

# FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICY PRIORITIES FOR YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

**ARACY WEBINAR, 24 APRIL 2019**

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# CONTEXT

- ORGANISATIONAL
- CHILD POVERTY IN AUSTRALIA
- THE VOICES OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS
- RESEARCH ON IMPROVING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

# 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 HISTORY

Established in 1922 by a group of businessmen.

## OUR SIZE

Nationally supporting **175,000** disadvantaged children, young people and their carers per year, including over **19,000** from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

## PLACE-BASED

**90+** communities across all states and territories.

# CHILD POVERTY



**1.1 million** Australian children and young people are living in poverty



“Child poverty...will **permanently scar a generation**, preventing it from ever reaching its full potential”

Angel Gurría  
OECD Secretary-General



By 2030, **reduce at least by half** the proportion of children living in poverty according to national definitions.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 1 which Australia has committed to

# YOUNG AUSTRALIANS AND THE ESSENTIALS OF LIFE

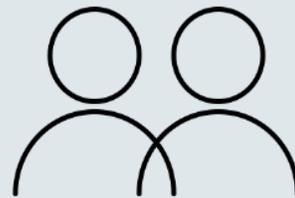
- Research led by SPRC at UNSW, with NSW DoE, NSW Office of Advocate for C&YP, The Smith Family
- Voices of students from NSW gov high schools and financially disadvantaged students supported by TSF
- Strong **consensus** on items they see as “essential” for all young people across a range of areas
  - Material deprivation items: a lack of ‘things’
  - Social exclusion items: a lack of ‘doing’



Home



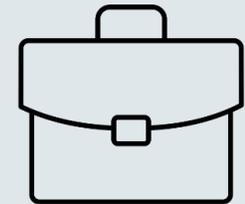
Spending time with family



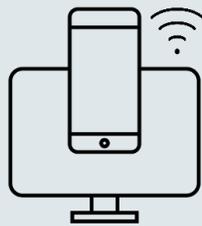
Friends and free time



School



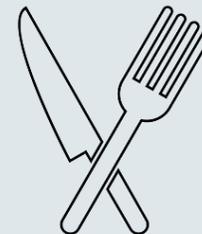
A job



Technology



Transport



Food and diet



Clothes/ Shoes

# WHAT YOUNG AUSTRALIANS SEE AS ESSENTIALS OF LIFE

Material deprivation items		Social exclusion items	
Computer or mobile device	Place at home to <b>study/do</b> homework	<b>Holiday</b> with family at least once a year	Local <b>park</b> or green space
Separate <b>bedroom</b> for each child 10 yrs+	<b>Books</b> at home suitable for child's age	<b>Meal out</b> with family at least once a month	Access to <b>public transport</b> in local area
<b>Clothes</b> needed for school (inc sports gear)	<b>Fruit</b> or <b>vegetables</b> at least once a day	<b>Extra-curricular</b> school activities (sport/music)	<b>School excursions/trips</b> at least once per term
Money for classes/ activities <b>outside school</b>	Some \$ (from paid work or carers) weekly to spend/save	<b>Internet</b> access in public spaces	<b>Internet</b> at home
Three <b>meals</b> a day		Right <b>clothes</b> to fit in with other people your age	

- Significant proportions of both groups **missing out** on these essentials
- Around **1 in 5** (18.7%) of gov high schools students and **2 in 5** (40.4%) financially disadvantaged students were deprived of **3 or more essential items** – ie experiencing **multiple deprivation**.
- Close to **1 in 3** (31.2%) of financially disadvantaged students deprived of **4 or more items**.
- **1 in 10** (10.7%) financially disadvantaged students deprived of **7 or more items**.

## IMPACT OF MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

- Across multiple dimensions of young people's lives:
  - Undermines ability of **families** to enjoy activities together most other families take for granted.
  - Weakens young people's participation in **school activities** which have learning, engagement, well-being and social benefits.
  - Lack of one's own money impacts young people's sense of **autonomy** and **independence**, which is particularly important in adolescence
- Addressing deprivation is a priority because:
  - Young people experiencing severe deprivation have lower levels of **wellbeing** and more **negative attitudes to schooling** than those not experiencing severe deprivation.
  - Impacts life satisfaction, sense of control over their lives, positivity about the future, family functioning, sense of safety, connectedness to family, friends and school.

Deprivation ⇒ Poorer well-being and attitude to school ⇒ Likely poor life time outcomes

# AUSTRALIA'S EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

## YOUNG PEOPLE ARE BEHIND AT EACH STAGE



### 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.



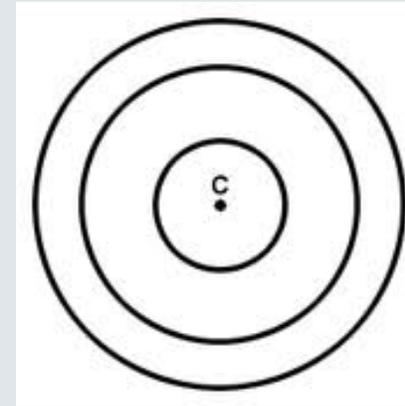
### Post-school engagement

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

**Young people's educational and life outcomes are strongly linked to poverty**

# RESEARCH UNDERPINNING OUR POLICY PRIORITIES

- **Multiple** factors impact children and young people's outcomes – personal, family, peers, learning and care institutions, community and societal.
- These factors place a child on a particular **trajectory** or pathway.
- A child's trajectory **isn't fixed** and can be influenced by the **right support** at the **right time**.
- Working in **multiple areas** of a child's life maximises the likelihood of positive outcomes.



# RESEARCH SHOWS

- **Early intervention** and **long-term support** provide the best return on investment for supporting disadvantaged children and young people to achieve.
- Nobel Economist James Heckman: “The same amount of total investment distributed more evenly over the life cycle of a child produces more adult skills than policy that concentrates attention on only one part of the child’s life cycle.”
- Policy message: Invest **early** – and **keep on** investing

	High school graduation rates (%)	University enrolment (%)	Use of welfare program (%)	Criminal conviction (%)
No intervention (Baseline)	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

# POLICY IMPERATIVE: EARLY INTERVENTION

## TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

### EDUCATION

Key enabler of economic and social participation.

### IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Most cost-effective way of addressing inter-generational disadvantage and welfare dependency.

### SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Not achieving educational outcomes needed to participate in employment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### EARLY INTERVENTION IS URGENTLY NEEDED

To improve young people's educational, health, wellbeing and employment outcomes and avoid long-term costs to governments and the community.

# OUR POLICY PRIORITIES

# POLICY PRIORITIES FOR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

1. National action to reduce child poverty
2. Improve the education and life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
3. Support parent engagement in children's learning
4. Strengthen community engagement that enriches student learning
5. Build Australian educational evidence Infrastructure
6. Invest in effective careers support for young people

# NATIONAL ACTION TO REDUCE CHILD POVERTY

- UN Sustainable Development Framework: Reducing poverty (Goal 1), quality education (Goal 4) and reducing inequalities (Goal 10) – significant acceleration needed to meet these goals by 2030
- Priority consideration for COAG
  - Measuring progress is critical and reporting publicly on it
- Agree definition of child poverty
- National framework needed re implementation of SDG including roles of different jurisdictions, sectors (inc business and not-for-profit organisations), Depts and how they will work together
  - Service-user centred
  - Hear voices of service-users
  - Enabling infrastructure for service system collaboration
- Support ARACY's call for a national Minister for Children and Young People

# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE

- Continue priority of improving educational and life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- Reframe Closing the Gap targets to be less deficit-based and more aspirational, to reflect strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge into targets
- Build more nuanced understanding of nature of gaps *within* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts to help deliver better tailored services.
- Introduce short and medium term performance indicators for each target
- Consider new target re participation of 16 – 24 year olds in study and/or work after secondary school



# SUPPORT PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CHILDREN'S LEARNING

- Research shows critical role of parental engagement in children's learning, particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, but it has yet to be sufficiently leveraged in Australian educational policies.
- Commonwealth leadership is required:
  - Institutional reforms that highlight obligation on schools and states/territories to embed parent engagement in their culture and practices.
  - Build capacity of school leaders and educators to engage as learning partners with families, through initial teacher training and professional development across educators' careers.
  - Make parent engagement a priority research and practice area, including implementing tool for measuring it within school communities which allows tracking of progress over time.



# STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THAT ENRICHES STUDENT LEARNING

- Schools alone can't create optimal conditions for young people's learning, especially in disadvantaged areas.
- Community engagement mobilises and coordinates range of resources needed to create conditions for student learning.
- Prioritise actioning Gonski Review recommendation:  
*Strengthen school-community engagement to enrich student learning through the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate quality partnerships, including engagement in mentoring, volunteering and extra-curricular activities, between schools, employers, members of the community, community organisations and tertiary institutions.*
- Community engagement doesn't just happen – needs to be resourced and prioritised so it efficiently and effectively contributes to improved student outcomes.
- Review Australian practice and evaluate ongoing efforts in this space to ensure more effective use of resources and to maximise impact on student outcomes.

# BUILD AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL EVIDENCE INFRASTRUCTURE

- National educational evidence infrastructure should include:
  - Access to evidence repository: what works, for whom, under what circumstances, in language accessible to diversity of stakeholders
  - Tools and resources that help schools and other organisations assess needs, identify priorities, select and implement initiatives, track progress
  - Undertaking or commissioning evaluations to add to evidence including 'in' and 'outside' of school

# BUILD AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL EVIDENCE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Unique Student Identifier (USI) for all **school students** (ideally prior to school through post-school study) is foundational to building Australian educational **evidence base**.
- Particularly important to understand how **disadvantaged** students are doing.
- Australian Govs endorsed USI in 2009 but progress is slow – needs leadership, drive and investment.
- *A nationally consistent system of USIs would offer significant benefits to schools, teachers and families as well as supporting data linkage for education research purposes... would enable tracking of individual student outcomes over time, across jurisdictions and between government and non-government schools. ...would make it easier and more efficient for schools and teachers to prepare programs and strategies that support students' individual needs...would provide straightforward way of accessing longitudinal data on students' outcomes and other personal information (eg disability), which can form essential 'backbone' of data for conducting evaluations of the impact of specific programs and interventions.*  
Productivity Commission, 2016

# INVEST IN EFFECTIVE CAREER SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- Current approaches to careers support in schools are **inconsistent** and **not in line** with the **21<sup>st</sup> century economy**, despite some pockets of excellence
- **Leadership** from Commonwealth is needed given economic and social **benefits/costs** to individuals, families, communities and Government of young people not being able to participate in the economy.
- Effective and timely **contemporary careers support** is urgently needed, particularly for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, including those in **regional and outer-metropolitan communities** impacted by major economic and employment changes – commencing in primary school



# INVESTMENT IN EFFECTIVE CAREER SUPPORT

- **Effective support :**
  - Enhances knowledge, skills and confidence regarding careers and post-school planning
  - Starts in primary school and continues through high school and beyond
  - Supports young people to develop ambitious and realistic career aspirations
  - Encourages young people to complete Year 12
  - Exposes them to the contemporary world of work and builds their networks with employers and employees
  - Engages them with diverse post-school training and education offerings, including Vocational Education and Training
  - Empowers parents to be engaged in their child's education and career planning





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