

# SUCCEEDING THROUGH EDUCATION

The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program

Childhood, Education and Welfare:  
Research and Policy Insights Workshop  
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# ***Learning for Life – key underpinnings***



- Early intervention and long-term approach (Heckman)
- Parental engagement
- High expectations
- Reciprocity and accountability
- ‘Beyond school’ – complements but in addition to school
- Multiple partnerships – family, school, community, business, philanthropy
- Outcomes focus

# Learning for Life scholarship



**Parent and community engagement**

# 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
- Senior Learning Clubs
- Career and post-school pathways
- Work Inspiration
- Aboriginal girls' programs

## POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Careers Transition
- Professional Cadetship
- Financial Literacy

## PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

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



*Learning for Life* scholarship  
Students can begin in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of school  
and continue to the end of tertiary

# LEARNING FOR LIFE FAMILIES



# Learning for Life families



- **33,000** 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 peers 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'
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

- Unique **student identifier**
- **Longitudinal** 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

# PROGRAM 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

# Increased school attendance

The Smith Family's national average attendance rates, 2015



90.7%

For Learning for Life  
primary school  
students



86.1%

For Learning for Life  
secondary school  
students



86.1%

For Learning for Life  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander school students

## National comparison

The average attendance rate for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 1 to 10 in all government schools is 83.2%, below the 86.1% of Aboriginal students on Learning for Life.

# Improved Year 12 completion

## The Smith Family's national advancement rate

68.2%

Learning for Life students who were in Year 10 in 2013 and advanced to Year 12 or its equivalent by 2015. Up from 60% for the period 2010–12.

Between 2012 and 2015, **6,500** students have been supported on Learning for Life to complete Year 12.



### National comparison

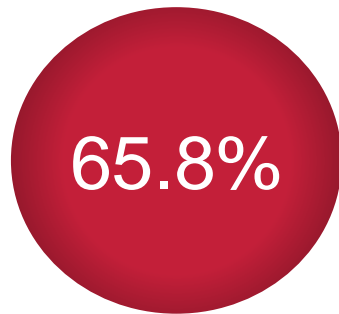
The national Year 12 completion rate for 19 year olds from Australia's lowest socioeconomic decile is 60.6% and for the second lowest decile is 61.4%. This is well below The Smith Family's Advancement Rate of 68.2%.



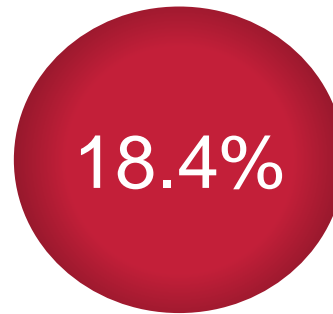
# Successful post school transitions

**84.2%** of former Learning for Life students nationally are in work or study 12 months after leaving the program

Fully engaged



Partly engaged



For **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander** young people, **74.2%** were engaged – 54.6% were fully engaged and 19.6% were partially engaged.

For both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal former students who were not engaged, 80% were actively **seeking employment** and one in six was **volunteering**.

Nationally, **58.9%** of all **24 year olds** from lowest SES decile are fully engaged. This is well below the rate for former Learning for Life students who are much younger and have had less time to establish themselves, post-school.



# KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO IMPACT



# Key contributors to impact include



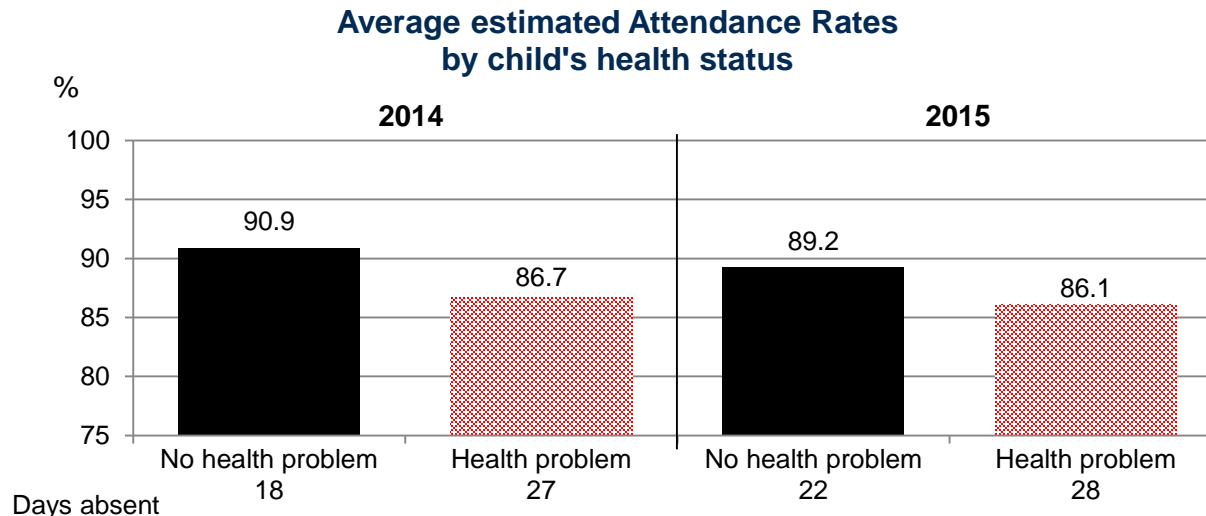
- **Early intervention + long-term** support, including different program offerings at different stages of young person's development
- Respectful long-term partnerships with **parents/carers** around their child's education – scholarship not welfare, supporting parents' engagement in their child's learning
- **Place based** approach – local partnerships with schools within national program implementation and evaluation framework
- Work across **multiple areas** of a young person's life, particularly home-school relationship
- Multiple **cross sectoral** partnerships
- Strong outcomes focus and use of **data** and **practice** experience to refine approach - including for different groups of students

# SOME OF WHAT WE'RE LEARNING



# What have we learnt from Attendance Rates data?

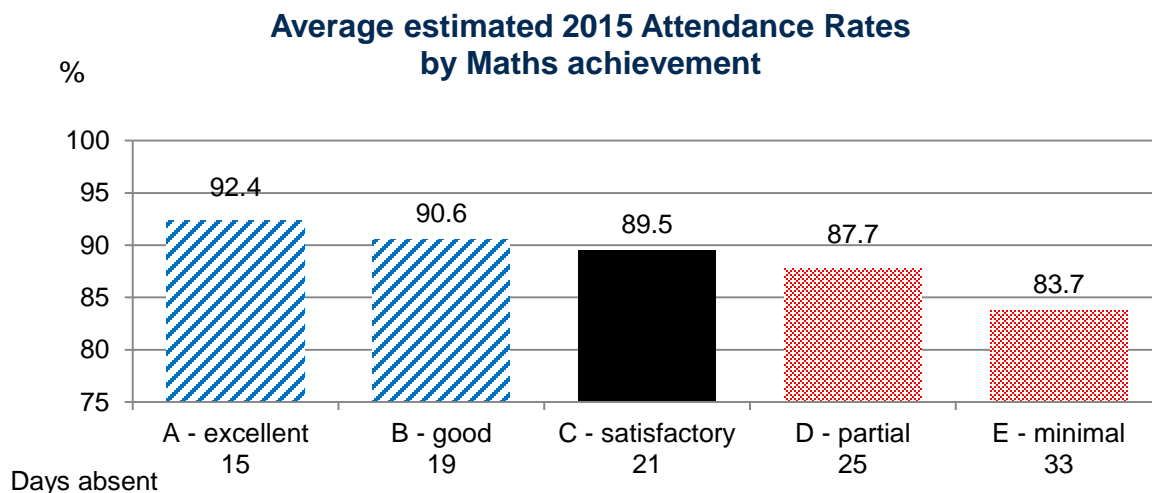
- Rates for LfL students begin to **decline** in later years of primary school – consistent with data for all students. Opportunity to provide **additional support** for students.
- Unsurprisingly, high level of **health** and **disability** issues significantly impacts LfL students' attendance rates.
- When controlling for other characteristics, LfL students who have health or disability issues have **significantly lower** average attendance rates than students who don't have these issues.



The black columns represent the group whom the comparison is made against (base category). The red cross columns indicate rates that are significantly lower than the base category.

# What have we learnt from Attendance Rates data?

- **Association** between Maths (and English) **achievement** and **attendance**. eg average attendance for students with A in Maths is 92.4% and 83.7% for those who achieve an E.
- **Direction of causation** could work both ways.

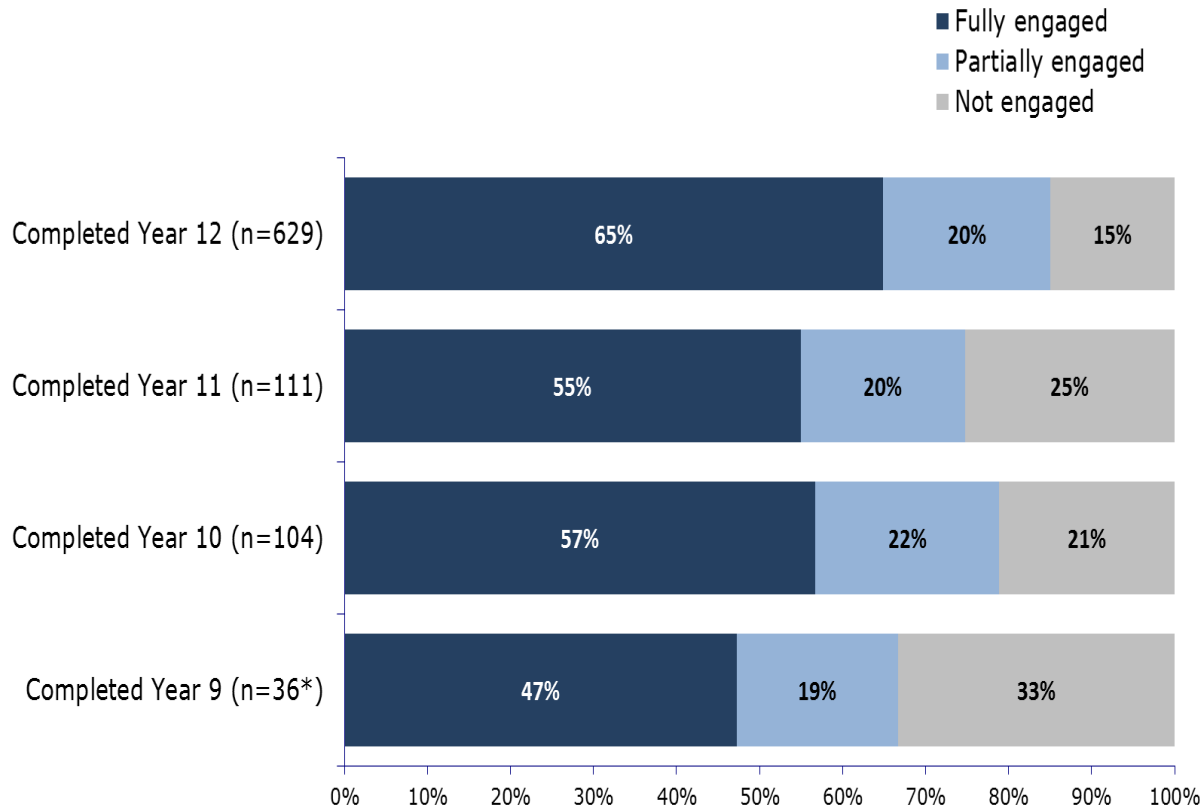


The black columns represent the group whom the comparisons are made against (ie the base category). The red cross columns indicate rates that are significantly lower than the base category. The blue strip columns indicate rates that are significantly higher than the base category.

## **Lower attendance rates** consistently found for LfL students who:

- are in Yrs 7 to 10; achieve below average results in Maths or English; are from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds; have a health or disability issue; have a parent/carer who is not employed, whose highest education is Year 7 to 10, is a single mother, is of English speaking background.
- Allows **better targeted support** to those who most need it.

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



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

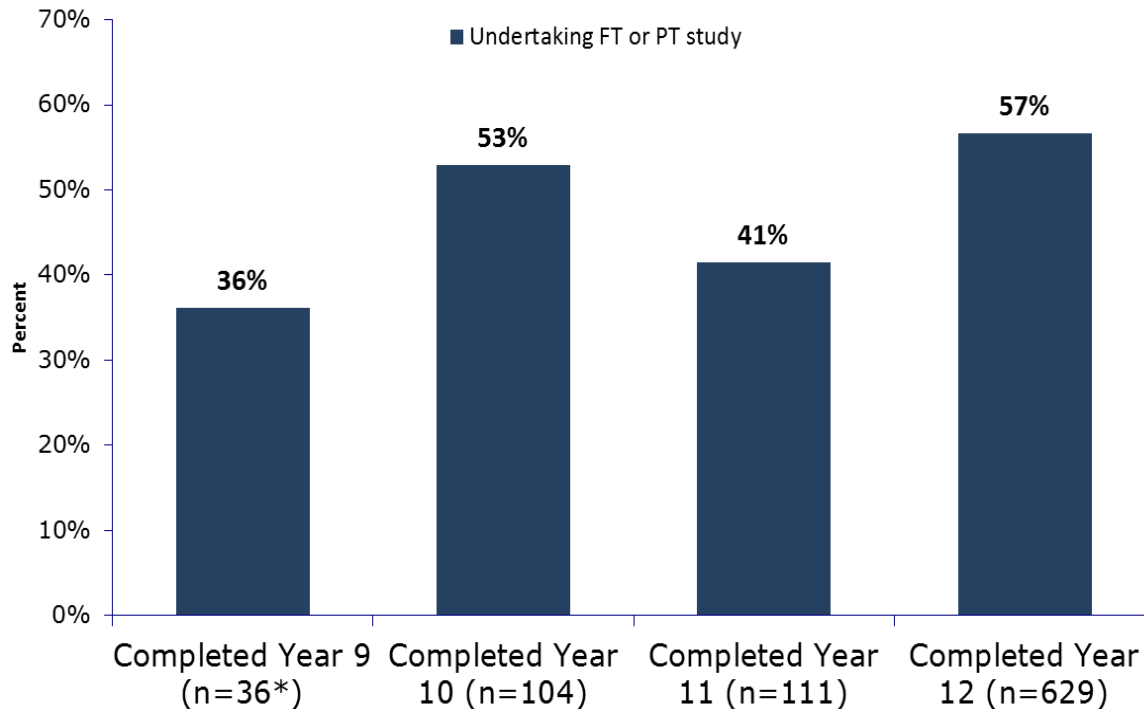
Source: survey data

\*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 to improve our program suite and influence public policy

# 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, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background students)
  - 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

# CONCLUSION

# Conclusion

- Regularly hear of Australia's educational challenge
- It's real – educational outcomes related to children's background – but improvements are clearly possible
- Teachers and schools are critical but can't do it alone
- Parents aren't 'the problem'
- Home environment, parental engagement and home – school relationships vital
- Long-term sustainable improvements possible with long-term support
- No one organisation can do it alone – need common purpose and shared effort
- Need to scale effective support and continue to build body of evidence

# THANK YOU

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