

IMPROVING THE EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF HIGHLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

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The Smith Family



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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

SCALE

125,000 children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals

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



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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**
(James Heckman)



Learning for Life scholarship students can begin in the 1st year of school and continue through to the end of tertiary

FAMILIES SUPPORTED BY *LEARNING FOR LIFE*



Learning for Life families



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- **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/other
- 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 DATA – COLLECTION, LINKAGE & ANALYSIS

Measures of effectiveness

**LONGER-TERM
OUTCOMES**



**SHORT-TERM
OUTCOMES**



PROGRAMS
Build skills &
knowledge &
influence
attitudes &
behaviours

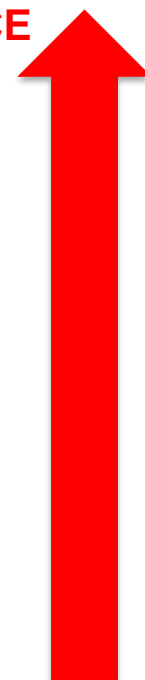
- Young people are in education, training, and/or work
- Young people complete Yr 12 or equivalent
- Young people stay engaged with learning

ENGAGEMENT

**ADVANCEMENT
ATTENDANCE**

-
- Improved literacy and numeracy
 - Improved confidence (self-efficacy)
 - Improved motivation and aspiration
 - Enhanced networks and relationships
 - Improved knowledge/understanding
 - Improved or sustained school attendance
-

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



Unique longitudinal data set



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- 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*
- Demographics - primary carers
 - Age, gender, Indigenous background
 - Main language spoken
 - Highest education level
 - Labour market status
 - Studying status
 - Role relative to scholarship child

Unique longitudinal data set...



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- Educational outcomes - students
 - School attendance
 - Achievement, English & maths
 - Year 12 or equivalent completion
 - Post-school engagement, work, education and/or training
 - Highest year level completed
 - Qualification in which currently enrolled
 - *Tertiary scholarship – qualification attainment*
- Peer comparisons - school level*
 - Demographics
 - Average attendance rates
- National comparisons – student/young person level^
 - Demographics
 - Average attendance rates

* data provided by ACARA & state departments of education

^ where is available by SES, from various government reports (e.g. RoGS, COAG)

ARC Linkage Grant

Institute of Social Science Research, UQ
Centre for Children and Young People, SCU



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Cross-sectional survey

- Random subsample of 6,000 Year 5 to 12 LfL students and their parents/carers (2015)
 - educational factors/issues
 - non-cognitive skills
 - future aspirations

In-depth interviews

- 32 *Learning for Life* matched student and primary carer, low & high attenders
 - school & family/student relationships
 - access to resources
 - factors affecting engagement
 - post-school plans

Linked with longitudinal data set

SOME OF WHAT WE'RE LEARNING

Increased school attendance

The Smith Family's average attendance rates, 2014



91.3%

For *Learning for Life* primary school
students



86.9%

For *Learning for Life*
secondary school
students



87.3%

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

- There has been a steady year on year improvement for all three rates since 2012

Improved school completion



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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

Attendance & Year 12 completion



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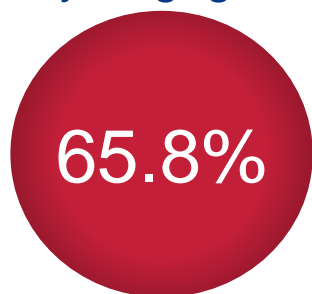
Factors contributing to variations in attendance & completion:

- Family/parent factors
 - Family type
 - Parent/carer employment
 - Parent/carer education level
- Student achievement
- *Health (associated with student attendance, not yet tested against completion)*

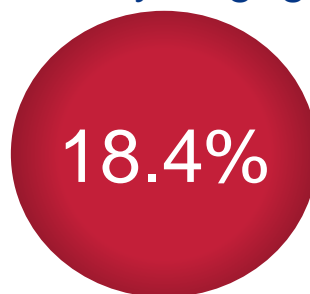
Successful post school transitions

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

Fully engaged



Partially engaged



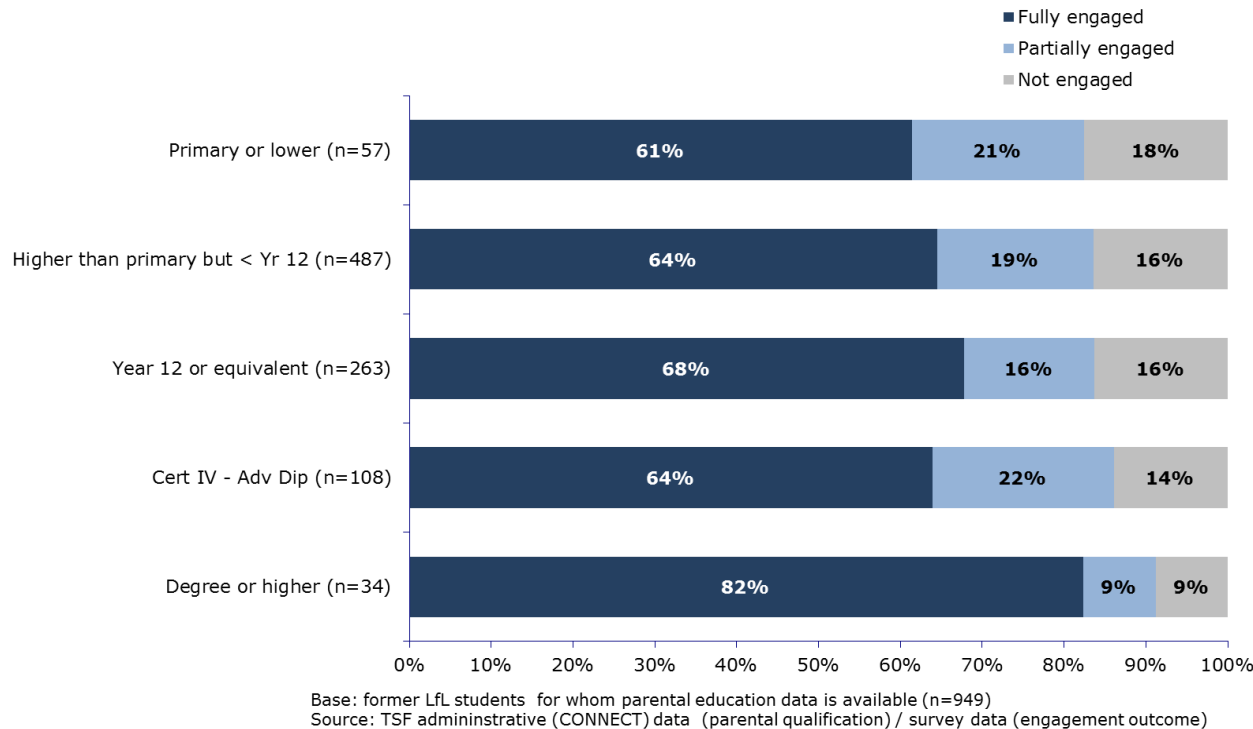
For **Indigenous** young people, **74.2%** were engaged – 54.6% were fully engaged and 19.6% were partially engaged

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

Engagement rate – Parental education



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- Parent/carer education has little influence on post-school engagement rate of LfL students except if parent has a degree

Early school leavers

Reasons for leaving early – multiple and complex

Years 9 to 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
- } opportunity for early intervention by The Smith Family
- 12 months after leaving, >1:5 regret their decision

HOW ARE WE USING WHAT WE'RE LEARNING?

Using data to improve outcomes



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Data, evaluation and research are driving program refinements and continuous improvement, for eg:

- More **tailored support** (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

Also driving:

- Advocacy strategy

Learning for Life: Good progress...journey continues

- Evidenced-informed program - 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
 - **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

Further information is available at www.thesmithfamily.com.au, including a research report on the LfL program

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