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# SUPPORTING STUDENTS FROM DISADVANTAGED BACKGROUNDS TO SUCCEED AT SCHOOL AND BEYOND

July 2018

International Conference on Employer Engagement and Training  
Dr Gillian Considine, The Smith Family Australia

# Early intervention to support economic and social participation



## OUR MISSION

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

- Australia's largest education related charity
- Annually supporting over 150,000 children, young people and their carers
  - All are from financially disadvantaged backgrounds



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# ***LEARNING FOR LIFE*** **PROGRAM**



# ***Learning for Life* scholarship program**

**- supporting over 40,000 children and young people**



**Parent and community engagement and relationship with individual sponsor**

# *Learning for Life* students, circumstances and characteristics

Highly disadvantaged

- 70% - parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed
- 57% - **single parent** families; 6% in grandparent, kin or foster families
- 56% - parents have **not completed Year 12** or equivalent
- 40% - students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 30% - no computer and/or internet connection at home
- 20% - have been at **4 or more schools**
- 20% - **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background

# 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
- Cadetship to Career

## PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy

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



Students can begin on *Learning for Life* scholarship in the first year of school and continue through to tertiary



# 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

## 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

## ENGAGEMENT ADVANCEMENT ATTENDANCE



# ATTENDANCE LIFTS ACHIEVEMENT

Building the evidence base  
to improve student  
outcomes

## Attendance lifts achievement:

Building the evidence base to improve  
student outcomes

The Smith Family Research Report

March 2018



### Executive summary

Australian children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk of poor educational outcomes from their first year of school. This risk increases as they move through school, with lower proportions of these young Australians completing Year 12 and moving into employment or further study post-school, compared to their more advantaged peers.

Poor educational outcomes have costly lifelong impacts on young people and the wider community, given the relationship between education and employment, health, social connectedness and reliance on income support.

Although gaps in educational outcomes are evident early in a child's life, research shows young people who start school behind can subsequently meet key educational outcomes. Students who start school developmentally on track can also fall behind over time.

Improving the life outcomes of disadvantaged young Australians relies on providing targeted and timely support to those most at risk of not achieving educationally. Critical to a more efficient allocation of educational resources is a sophisticated understanding of the early flags for poor educational outcomes that go beyond financial disadvantage alone. This includes indicators of educational vulnerability that emerge as young people move through school.

Analysis of a large nationally unique dataset of disadvantaged students participating on The Smith Family's Learning for Life scholarship program shows that:

- School attendance and school achievement in English or Maths are closely related.
- Changes in student attendance and achievement are relatively common as students move through school.



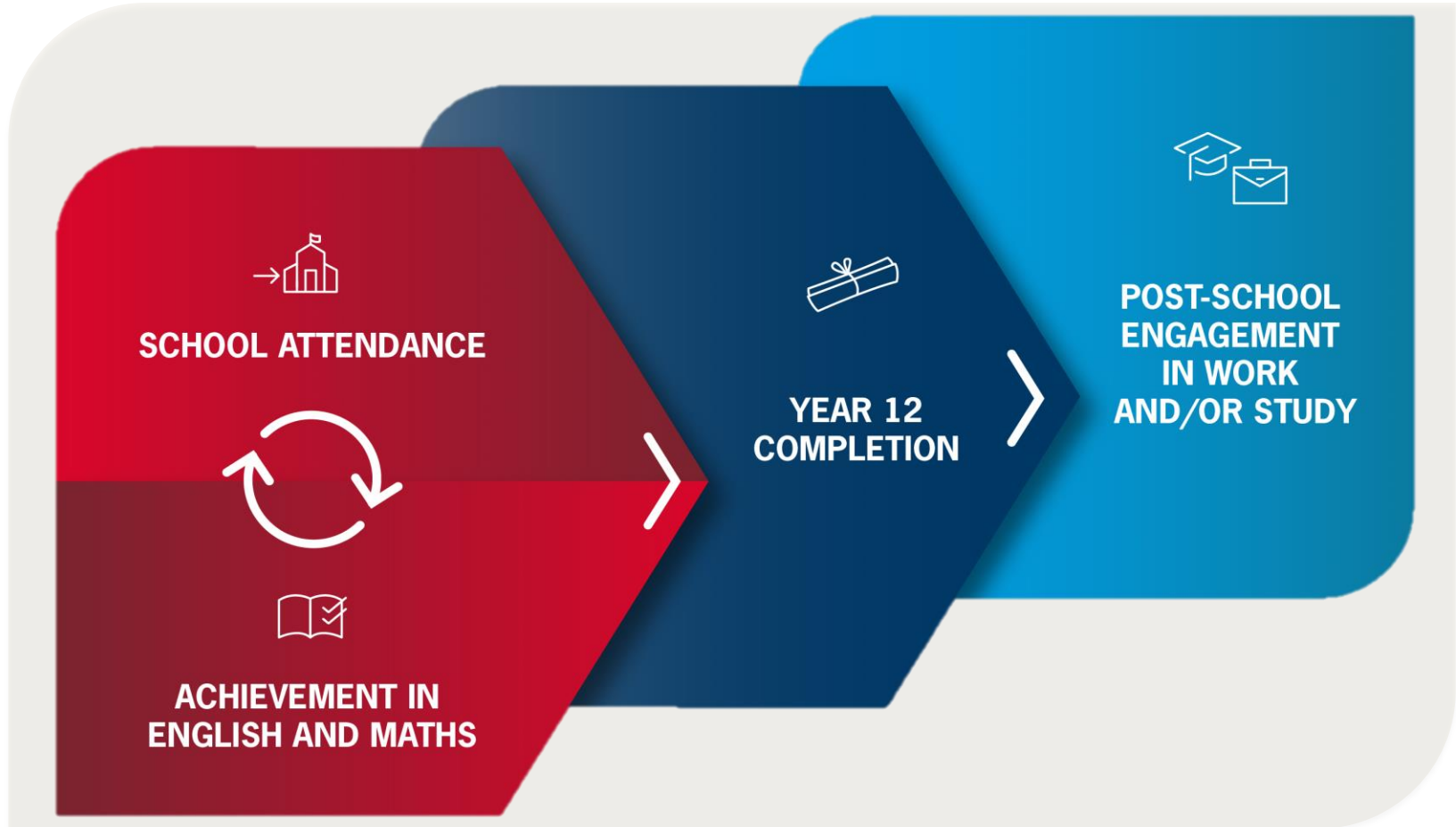
- Attendance and achievement are early indicators of students who are likely to have poor longer-term outcomes, as they help predict school completion and engagement post-school in work or further study.
- Targeted and timely support to improve students' low school attendance and below satisfactory achievement in English and Maths as they move through school is essential.
- Improvements in attendance and achievement are possible and increase the likelihood of students completing school and being in work or study post-school.

There is a significant opportunity to improve the educational performance of Australian school students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Key to improving their educational outcomes are:

- Tracking students' individual progress.



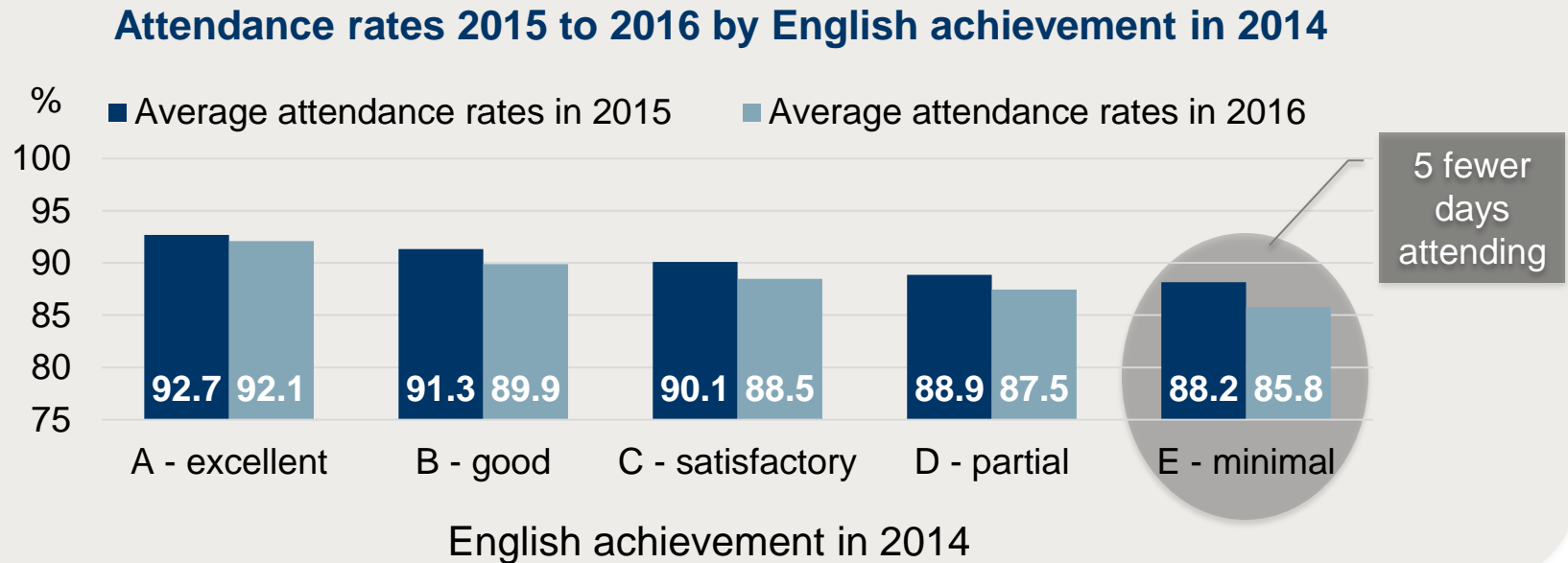
# In summary *Learning for Life* longitudinal data shows:



# 1. SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT & SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



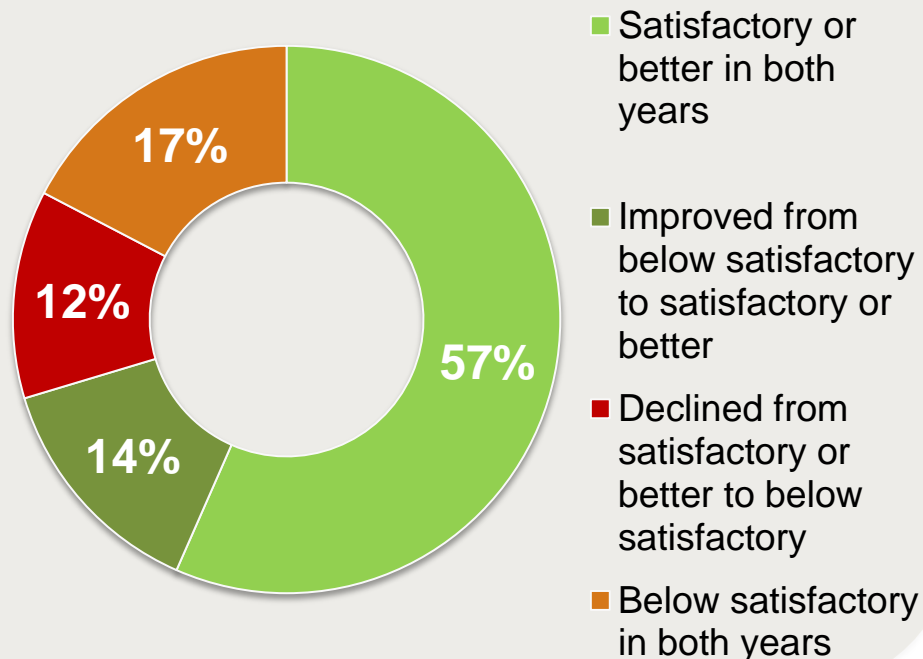
# There is a relationship between English achievement and future school attendance



- Lower English achievement grades in 2014 are a **predictor** of lower attendance in subsequent years.
- **decline** in attendance greatest for students with 'E' grade
- Converse applies - attendance **predicts** future achievement
- Same relationships apply for maths

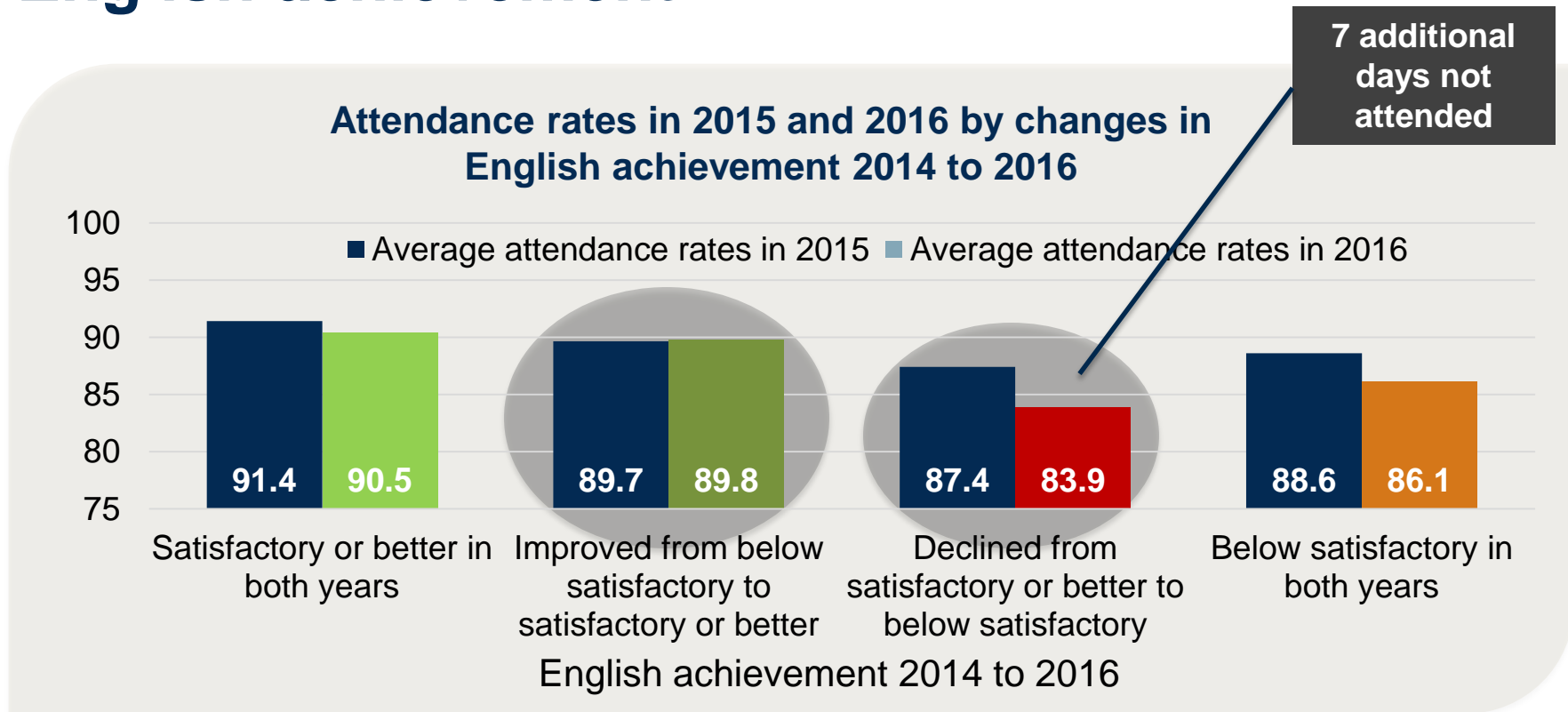
# English achievement over time is satisfactory for majority but change is common

## Changes in English achievement 2014 – 2016 (%)



- Majority had satisfactory or better achievement in 2014 and 2016
- 1 in 4 students experienced movement ↑ or ↓
- Improvements are possible
- Timely support to arrest ↓
- Need ongoing monitoring through school

# There is a relationship between attendance over time and changes in English achievement



- Students whose English achievement ↑ had stable attendance
- Students whose English achievement ↓ had large drop in attendance

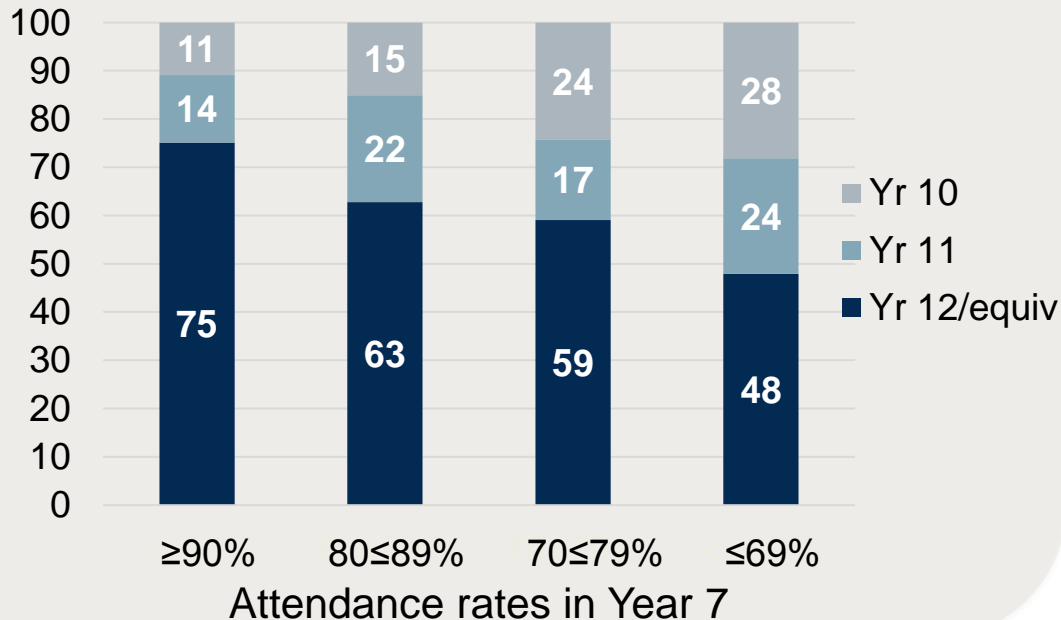
## 2. SCHOOL COMPLETION & ATTENDANCE (& ACHIEVEMENT)





# Attendance rates in Year 7 are related to whether or not a student completes school

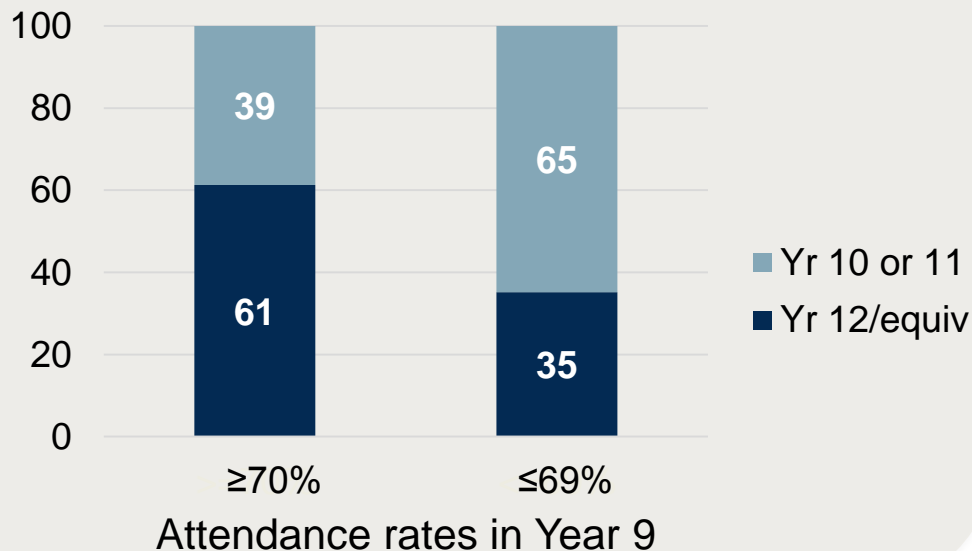
Highest level of school completed 2014-2016 by attendance rates in Year 7



- Uses *LfL* 2014 – 2016 school completion data
- Students with high attendance in Year 7 were much more likely to complete Year 12, cf students with low attendance (75% cf 48%)

# 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  
≤69% attendance in Year 7**



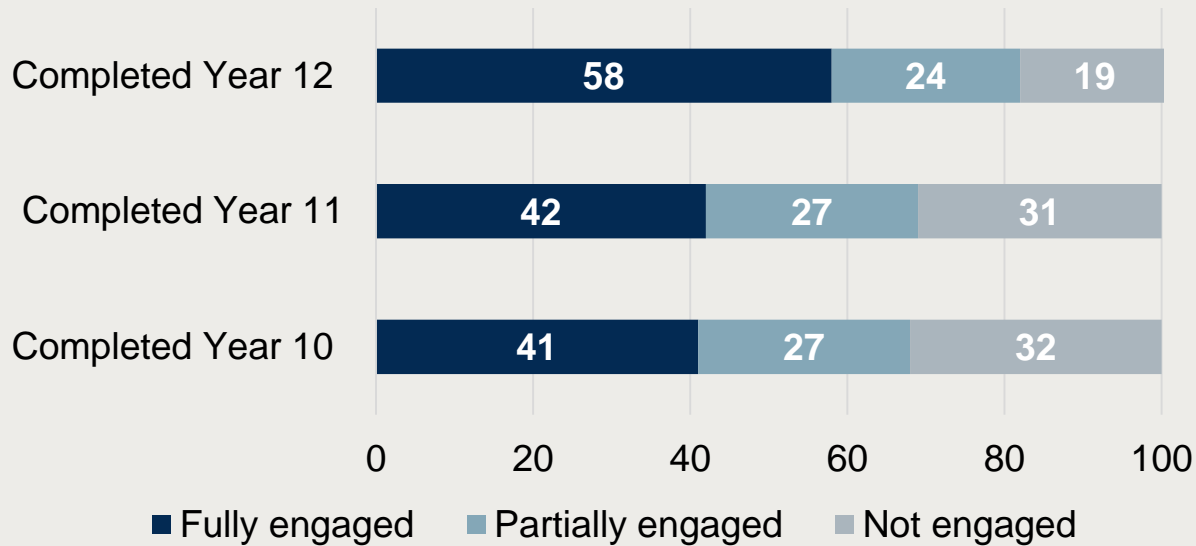
- 6 in 10 students who had very low attendance in Year 7 but improved their attendance Year 9, completed Year 12 cf 35% of students who had very low attendance in both Years 7 and 9

# 3. POST-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT IN WORK AND/OR STUDY



# There is a strong relationship between completing Year 12 and post-school engagement in work and/or study

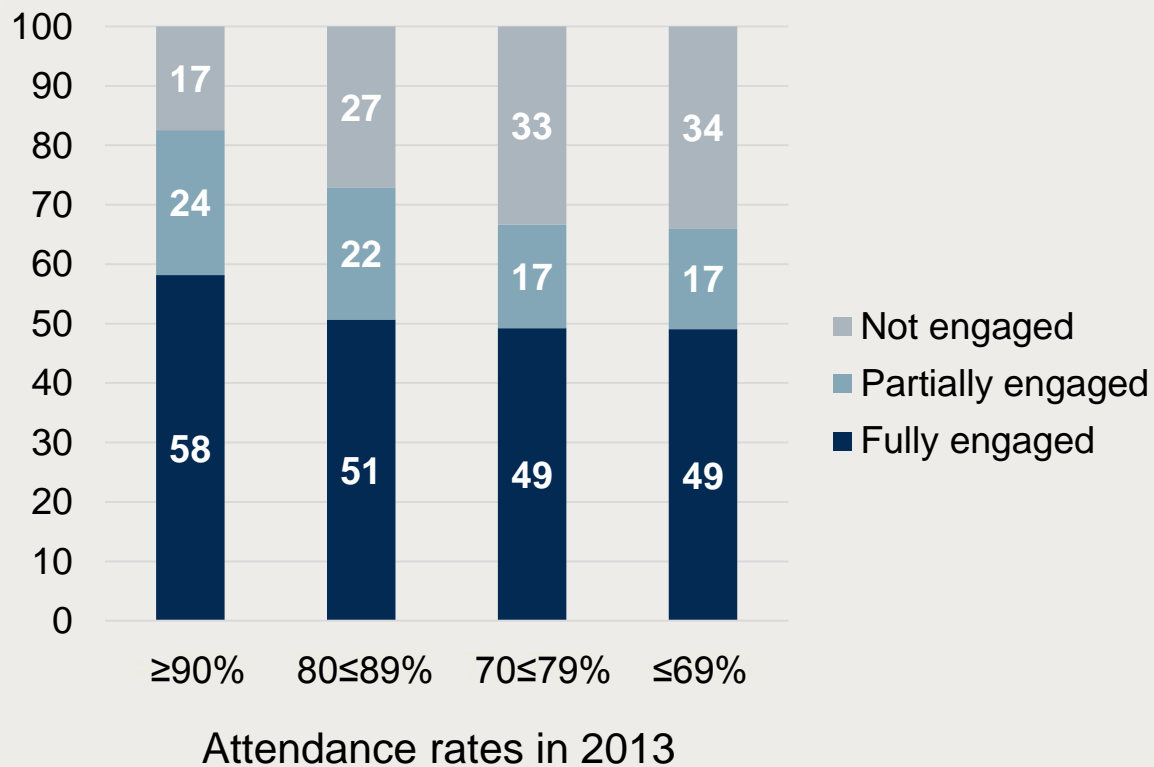
Engagement rates in 2017 by highest level of school completed



- 82% of students who completed Year 12 were in work and/or study post school cf < 70% of those who only completed Year 10 or Year 11

# Post-school engagement in work and/or study is related to school attendance

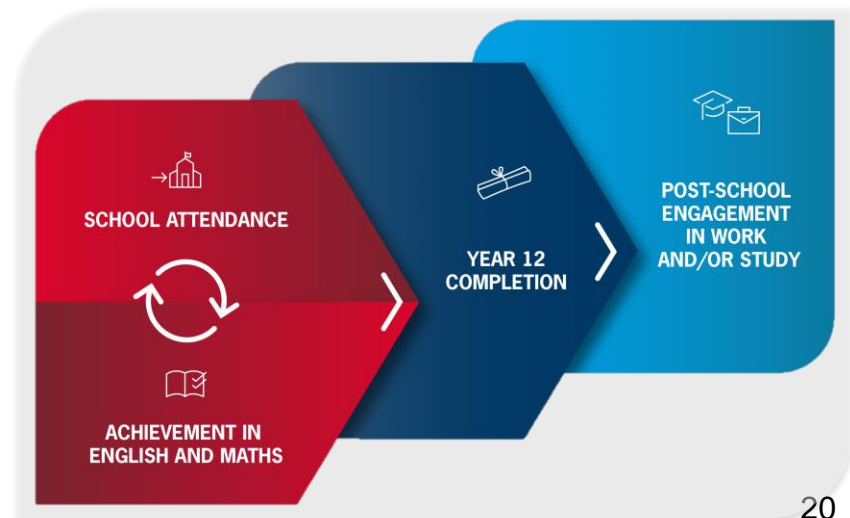
2017 Engagement rates by 2013 attendance rates



- 82% of students who had high attendance rates during high school were in work and/or study post-school of 66% of those with very low attendance rates
- High attenders were also more likely to be fully engaged

# Summary

- School **attendance** and school **achievement** in English or Maths are closely related
- **Changes** in student attendance and achievement are relatively common as students move through school
- Attendance and achievement are **early indicators** of students who are likely to have poor longer-term outcomes, as they help **predict** school completion and engagement post-school in work and/or further study
- **Improvements** in attendance and achievement **are possible** and increase the **likelihood** of students **completing school** and being in **work and/or study** post-school





# Policy and practice implications



- Achievement and attendance are **indicators of risk**. They can be used to identify students needing additional support at particular times as they move through school.
- **Targeted** and **timely** support to improve students' **low** school **attendance** and below satisfactory **achievement** in English and Maths as they move through school is essential.
- Support for high attenders and achievers should focus on **widening learning experiences**, sense of possibilities and expanding networks.
- Support students at risk of early school leaving eg through new **Early School Leavers pilot initiative**.
  - Career coaching, setting goals, skills development including with employers
- **Unique Student Identifier** needed for all Australian students.



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