

# IMPROVING THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF HIGHLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

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# The Smith Family



## VISION

A better future for young Australians in need.

## MISSION

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

## BELIEF

Every child deserves a chance.

## STRUCTURE

National, non-government charity, voluntary Board, 600+ staff

## HISTORY

Established in 1922 by group of businessmen

## SCALE

Support 125,000 children, young people, parents/carers pa in 94 communities

## FINANCES

\$86.8 million in 2014-15

- \$52.5 m from donations, corporate support and bequests
- \$22.6 m from government
- \$2.4 m from recycling commercial operation

# Australia's educational challenge: 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.

## 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.

# *LEARNING FOR LIFE* PROGRAM



# 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
- Career and post-school pathways
- **Work Inspiration**
- Aboriginal girls' programs

## POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- 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 through to the end of tertiary

# ***Learning for Life – key underpinnings***

- Began almost 30 years ago
- Early intervention and long-term approach (Heckman)
- Parental engagement
- High expectations
- Reciprocity and accountability
- ‘Beyond school’ – complements but in addition to school
- Partnerships
- Outcomes focus



# FAMILIES SUPPORTED BY *LEARNING FOR LIFE*





# Learning for Life families



- **34,000** students nationally; 18,000 families; 94 communities
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 18% of **Indigenous** background
- Over half are **single parent**, 6% grandparent/kinship/foster
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 71% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed; 60% haven't completed high school
- 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**

# ***LEARNING FOR LIFE THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL***

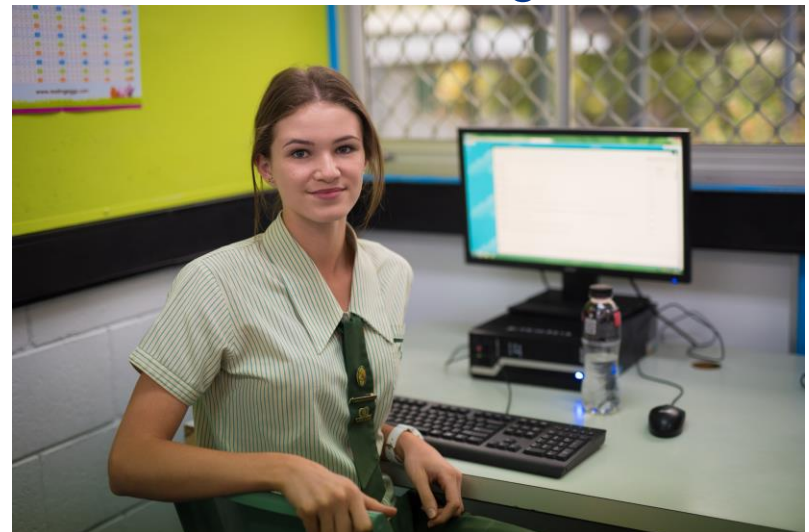


# *Learning for Life* through high school



- Increased focus on helping LfL students (and families) to understand and plan for study, career and post-school options
- Short term programs include:
  - Learning Clubs
  - I-track career mentoring
  - Work Inspiration
  - Experiential career and uni visit days
  - Creative enrichment
- Networks, mentoring, new knowledge and skills, possibilities, goal setting, self-confidence and self-efficacy, work exposure and experience

- On-line mentoring program for students in Years 9 to 11
- Students matched with supportive adult (half from our corporate partners), who provides advice and guidance about workplace, study and career opportunities and planning for them
- Weekly chat sessions for an hour over 18 weeks with trained mentors
- Aims to increase confidence, aspirations and knowledge re post- school transition



# i-track outcomes, 2015 (pre and post)



- Significant increase in % more motivated re school, going to study post-school, knew what school subjects they needed, career they wanted, where to get information re careers, steps to take
- Significant reduction in % who were 'not sure' what they would do when they left school
- More than 3 in 4 students increased their confidence to ask for advice/help from adults

*She would always encourage me to do well. She would motivate me on never giving up even at the hardest of times because 'every no leads me closer to a yes'...she was really inspirational.*

*He helped me with my career options and what I might be interested in. He told me about his career and what he did to reach where he is. He motivated me to do well in my education and we have many things in common. My mentor is the best.*



# OUTCOMES OF LFL STUDENTS





# 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

Longitudinal dataset, unique student ID, admin, demographic and outcomes

# Improved school completion

## The Smith Family's 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.

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

### 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 are in work or study 12 months after leaving the program

Fully engaged

65.8%

Partly engaged

18.4%



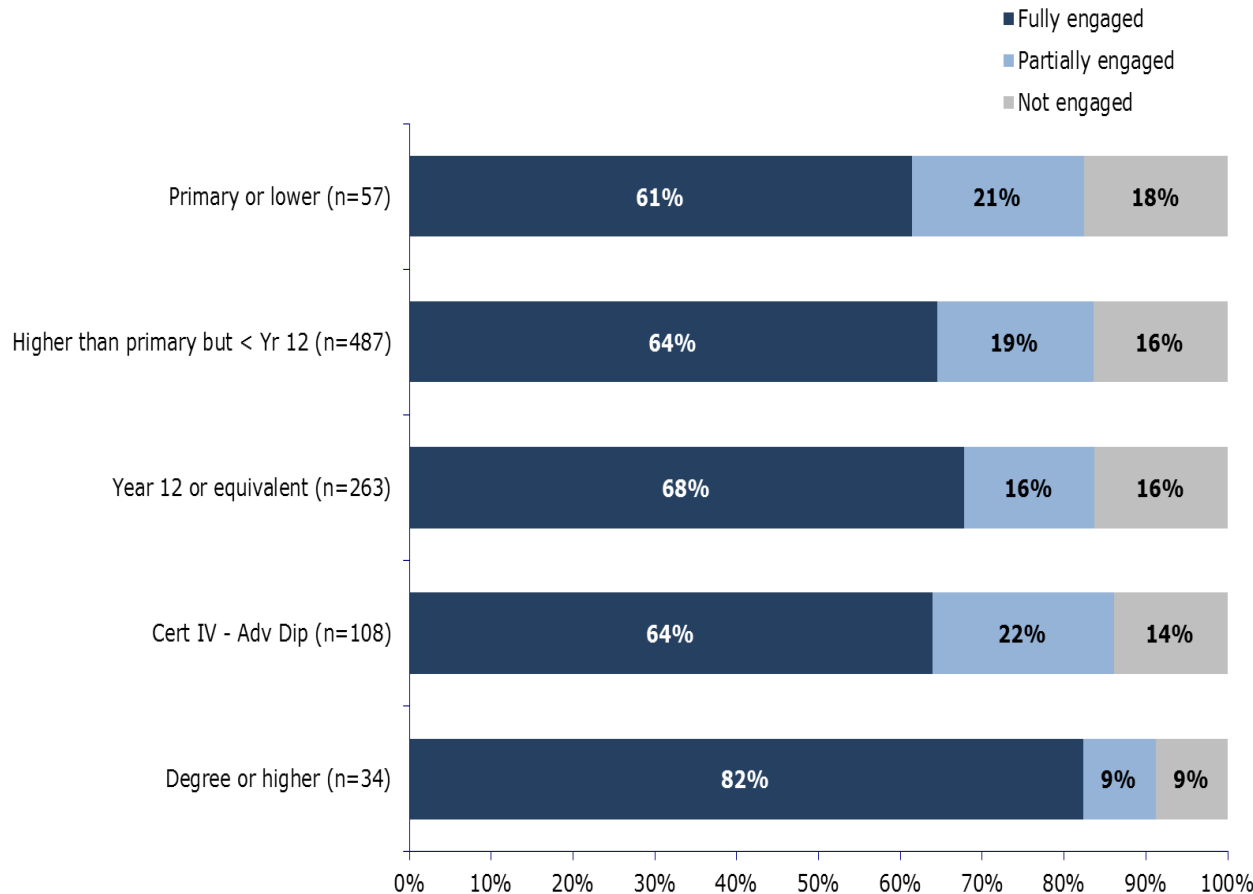
For **Indigenous** young people, **74.2%** were engaged – 54.6% were fully engaged and 19.6% were partially engaged. For both Indigenous and non-Indigenous former students who were not engaged, 80% were actively **seeking employment** and one in six was **volunteering**.

These rates are significantly above national outcomes for similar young people.

# SOME OF WHAT WE'RE LEARNING



# Engagement rate – Parental education

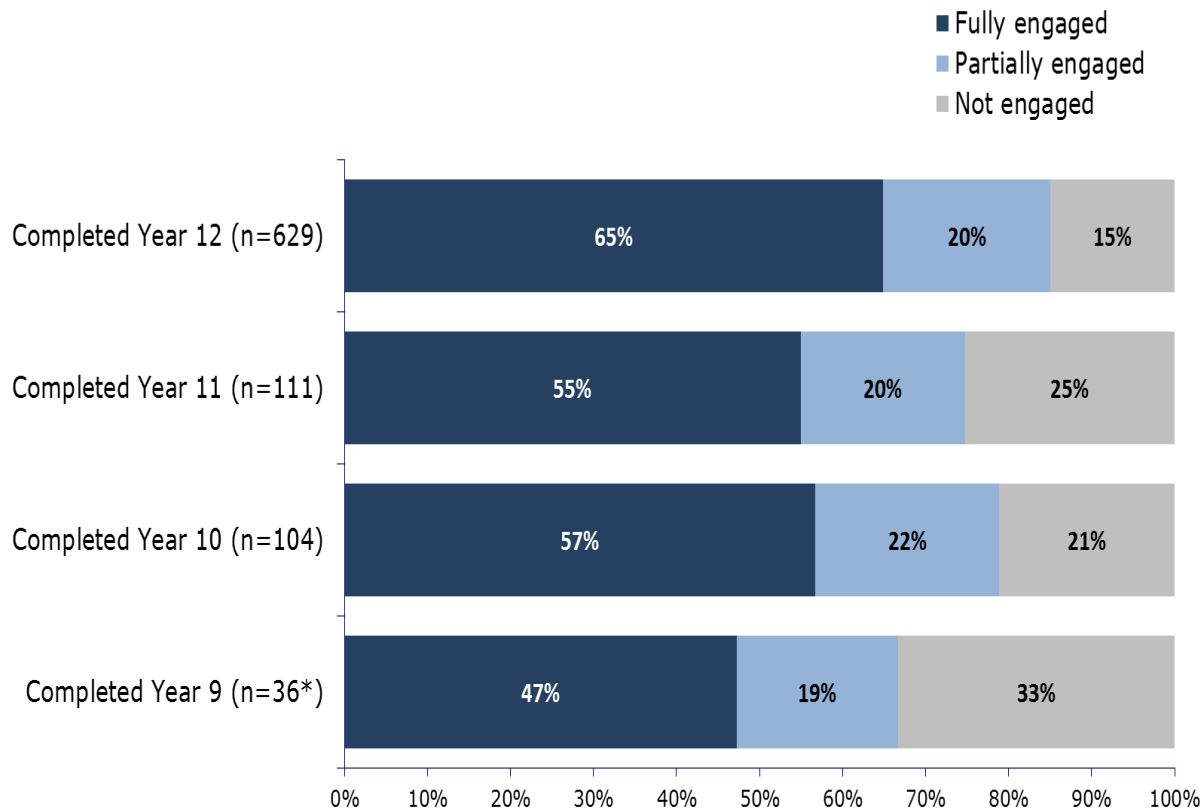


Base: former LfL students for whom parental education data is available (n=949)

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.

# Engagement rate – by highest level of school completed



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

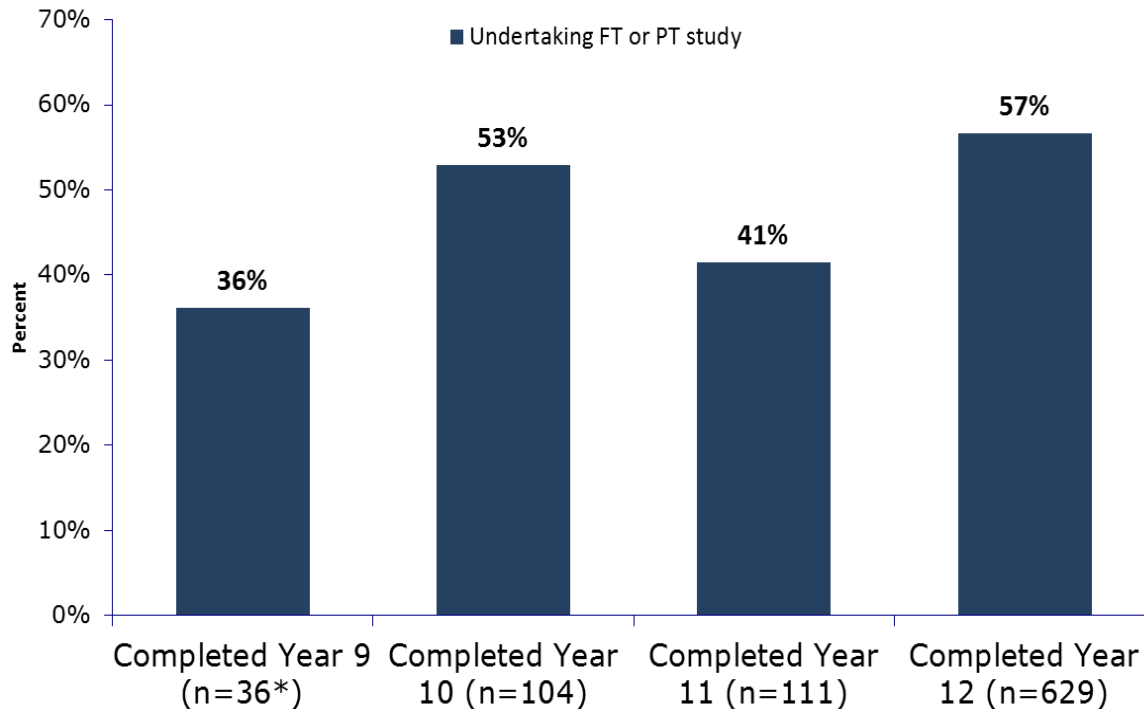
Source: survey data

\*Small sample size - treat with caution

- Stronger 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

# 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 by The Smith Family

# 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
- Stronger achievement rates in English in Year 10 positively associated with completing school

# 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

# *Learning for Life: Good progress...journey continues*



- Evidenced-informed program which has evolved over **30** years
- Early intervention, long-term approach, responsive to changing needs
- Highly targeted
- Reciprocity, parental engagement, high expectations
- Improving educational and employment outcomes of highly disadvantaged young Australians, with **further improvements** possible
  - not all young people on the program are achieving
- Cost effective, involving multiple partnerships and volunteers
- Ongoing analysis of longitudinal data will further enhance evidence base



# QUESTIONS

Further information is available at [www.thesmithfamily.com.au](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au), including a research report on the LfL program

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