

# IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF DISADVANTAGED YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

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The Smith Family



# The Smith Family



## OUR VISION

A better future for young Australians in need.

## OUR MISSION

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

## OUR BELIEF

Every child deserves a chance.

## OUR SIZE

National organisation

Working with 90+ communities across all states and territories.

Support 150,000+ disadvantaged children, young people and their carers each year.



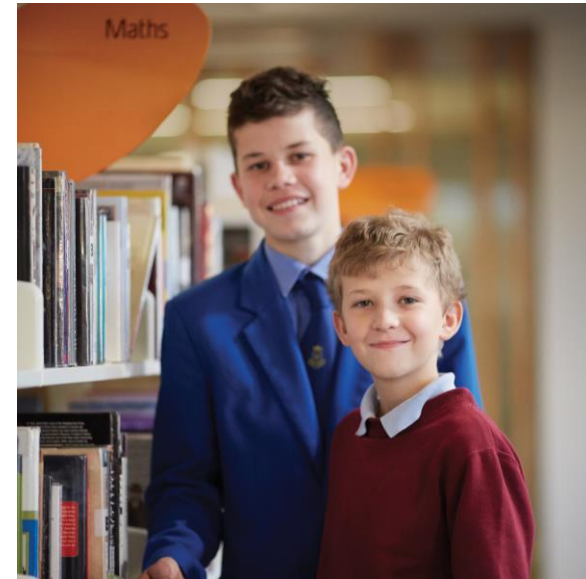
*everyone's family*

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



# Principles of *Learning for Life*

- **Early intervention** and **long-term** support
- **Parental engagement** in their child's learning
- **High expectations** for all students
- **Reciprocity** and accountability
- A '**beyond school**' approach – complementing, but in addition to what happens in school
- Multiple **partnerships** – families, schools, communities, business, governments
- **Outcomes** focus



# Learning for Life scholarship



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

# *Learning for Life* families are highly disadvantaged



- **40,000+** students nationally
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 1 in 5 **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 70% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed
- 56% of parents have not completed Year 12 or equivalent
- Over half are **single parent**; 6% in grandparent, kin or foster families
- 20% of students have been at **4 or more schools** and 1 in 20 at 6 or more schools
- 30% do not have a **home computer** and/or **internet connection** at home
- Over half of our secondary and tertiary students have been on LfL for **6 or more years**

# OUR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION APPROACH



# Our evaluation approach

1. A **'theory of change'**
  - Emphasises what we want to *achieve* rather than what we want to *do*
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

- **Number** of students involved
- Unique **student identifier**
- All are from **disadvantaged** backgrounds
- **Longitudinal** nature of our 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

# OUR 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

## 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

Using  
Outcomes  
Based  
Accountability

## 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

## Three longer-term outcomes we are seeking to achieve with *LfL* students.

1. Improve **school attendance** over time to 90% (Attendance Rate).
2. Increase proportion of students who advance to **Year 12** (Advancement Rate).
3. Increase proportion of students engaged in **employment and further education** 12 months after they leave the program (Engagement Rate).

These measures were chosen because:

- **Research** shows their importance for young people's economic and social participation and overall wellbeing.
- They are **policy relevant**, with Council of Australian Governments (COAG), tracking progress on them for all young Australians.
- They are **directly relevant** to our program delivery.

# 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:

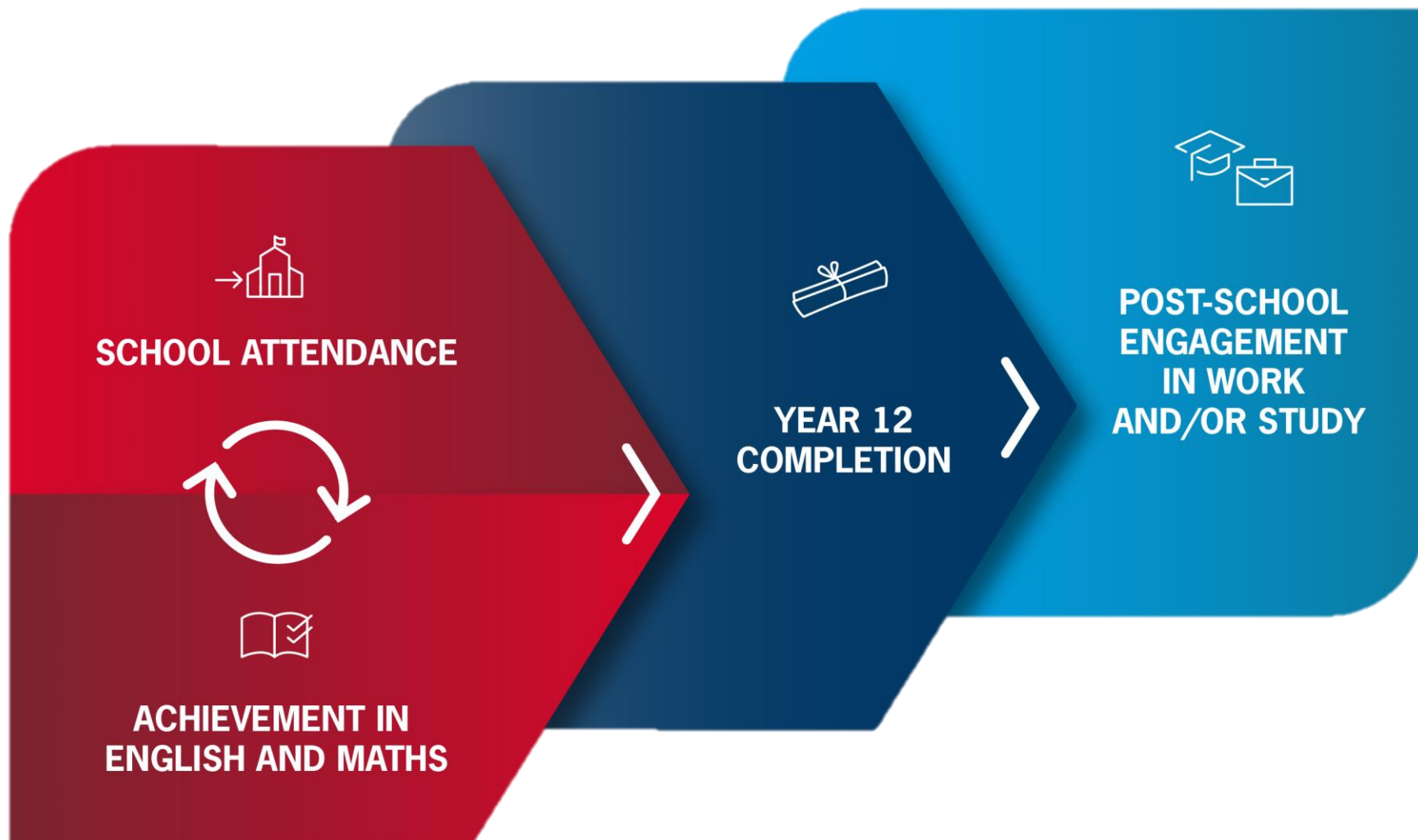
- Tracking students' individual progress.

# New research report

- Data rich report focussed on educational outcomes of financially disadvantaged young people
- Uses *LfL* educational outcomes data collected over 7 years from 30,000 students  
⇒ new knowledge
- Range of practice and policy implications  
⇒ improve program and as basis for public policy advocacy
- Relevant for parents, schools, Depts of Ed, NGOs, philanthropic organisations etc



# *LfL* longitudinal data shows relationships between key educational outcomes



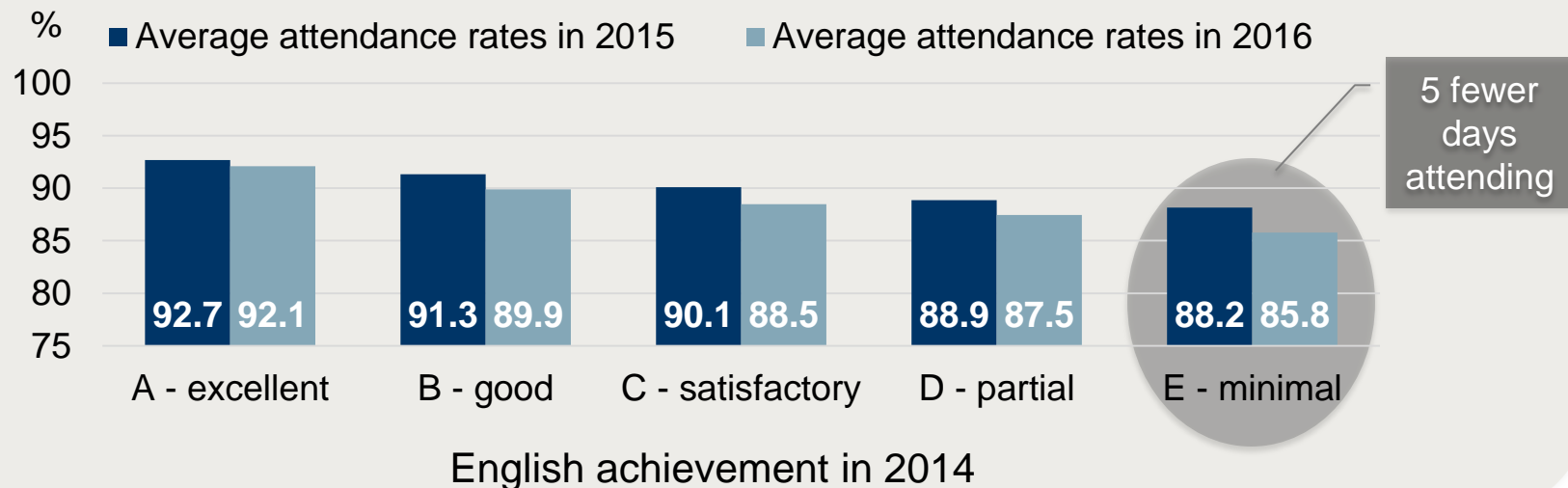


# 1. SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT & SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



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

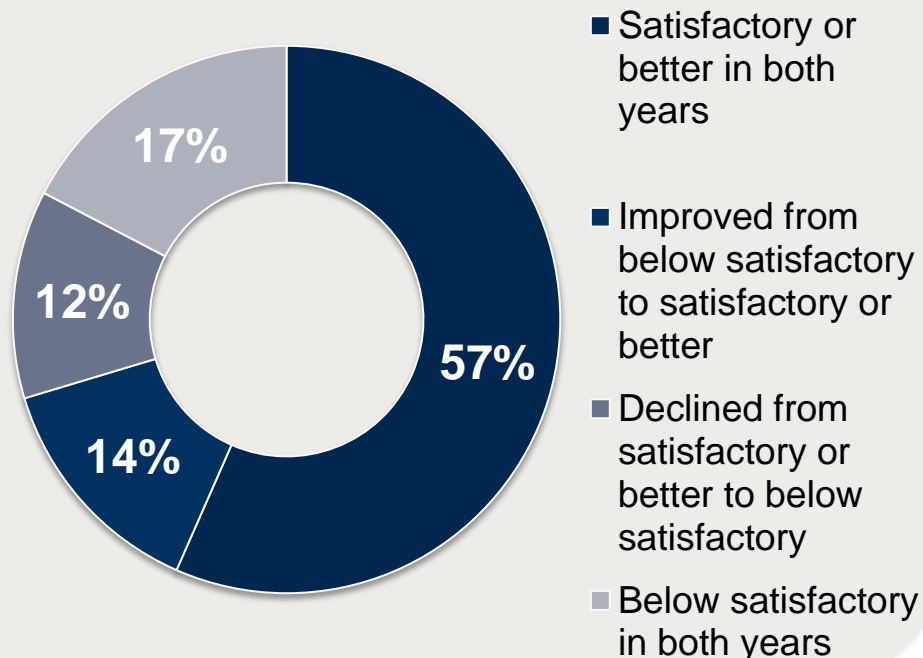
Attendance rates 2015 to 2016 by English achievement in 2014



- Lower English achievement grades in 2014 are a **predictor** of lower attendance in subsequent years
- ↓ 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 (%)



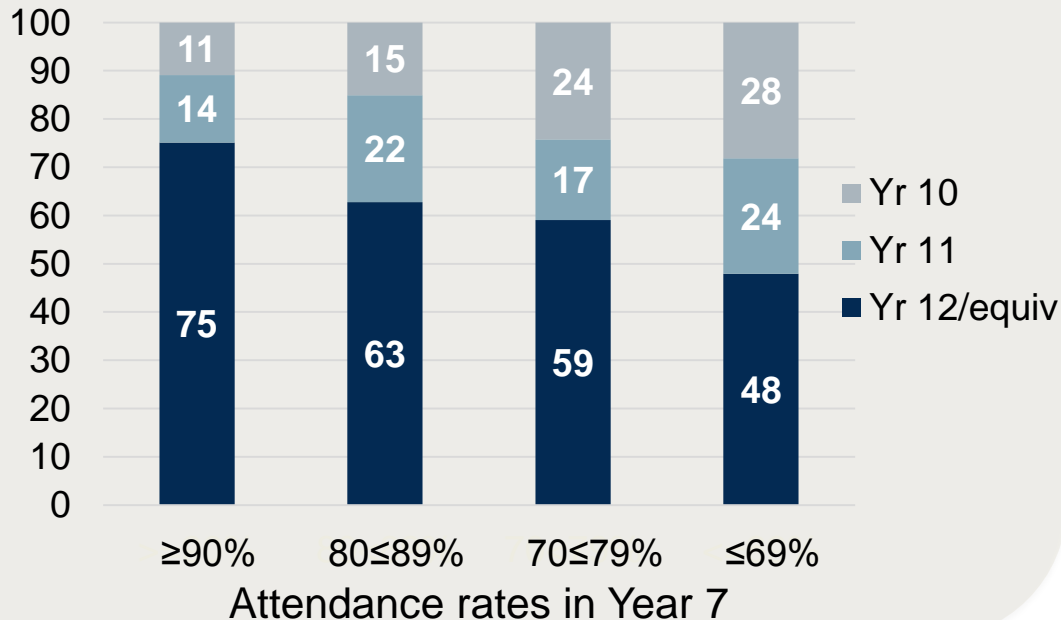
- Majority had satisfactory or better achievement in 2014 and 2016
- 1 in 4 students experienced movement ↑ or ↓
- Improvements are possible
- Timely support to arrest ↓
- Need ongoing monitoring through school

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



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

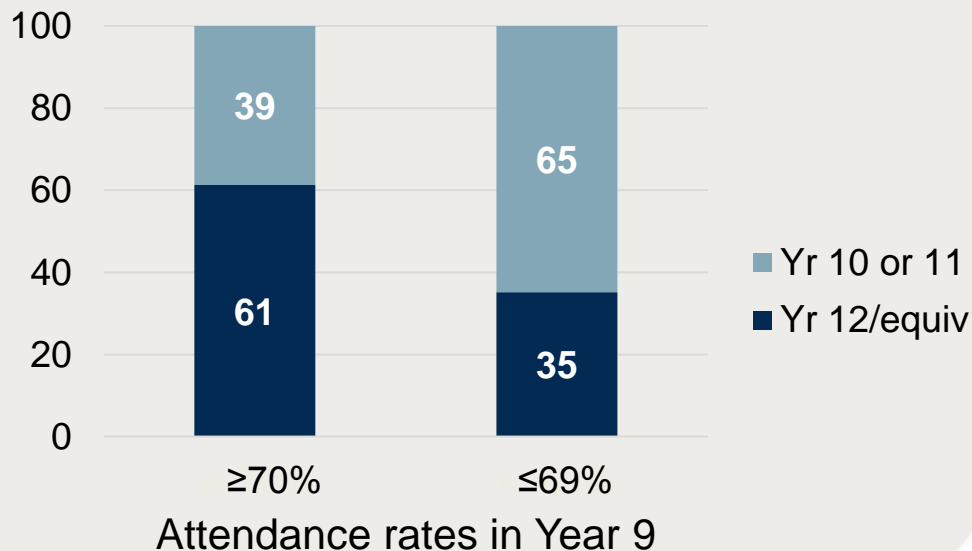
Highest level of school completed 2014-2016 by attendance rates in Year 7



- 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

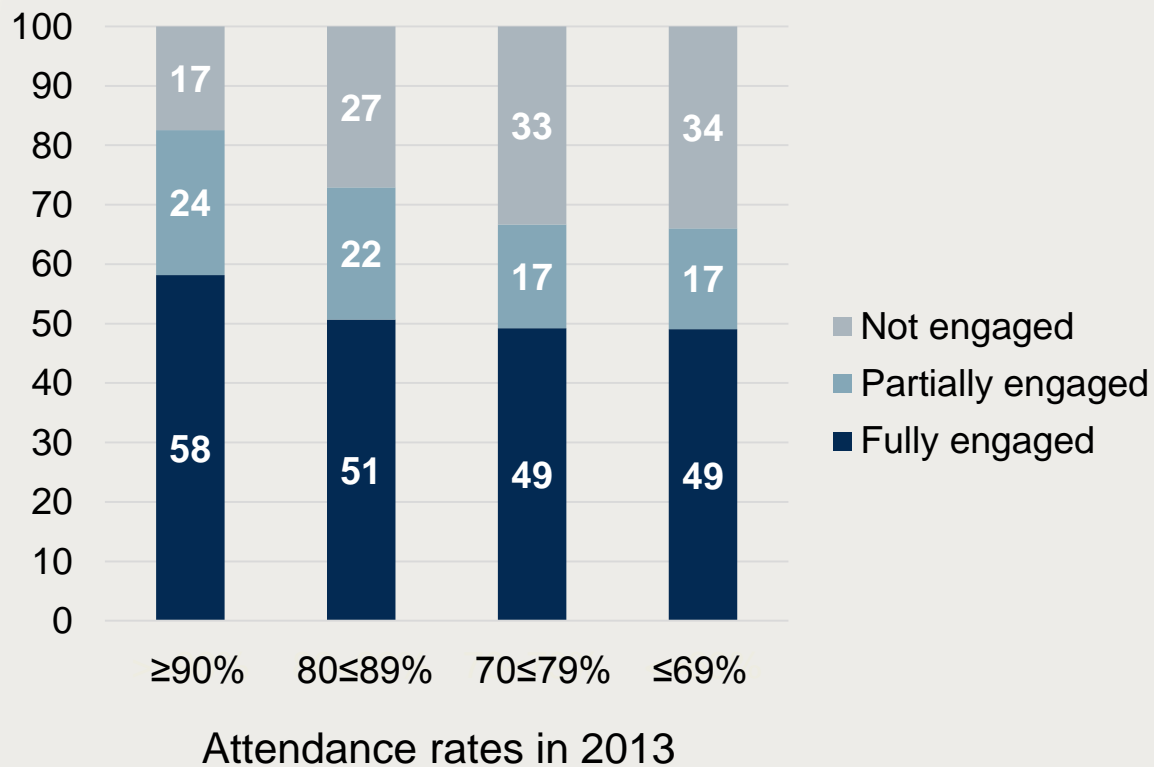
# 3. POST-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT IN WORK AND/OR STUDY





# 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

# Policy and practice implications



- Achievement and attendance are **indicators of risk** and can be used to **identify students** needing additional support 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
- **Improvements** in attendance and achievement **are possible** and increase the **likelihood** of students **completing school** and being in **work and/or study** post-school
- 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. Includes career coaching, setting goals, skills development including with employers
- **Unique Student Identifier** needed for all Australian students

# Conclusion

- There is significant opportunity to improve Australia's educational performance, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Highly disadvantaged students can achieve educationally and be involved in work or study post-school
- This research contributes to the evidence base to ensure more students succeed
  - provides more sophisticated and nuanced understanding
  - contributes to evolution of *LfL* but goes well beyond this by strengthening the educational evidence base
- Wherever possible work in the outcomes space should benefit program participants and help inform the work of others.





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