

# EARLY INTERVENTION:

The key to preventing  
entrenched disadvantage

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# Entrenched disadvantage in Australia

- Around 5% of Australians experience severe disadvantage
- Over half a million children in jobless households/poverty
- Characteristics associated with risk of long-term disadvantage include:
  - Low educational attainment
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background
  - Jobless households
  - Long term health/disability
  - Living in disadvantaged areas
  - Older people



# Education

- Predictor of future employment, health, welfare prospects
- Skills development is cumulative – young people who start behind often stay behind
- Failure to complete Year 12 or equivalent increases risk of lifetime economic and social disadvantage
- Employment markets emphasise knowledge, skills, innovation
- Australia's economic and social prosperity relies on capacity to realise potential of all Australians



# Many young people being left behind

## EARLY YEARS



Developmentally vulnerable

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

## PRIMARY YEARS



Numeracy

More than 10% difference in Yr 5 students at or above national minimum standard based on parents' education.

## SECONDARY YEARS



Year 12 completion

More than 10% difference based on socio-economic status of students.

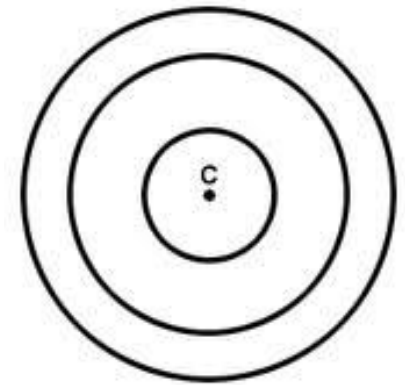
## POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Post-school engagement

Post-school, 42% of 17–24 year olds from most disadvantaged backgrounds were not fully engaged in work or study, compared to 17% among most advantaged.

- Multiple influences on young person's development
- Early intervention – mitigates risk or prevents emerging problem getting worse
- More cost effective
- Balanced intervention for disadvantaged children
  - invest early and keep on investing throughout a young person's life
  - This gives best return on investment (James Heckman)



# ***Learning for Life* scholarship – early intervention to improve educational outcomes and prevent long-term disadvantage**



**Parent and community engagement**

# Key programs at different 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

## POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Financial Literacy

## PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

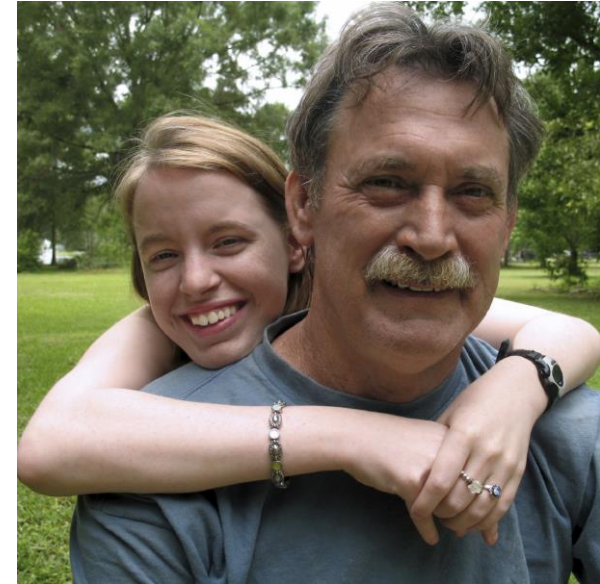


*Learning for Life*  
scholarship

# Parental engagement

- Parental engagement in children's learning is bigger predictor of how children do, than a family's socioeconomic status.
- Students with engaged parents, more likely to do well at school, graduate from school and go on to higher education.
- Parental engagement in learning is one tool that can help close the gap in achievement between children of different socioeconomic backgrounds.

*Education Capital, 2014*





# *Learning for Life* – scale and characteristics

- 34,000 students from 18,000 families
- 94 communities across all states and territories
- Low income families – Health Care Card or pension
- 16% (5,500) Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background
- 68% of parents not in labour force or unemployed and low % have Year 12
- 60% sole parent families
- More disadvantaged as a group than school peers, even in disadvantaged schools
- Over half of secondary students on program for 5+ years



# Measures of effectiveness of *Learning for Life*

- Improve school attendance over time to 90%
- Increase the proportion of students who advance to Year 12
- Increase proportion of students engaged in employment and further education after they leave the program



# Increased school attendance

## *Learning for Life* 2013 average school attendance rates

91.2%

For *Learning for Life*  
primary school students

86.0%

For *Learning for Life*  
secondary school students

86.9%

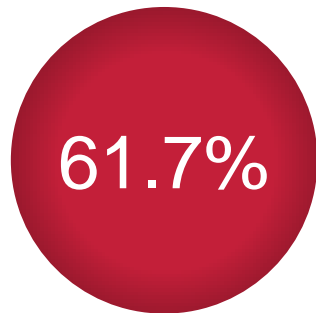
For *Learning for Life* Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander school students



**All are  
improvements on  
2012**

# Successful post school transitions

Fully engaged



Partly engaged



*Learning for Life* students in work or study 12 months after leaving the program. This is of students who left the program in Years 10, 11 or 12. Of the 20% who were not engaged, two thirds were actively seeking employment and one in 7 was volunteering.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, 56% were fully engaged and 14% were partially engaged.



# Using data to improve effectiveness

- Review of School Funding – insufficient data to assess impact of \$4.4 billion annual investment in programs to address educational disadvantage
- Detailed analysis of *Learning for Life* longitudinal data across range of characteristics is leading to improvements in outcomes achieved by highly disadvantaged young people
- If Australia is to address entrenched disadvantage, need to invest in evidence-based initiatives





# Conclusion

- Clear relationship between education and lifelong social and economic outcomes
- Many children and young people living in disadvantaged families are at risk of poor outcomes
- Many young people not achieving good educational outcomes
- Background is not destiny – early intervention provides way of helping children on positive pathway
- Through partnerships with family, schools, governments, non-government organisations, business and philanthropy the cycle of entrenched disadvantage can be broken





*everyone's family*