

IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS: THE EXPERIENCE OF A NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANISATION



Outcomes based approaches in Government

30 July 2019, Sydney

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Organisational context: The Smith Family



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 SIZE

National organisation

Working with 90+ communities across all states and territories.

Support 175,000+ disadvantaged children, young people and their carers each year.

EXTERNAL CONTEXT AND CHALLENGE

DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS ARE BEHIND AT EACH STAGE OF THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY



Early Years

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



Numeracy

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



Year 12 completion

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



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.

1.1 million Australian children and young people are living below the poverty line



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LEARNING FOR LIFE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



Principles of *Learning for Life* – evidence informed

- **Early intervention** and **long-term** support
- **Parental engagement** in their child's learning
- **High expectations** for all students
- **Reciprocity** and accountability
- A '**beyond school**' approach – complementing, but in addition to what happens in school
- Multiple **partnerships** – families, schools, communities, business, governments
- **Outcomes** focus



\$ + support +
educational
programs

***Learning for Life* students are highly disadvantaged**

– targeted program



- **48,000+** students nationally, across all states and territories
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 1 in 5 **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 70% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed
- Over half are **single parent**; 6% in grandparent, kin or foster families
- 20% of students have been at **4 or more schools** and 1 in 20 at 6 or more schools
- 30% do not have a **home computer** and/or **internet connection** at home
- More disadvantaged than their peers in disadvantaged schools
- Over half of our secondary and tertiary students have been on LfL for **6 or more years**

OUR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION APPROACH



Our evaluation approach

1. A **'theory of change'**
 - 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:
 - How much did we do?
 - How well did we do it?
 - Is anyone better off?
3. Small number of **long-term outcomes** and the means of collecting and analysing this data for *Learning for Life* scholarship students.



Nationally unique dataset for LfL students



- Unique **student identifier**
- All are from **disadvantaged** backgrounds
- **Longitudinal** data collection
- **Admin, demographic** and **outcomes** data for **each** student and their family.

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



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OUR OUTCOMES



Measures of effectiveness

LONGER-TERM OUTCOMES

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

SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES

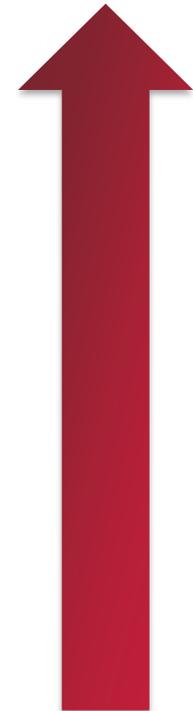
- Improved literacy and numeracy
- Improved confidence (self-efficacy)
- Improved motivation and aspiration
- Enhanced networks and relationships
- Improved knowledge/understanding
- Improved or sustained school attendance

PROGRAMS

Build skills and knowledge and influence attitudes and behaviours

- Let's Count • Let's Read • Learning for Life
- Student2Student • iTrack mentoring
- Learning Clubs • Creative enrichment
- Careers/post-school options workshops
- Cadetship to Career • Aboriginal girls' program
- Work Inspiration • Tertiary Mentoring
- Tech Packs • Financial literacy

**COMPLETION
ENGAGEMENT
ADVANCEMENT
ATTENDANCE**



Four longer-term outcomes we are seeking to achieve with *LfL* students.

1. Improve **school attendance** (Attendance Rate) – reported annually
2. Increase proportion of students who advance to **Year 12** (Advancement Rate) - reported annually.
3. Increase proportion of students engaged in **employment and further education** 12 months after they leave the program (Engagement Rate) - reported biennially.
4. Increase proportion of students completing a **tertiary qualification** (Tertiary Completion Rate) - reported annually

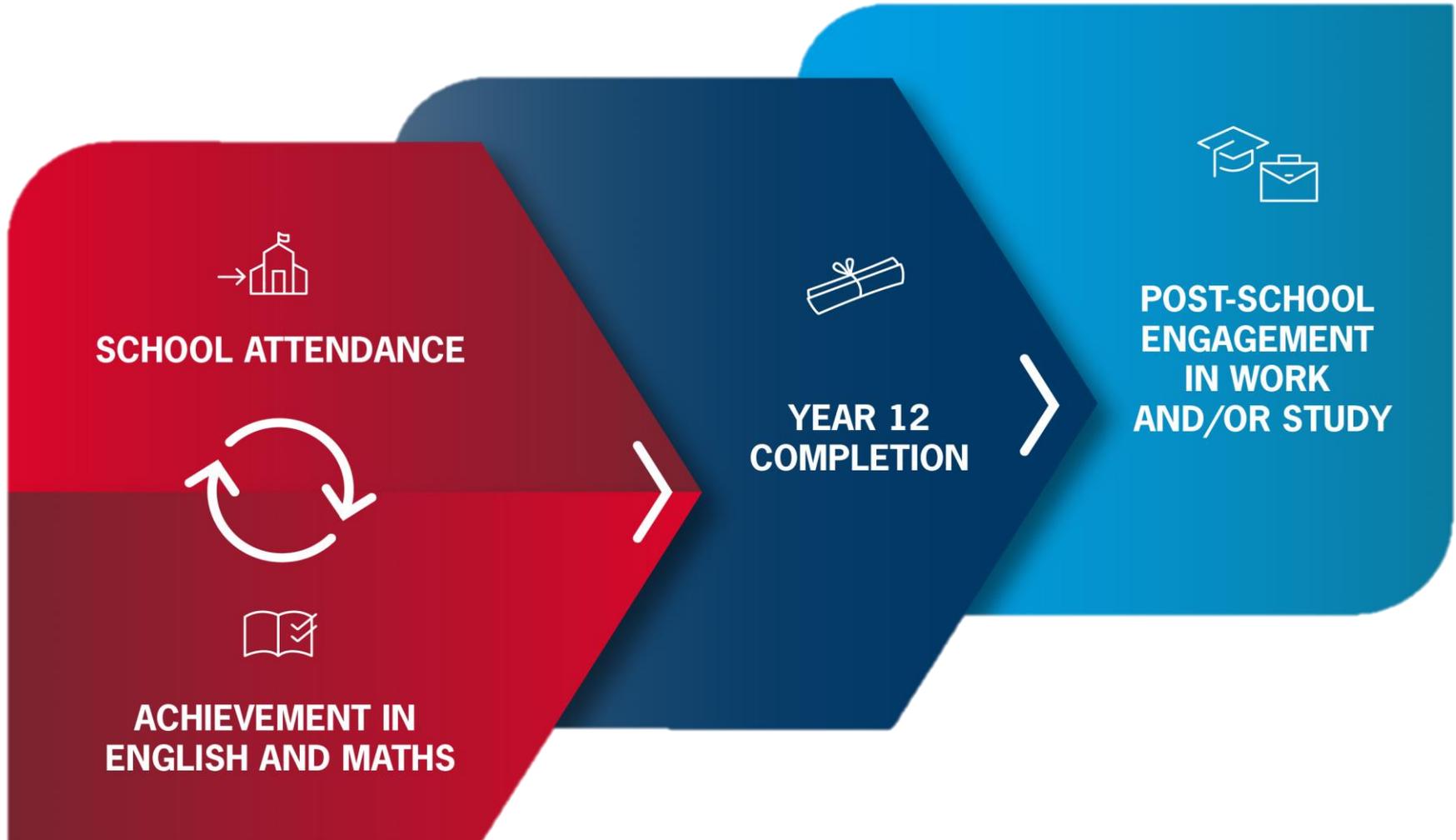
These were chosen because:

- **Research** shows their importance for young people's economic and social participation and overall wellbeing.
- They are **policy relevant**, with Council of Australian Governments (COAG), tracking progress on them for all young Australians.
- They are **directly relevant** to our program delivery.

THE VALUE OF LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS

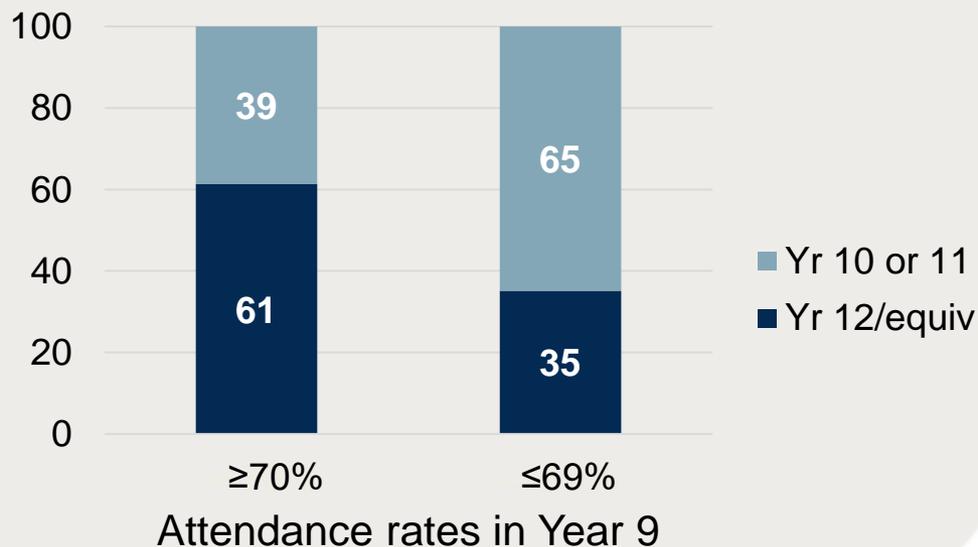


Analysis of *LfL* longitudinal data shows relationships between key educational outcomes – an Australian first



LfL longitudinal analysis shows improving attendance rates as students move through high school increases likelihood they'll complete school

Highest level of school completed 2014-2016 by attendance in Year 9 for students with $\leq 69\%$ attendance in Year 7



- 6 in 10 students who had very low attendance in Year 7 but improved their attendance Year 9, completed Year 12 of 35% of students who had very low attendance in both Years 7 and 9

So what? Policy and practice implications

- Achievement and attendance are **indicators of risk** and can be used to **identify students** needing additional support as they move through school
- **Targeted** and **timely** support to improve students' low school attendance and below satisfactory achievement can lead to improvements which in turn increase the **likelihood** of students **completing school** and being in **work and/or study** post-school
- As young people move through school **change** in key outcomes is relatively common – individualised, tailored approach is key
- Support for high attenders and achievers from disadvantaged backgrounds should focus **on widening learning experiences**, sense of possibilities and expanding networks
- **Support students** whose educational outcomes indicate they are **at risk** of early school leaving eg through career coaching, goal setting, skills development including with employers
- **Unique Student Identifier** needed for all Australian students



Contributors to organisational outcomes focus include



- **Leadership** – CEO, Executive etc regularly and comfortably talk about outcomes, program effectiveness and use data to inform on-going program improvements and investments
- **Embedded** in 5 year strategy, yearly corporate operating plan, KPIs
- Linked to organisational **mission** – staff want to make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged young people
- **Values based** – links to values of excellence, collaboration and innovation
- Creating the **systems and processes** to support this work and embed it in **all areas** – Operations, Research, Fundraising, BIS/IT, P&C, etc
- **Small number** of relevant student outcomes and **longitudinal** data – all staff know what we're aiming to influence
- **Continuous improvement** focus – learning organisation with multiple opportunities to feedback and discuss data and analysis with teams
- **Long-term** – not a 1 off, not resting on laurels
- Using it to inform **public policy advocacy**



Questions and conversation....

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