



The Smith Family  
everyone's family

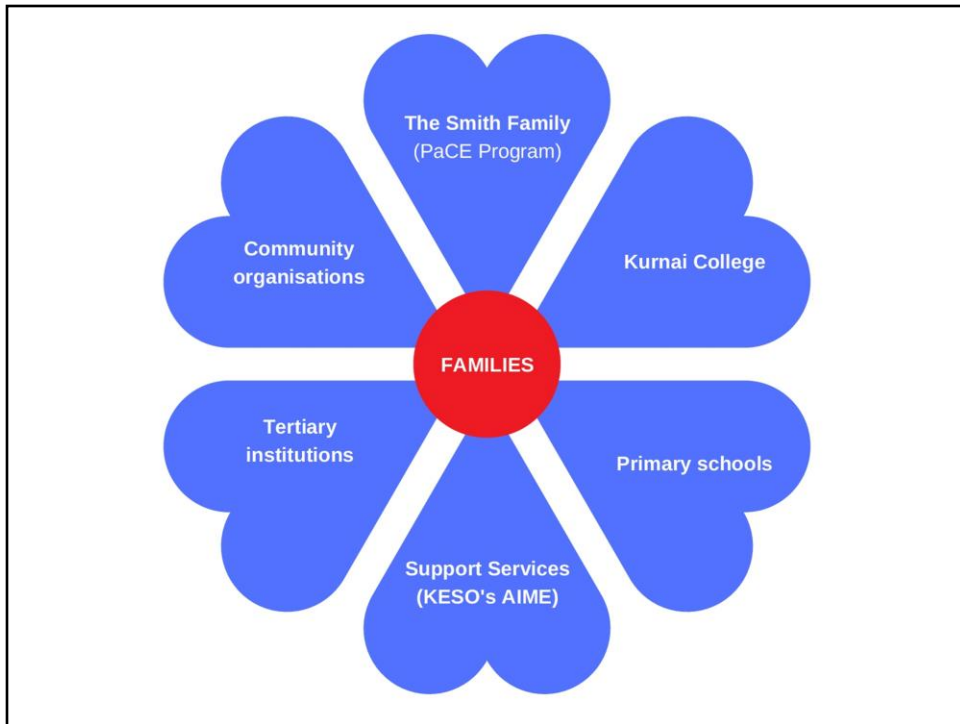
# SUPPORTING THE EDUCATION OF INDIGENOUS FAMILIES THROUGH INNOVATIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The Smith Family's Parental and Community Engagement Program funded by the Federal Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy



I am cooking Johnny Cakes for Federation University students

There is an identified need to support and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their children in Morwell and Churchill as they progress through primary and secondary school, fostering development of their aspirations to progress to Year 12 and beyond. The Smith Family's Parental and Community Engagement Program (PaCE) funded by the Federal Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) has been building on parental strengths to empower parents to support their children and improve educational outcomes in Morwell and Churchill.



The purpose of the Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program is to increase the enrolment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students from primary school to junior secondary school, junior to senior secondary and see improved attendance and retention rates of secondary school students. The aim is to improve the knowledge base of secondary students and their parents and carers around career pathways and education support options. This is achieved through strategic and supportive partnerships as demonstrated on the diagram.

## Strategic Outcomes



- *90% Attendance*
- *Advancement to Year 12*
- *Post School Engagement*
- Increased enrolment rate of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children to secondary school and beyond
- Parental engagement to see improved longer term retention, attendance and advancement rates among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students
- Building and maintaining key partnerships with education, government and community stakeholders
- Programs/workshops and other engagement opportunities
- Referrals to key support services

These strategic outcomes are achieved through the delivery of transition workshops for families (primary to secondary and junior secondary to senior secondary), facilitating school and community events and supporting parents to attend planned school and community activities. These workshops and events are enabled through the development and maintenance of strategic partnerships with key stakeholders and referrals to partner organisations and agencies to ensure ongoing support services are in place. The strategic outcomes of the funded Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program align with The Smith Family's KPIs of attendance, advancement and engagement.

## Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program, Morwell



- Based at Kurnai College (Morwell campus)  
*Drop in place for school staff,  
parents, students & community*
- Part of The Smith Family Team  
*600 Learning for Life Scholarships for  
families in this community (7,000 for Victoria and  
33,000 Nationally)*
- Plan, invite, and run a range of Parent  
Engagement events

Christine Johnson is employed by The Smith Family to work in Morwell and Churchill on the Parental and Community Engagement Program (PaCE) funded by the Federal Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS). The outcomes of Christine's work and her targeted engagement strategies has ensured that the program is successfully building capacity among families and data has shown positive gains in the areas of attendance and retention. Based at Kurnai College in Morwell, Christine is able to ensure parents and families build their comfort level in visiting the school and engaging with school staff.

## Parent Engagement events



Parent	Engagement Events
Transition Events targeting Grade 6 and Year 10 parents	NAIDOC & Reconciliation Events
Guys Great Fun Day	Parent Information sessions for AIME & RMIT "I Belong"
Apology Day	Parent training in the school portal- <i>Compass</i>
Financial Literacy & Cyberbullying workshops	Tech Pack computer training
Graduation Celebrations	Christmas and Easter Celebrations

Currently, there are 55 families that Christine works with and these families are engaged with and supported on a regular basis. Key engagement strategies and activities include delivering a series of school transition and engagement opportunities for parents and carers with the aim of improving education participation and attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. The targeted demographic locale is Morwell and Churchill and many of these families have limited resources to be able to attend events. Christine has actively supported participation by collecting parents in her vehicle and by engaging through home visits.

## The Guy's Great Fun Day – 19 attended



The Guy's Great Fun Day, held on Saturday November 19, was aimed at Koorie boys and their fathers, uncles and grandfathers. The guys bonded over a quiz, laser tag, mini golf and a BBQ. There was also a range of targeted information and resources available around education and training. In all, 19 guys attended and this was a very successful engagement strategy. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the guys wanting to make this a regular event. Active discussions around the importance of engaging with schools and the importance of educational advancement were taken on board, with all the guys contributing and showing positive interest.

**A parent who attended the Guy's Great Fun Day says:**



*“The information and support given to us has been great. It was a little overwhelming at first but we feel we are starting the school year with everything we need. Just feeling part of the school community has been very valuable. We hope that we can do this again next year. Thanks.”*



## Apology Day 2017



Apology Day 2017, at the Hands on Learning Centre, Kurnai College. 80 students, families and community members attended.





A key element to the success of the engagement strategies is the strong and mutually supportive relationship with Kurnai College. Christine delivers workshops around Cross Cultural understanding to Kurnai College staff across all four of their campuses. These workshops are positively received, valued and provide a greater understanding of the local Gunai Kurnai Culture. This enables the staff to respectfully deliver their curriculum to Koorie students and to better support their relationship with their parents and families.



## Strong Partnership with Kurnai College



This partnership is pivotal to the success of our programs. Kurnai College supports The Smith Family's Parental and Community Engagement work by providing a venue, resources and facilitators.

*"Your encouragement, enthusiasm and the knowledge you have shared has been an asset to our college. The professional development of our staff, the coordination of events for our students and our learning community, and the information sessions have been a tremendous value".*

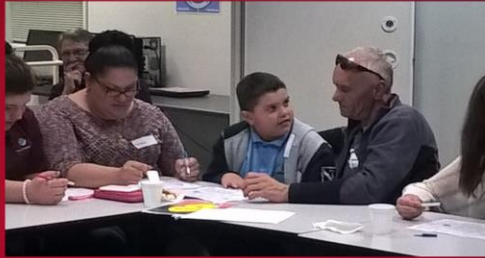
- College Principal Anthony Rodaughan

Working closely with the Kurnai College Leadership Team, Year Level Coordinators, Koorie Education Support Staff, and KESO's has enabled the ability to share information and data when needed. This has become a two way partnership as common goals of attendance, advancement and engagement are worked towards. Kurnai College is aware of the importance of ATSI students identifying their Aboriginality, and will be implementing a Cultural Profile for each student in 2017. All staff at Kurnai have undertaken Cross Cultural Understanding Training with Christine and this has led to an increase in interest with the local Indigenous Culture



Christine works with local Koorie families to support the transition of their children from primary school to secondary school and from junior secondary to senior secondary. This focuses on two critical stages; Year 6 to Year 7 and Year 10 to Years 11 and 12. An ongoing challenge for the project has been how and when to best engage with our families. and to encourage attendance to events such as 'meet and greet' within the school.

## Transition to Secondary School 25 students and families attended



The aim of the transition events is to improve education participation and attainment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and families. Transition events are held at the school to encourage parents to feel more comfortable in a school setting. Touring the school and meeting with school staff enables families to relate to and develop an understanding of the process of their children's education. These events are successful because all family members are included and it is a fun night with language games, prizes and lots of delicious food. Three new enrolments for VCE have occurred due to the success of a recent transition event.

## Building capacity – Tech Pack Program



To engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, build their capacity and confidence around their children's education through increased attendance at parent/teacher interviews and school and community events a number of strategically delivered programs are offered. One such program offered through The Smith Family is Tech Pack which gives the participating family a computer, training and Internet connection for a year. The outcomes of the Tech Pack program include:

- **Outcome 1:** Participants increased their use of computers and the internet
- **Outcome 2:** Participants' children use the computer for school related purposes
- **Outcome 3:** Participants improved their skills and confidence using computers and the internet

Parents are then able to access Compass, the school portal and assist their children with homework and assignments.

# Results



## Customize Your Order

Build a Cake Option and Pensioner discounts are also available (proof will need to be displayed).

Morwell,  
Victoria

## Crysstal Lea Quality Cakes

BIRTHDAYS

SPECIAL

OCCASIONS

WORK

FUNCTIONS

CHRISTMAS

PARTY

OR YOU JUST LOVE CAKE!!!!

Whatever the reason,

You're only a message away !!



## CAKE MENU

- Butter Cake
- Chocolate Cake
- Sponge Cake
- Rich Mud Choc
- Banana Cake
- Black Forest



This Tech Pack participant had little computer or Internet skills prior to the program. After participating and completing the Tech Pack training sessions, she was able to develop this brochure.



## Compass Workshops



Compass is the school portal and many families on The Smith Family's Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program had neither the technology nor skills to navigate Compass and keep up to date with their child's progress. Compass workshops build capacity around using the school portal and ensures parents, carers and families are further engaged and supportive around their children's education progression.



## Parent feedback from the workshop



*"I would like to thank you so much for holding the Compass Workshop. I have struggled with Compass for the last year trying to work out Tegan's reports."*

*"Holding this Workshop has made things so much clearer and easier. I really hope that these workshops continue as it is always assumed that we know the system when this is not right."*

*"Keep up the fantastic work , Christine. Having you as the PaCE Worker is helping me out so much ore than you or The Smith Family realise."*

## Journey to Big School



The Journey to Big School, is a community model, working with primary schools, early childhood services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support children's school readiness and their effective transition to formal schooling. This project redresses the causes behind poor child readiness as a strategy to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children attend and engage successfully with formal schooling at the point of entry, setting a course for continued engagement and positive educational outcomes.

## Partnerships with Primary Schools Koorie Parents Morning Tea



Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and families to attend morning teas at their children's primary school, meet with school staff and tour the school encourages an early start to participation and engagement. In partnership with the school leadership and welfare teams and the Koorie Education Support Officers (KESOs), this engagement strategy builds capacity among families and ensures families are comfortable in their children's school setting from early primary.

## Partnerships with Tertiary Institutions



This important strategy and partnership aims to Improve the knowledge base of secondary students and their parents and carers around career pathways and education support options . There is a strong component to these partnerships and Christine's work in this area that supports students to complete post school studies and training opportunities.

## Practice Influencing Policy



Practice has influenced policy in the way that the reporting back to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has changed to include narratives that focus on positive change that have been gathered in informal discussions and yarning along with the required quantitative data. This will in turn lead to further strategies to support best practice in the delivery of projects and programs that support families to achieve educational outcomes.

## Transformational Change



- Reporting on the outcomes has a strong focus on narratives and 'stories of change' and statistical data.
- Evaluation will influence both policy and practice

Christine has conversations with families in their homes and at events they attend to gather quantitative and qualitative data for the necessary evaluation process. This yarning approach is an inventive way to informally and at ease have families participate fully in the funded program and for the program objectives to be met. From this approach, stories of transformational change are also gathered to feed back to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in the twice yearly reports along with the valued statistical data.

## Transformational Change- One Woman's Story- Jenny's Journey



Jenny is a parent with three children , two of whom attend Kurnai College and who has been engaged with the Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program since its inception in 2013. Her first contact with the school was not positive but she has since become an advocate for the school and is a strong parent voice. She currently combines her studies in numeracy and literacy at Federation Training with work at a local Indigenous Art Group. She has entered her art work in local exhibitions and has also been asked to be a guest speaker at local community events.



# Jenny



One of the first workshops Jenny attended was the Tech Pack computer training where she initially struggled. She overcame her fears and now feels quite confident with her ability to learn new things and is more confident in social situations. She has attended a vast range of Parent Engagement events from general transition information sessions to cyber bullying workshops, Christmas Breakups and many parent teacher interviews. She has also gained confidence to attend a range of community events and has accessed services that have empowered her to make positive changes in her life. Throughout all of this, Jenny has been proactively supporting the education of her three children. In December 2016 she was the proud parent of one of the eight Koorie Year 12 students to graduate from Kurnai College.

## **In Summary:**



**We know that The Smith Family's Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE) Program has worked because:**

**More students are completing Year 12 at Kunai College  
(All eight Graduates from the La Trobe Valley in 2016 were from Kurnai College)**

**More parents are attending parent teacher interviews**

**Parents are more confident in approaching the school**

**Kurnai College is now considered an integral part of the community for those families on the program**

**We have developed better engagement strategies from our learnings**

The benefits to Indigenous families and the community from the delivery of this program has been overwhelmingly positive with evaluation showing encouraging gains in areas of engagement, attendance and retention. Evaluation methodology for reporting back to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and to The Smith Family has demonstrated Christine's understanding of her targeted demographic and flexibility in her approach to capturing data. Home visits, yarning and informal chats over cups of tea have ensured that families feel comfortable providing feedback. Learnings have been made particularly around how best to engage with families and how to include partner agencies in the engagement process. Christine is well recognised in the Indigenous community and families feel comfortable engaging with her around education, training and student progress.



Thank you.