to education, risk taking behaviour

4. Learning and care institutions

eg teacher quality, student mix, school's expectations

5. Community and societal

eg economic and infrastructure, role models, social cohesion, safety



These factors shape a child's likely pathway through life, but pathways aren't pre-determined and they can be influenced.

Individual factors that influence educational outcomes

- **Early achievement** eg literacy, numeracy
- **Non-cognitive** skills eg perseverance, motivation, self esteem, goal-setting, self-efficacy, problem solving
- **Mindsets** – belief about whether intelligence is fixed or can be developed (growth mindset)
- School **attendance** – related to achievement and school completion, esp for disadvantaged students
- Student **mobility** - esp for disadvantaged students. Low SES students who move school 3+ times in first 4 years of secondary schooling have 65% probability of not completing Year 12



Family factors influencing educational outcomes

- **Parental engagement** in children's learning is a **bigger predictor** of how children do in school than family's socioeconomic status
- Aspects that matter most:
 - Parents' **aspirations** and **expectations** re children's achievement and participation in further education
 - Parent-child reading
 - Parents' **conversations** influence cognitive skills, value and enjoyment of learning
 - Creating **stimulating environment** eg books, visiting libraries, museums, fostering learning around child's interests
 - Positive and trusting **parent-teacher relationship**
- Influences orientation to learning, motivation, engagement, confidence, beliefs



Family and peer factors that influence educational outcomes

- **Most important** influencers on whether young people intend to go to university are perceived **expectations** of **parents** and **peers**
 - Students at age 15 who believe their parents expect them to go to uni are **11 times** more likely to say they plan to attend uni, compared to students whose parents don't expect them to go to uni



In-school factors that influence educational outcomes

- Quality of **teaching**, targeted to individual learning needs of students
- School **culture** and **environment**
 - Expectations
 - Nurturing environment, students socially connected and at ease
- **'In-school'** factors explain about 35 – 40% of variation in student achievement while student, family and peer factors explain about 55 – 60%.



IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE



For disadvantaged young people, intervene early and provide balanced long term support

	High school graduation rates (%)	University enrolment (%)	Use of welfare (%)	Criminal convictions (%)
No intervention	41	4	18	23
Early childhood intervention only	66	13	9	17
Adolescent intervention only	64	12	10	18
Balanced intervention across full life cycle of a child	91	38	3	11

Improving educational outcomes

- **Cognitive** and **non-cognitive** skills aren't determined solely by genetic factors – they can be developed
- **Target interventions** at appropriate stage of life to influence skills most malleable at that stage – eg non-cognitive skills during adolescence
- **Shared responsibility** and **collaboration**
- Use **data** and **evidence**

Reflection and discussion

1. What strikes you most about some of the economic, social and cultural changes happening in Australia?

2. What strikes you most about the research on children and young people's outcomes?

3. Are there any practical implications for your work?



USING EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS



Learning for Life scholarship program



- Early intervention and long-term approach
- Parental engagement
- High expectations
- Reciprocity and accountability
- 'Beyond school' – complements but in addition to school
- Multiple partnerships
- Outcomes focus

Learning for Life scholarship



Parent and community engagement, including relationship with individual sponsor

Key programs at different life stages

EARLY YEARS



- *Let's Count*
- *Let's Read*

PRIMARY YEARS



- Student2student reading program
- Learning Clubs

SECONDARY YEARS



- iTrack career mentoring
- Creative enrichment
- Career and post-school pathways
- Work Inspiration
- Learning Clubs
- Aboriginal girls' programs

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Financial Literacy
- Professional cadetship

PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

**Balanced
intervention
across
young
person's life**



Child can commence on LfL in first year of school and continue through to completion of tertiary.

FAMILIES ON THE LEARNING FOR LIFE PROGRAM



Learning for Life families



- **36,000+** students nationally; 18,000+ families
- **94** communities across all states/territories
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 19% **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background
- 71% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed; 60% haven't completed Yr 12
- Over half are **single parent**, 6% grandparent/kinship/foster
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 20% of students have been at **4 or more schools** and 1 in 20 have been at 6 or more schools
- **More disadvantaged** than their peer in disadvantaged schools
- 50%+ of secondary and tertiary students on program for **6+ years**

OUR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION APPROACH

Our evaluation approach

1. A **'theory of change'** and **program logic**
 - Emphasises what we want to *achieve* rather than what we want to *do*
2. An **Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)** framework, for each program, focusing on 3 key questions:
 - How much did we do?
 - How well did we do it?
 - Is anyone better off?
3. Small number of **long-term outcomes and Key Performance Indicators** and the means of collecting and analysing this data for *Learning for Life* scholarship students.



Nationally unique dataset for LfL students

- **Number** of students involved
- Unique **student identifier**
- All are from **disadvantaged** backgrounds
- **Longitudinal** nature of our data collection
- **Admin, demographic** and **outcomes** data for **each** student.

Unique IDs

- Student
- Family
- School
- Community
- Program Coordinator

Administrative records

- Referrals / support
- Participation in key programs
- Years on scholarship

Demographics - family

- Family type
- Family size
- Digital access
- Non-scholarship 'sibling' age & gender

Demographics - students

- Age, gender, Indigenous background
- Year level
- School
- 'Partner school' status
- Community
- Program Coordinator
- Health and disability

Demographics - primary carer

- Age, gender, Indigenous background
- Main language spoken
- Highest education level
- Labour market status
- Studying status
- Role relative to scholarship child

Student outcomes

- School attendance
- English & maths achievement
- Year 12 completion
- Post-school engagement
- Highest year level completed
- *Tertiary qualification completed*

Peer (school level) and national comparisons

- Demographics
- Average attendance rates
- Yr 12 completion
- Post-school engagement

OUR OUTCOMES



Measures of effectiveness

LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES

- Young people are in education, training, and/or work
- Young people complete Yr 12 or equivalent
- Young people stay engaged with learning

ENGAGEMENT ADVANCEMENT ATTENDANCE

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

- Improved literacy and numeracy
- Improved confidence (self-efficacy)
- Improved motivation and aspiration
- Enhanced networks and relationships
- Improved knowledge/understanding
- Improved or sustained school attendance

PROGRAMS Build skills & knowledge & influence attitudes & behaviours

Let's Count, Let's Read, Learning for Life, Student2Student, iTrack mentoring, Learning Clubs, Creative enrichment, careers/post-school options workshops, Work Inspiration, Tertiary Mentoring, Tech Packs, Financial literacy

Some outcome measures of *Learning for Life*



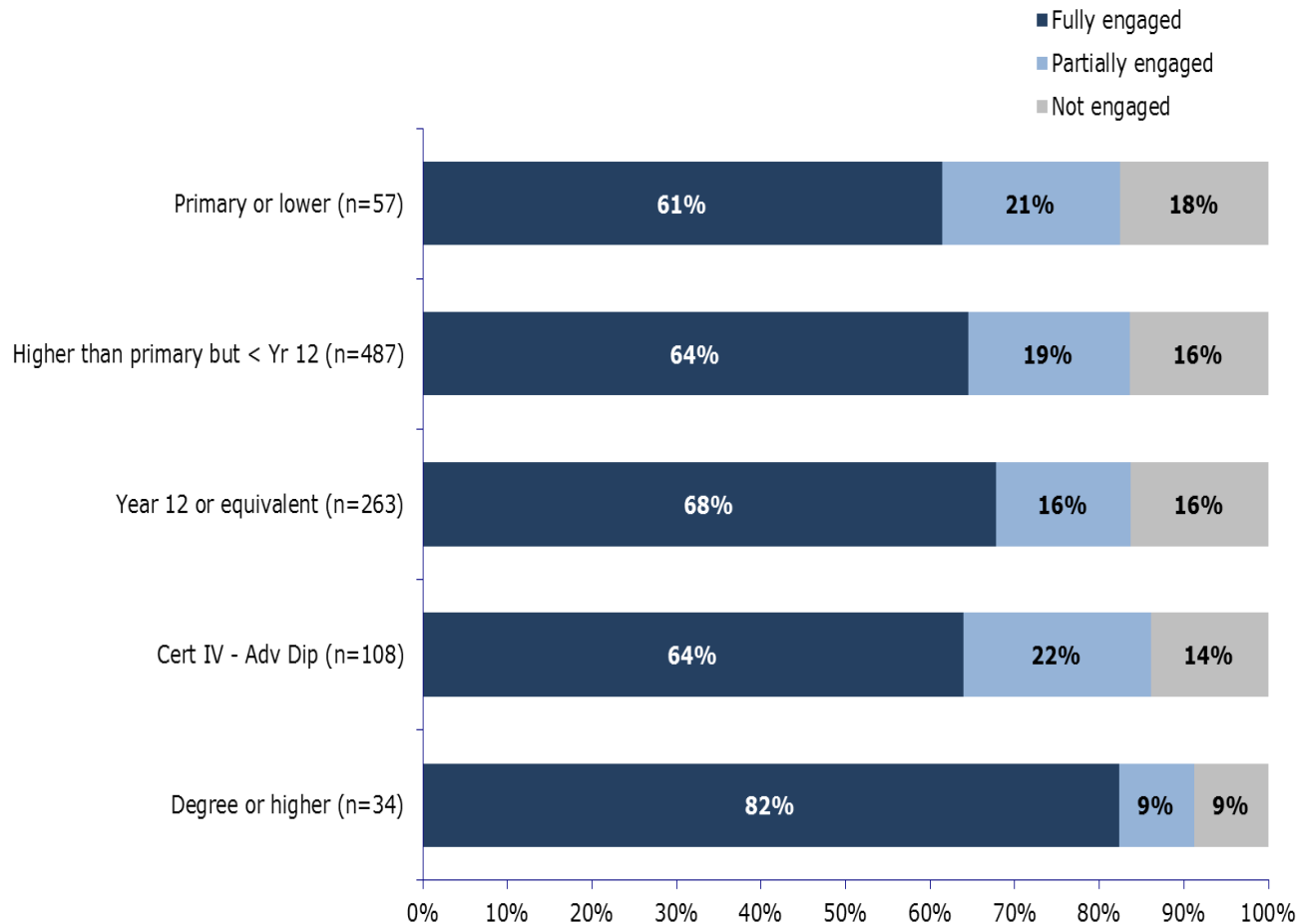
- Improve **school attendance** over time to 90%
 - Average attendance rate of Aboriginal students on the program is 86.1%
- Increase the proportion of students who advance to **Year 12**
 - 7 out of 10 students are completing Yr 12
- Increase proportion of students engaged in **employment and further education** after they leave the program
 - 84% of students are in work or study a year after leaving the program

These are strong educational outcomes for highly disadvantaged young Australians

SOME OF WHAT WE'RE LEARNING



What have we learnt from Engagement rate - parental education?

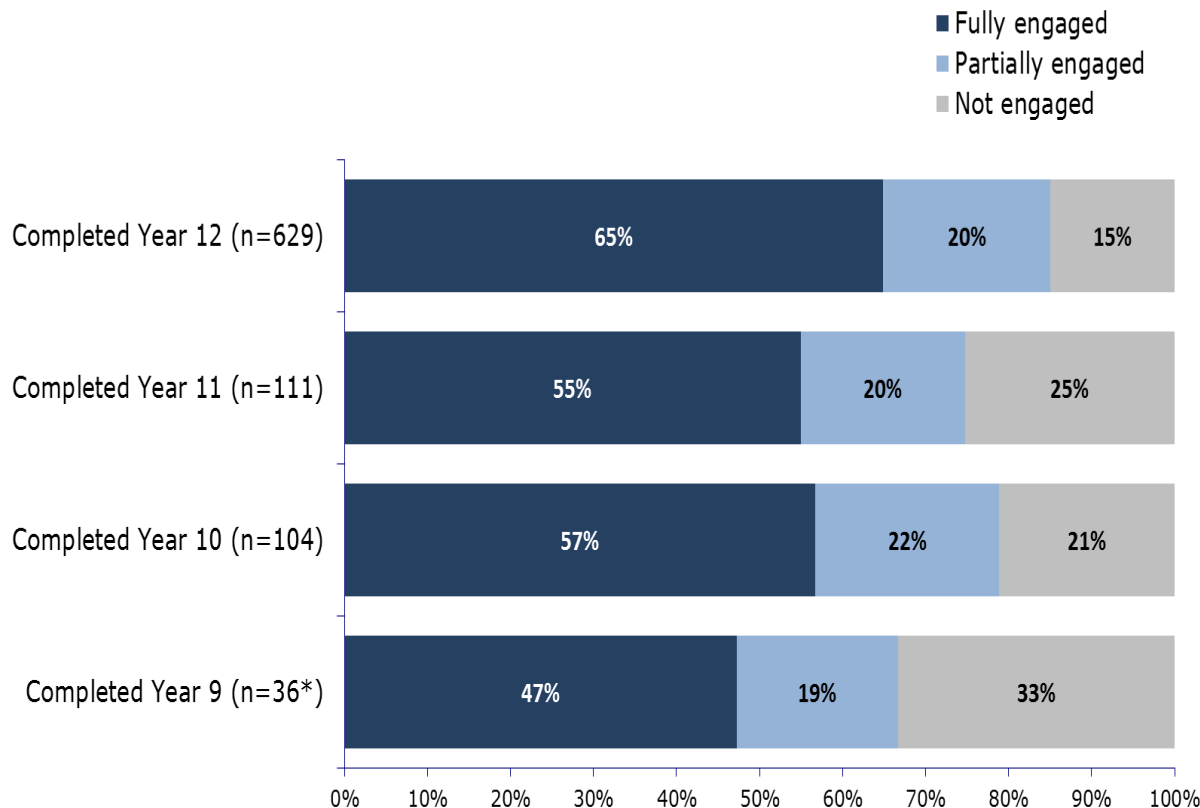


Base: former LfL students for whom parental education data is available (n=949)

Source: TSF administrative (CONNECT) data (parental qualification) / survey data (engagement outcome)

Parental education has little influence on post-school engagement rate of LfL students except if parent has a degree.

What have we learnt from Engagement rate – highest level of school completed?



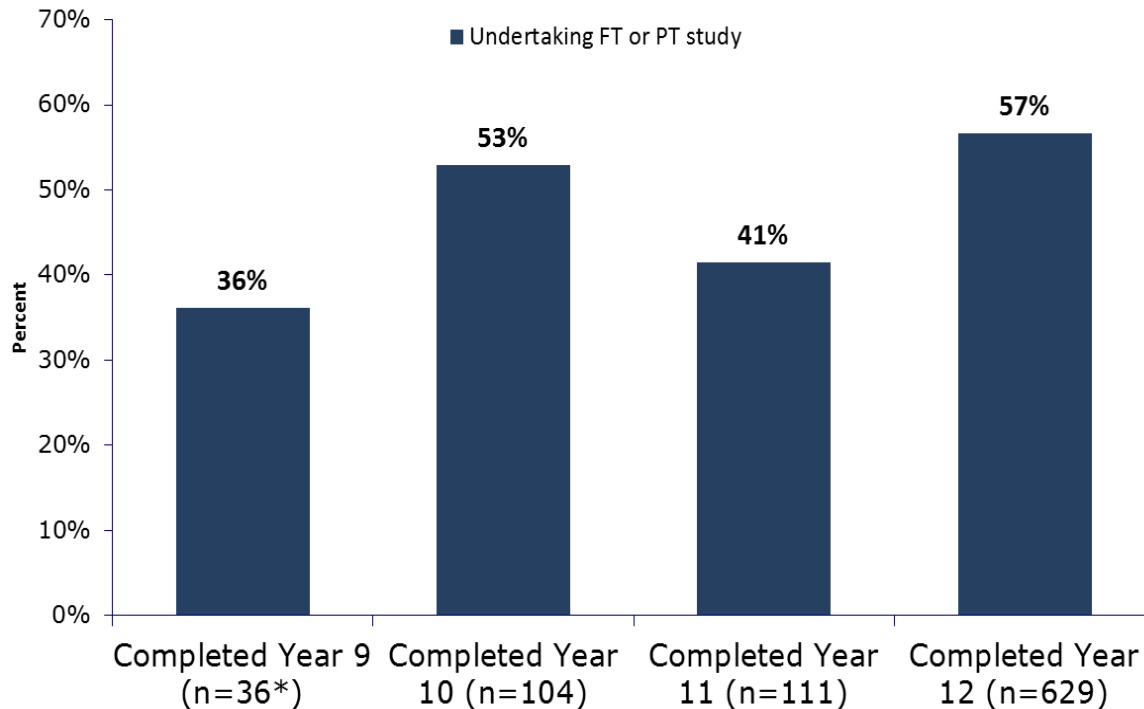
Base: former LfL students who have left school (n=880)

Source: survey data

*Small sample size - treat with caution

- Stronger engagement if completed Yr 12.
- Seemingly little difference between Yr 10 and Yr 11 leavers, however...

Continuing study by highest level of school completed



Base: former LfL students who have left school (n=880)

Source: survey data

*Small sample size - treat with caution

- Stronger likelihood of continuing study if completed Yr 12.
- Young people completing Yr 10 **much more likely** to continue studying than those completing Yr 11
➔ likely better longer-term outcomes
- Policy & program gap in Yr 11 – opportunity

What have we learnt from Engagement rate - early school leavers?

Reasons for leaving early – multiple and complex

Years 9-11

- Many related directly to ongoing challenging financial circumstances
 - Desire or need for financial independence
 - Earn own money
 - Get a job, apprenticeship or traineeship

Years 9 and 10

- Range of school related factors also strongly linked to leaving school early
 - Problems with students and/or teachers
 - Missed a lot of school
 - Dislike school
 - Not doing well at school
- ⇒ Opportunities for early intervention

What have we learnt from Engagement rate - other findings?

- Significant proportions (20%+) of those who'd left school early were sorry they'd made that decision
- Strong high school attendance rates in Year 8 positively associated with completing school - **confirms other research**
- Stronger achievement rates in English in Year 10 positively associated with completing school - **confirms other research**

HOW ARE WE USING WHAT WE'RE LEARNING?



Using data to improve outcomes

- **Data, evaluation and research** are driving program refinements and continuous improvement, for eg:
 - More **tailored support** for particular groups of students and at particular times (eg those struggling with school attendance, transitioning to high school)
 - Changes to frequency and nature of **engagement with families**
 - Re-defining roles of **staff**, role **specialisation**
 - Greater **focus** on supporting students to complete Year 12
 - **Training** for LfL staff on working with highly disadvantaged families
 - Refined **induction** program for new staff
 - And there's still more to do ...

Conclusion

- The contexts of all our work is dynamic and marked by strengths and challenges
- It is possible to improve the educational and life outcomes of highly disadvantaged young Australians
- Evidence informed programs, nuanced for local circumstances and that have a continuous improvement focus, are key
- Early intervention, long term support, parental engagement, collaboration, outcomes focus and scaling effective initiatives critical if we want to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children and young people



THANK YOU!

REFLECTIONS, QUESTIONS?

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