



*everyone's family*

# Commonwealth Government 2019-20 Pre-Budget Submission

**Supporting the careers of disadvantaged young  
Australians, by helping them complete school and move  
into work and further education and training.**

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There is an urgent need for an **effective and comprehensive** approach to careers support that ensures young Australians from **disadvantaged backgrounds**, including those in **regional** and **outer-metropolitan** communities impacted by major economic and employment changes, are able to participate in **Australia's 21<sup>st</sup> century economy**.

Despite pockets of excellence in **careers support in schools**, current approaches are **inconsistent** and **out-of-step** with today's economy.

The Smith Family has identified **enhanced investment in careers support for young Australians**, particularly those from **disadvantaged backgrounds**, as its **priority** for the 2019-20 Commonwealth Budget.

**Leadership** from the Commonwealth is essential in this area, in collaboration with the States and Territories, given the important **economic** and **social benefits** for **individuals, families, communities** and **Government** of ensuring young Australians have the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours necessary to participate and thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

### Recommendation

That the 2019-20 Commonwealth Budget make **supporting the careers of disadvantaged young Australians** a priority and increase investment in **evidence based models of careers support** for this group as they move through school. This will have significant **economic** and **social benefits** to disadvantaged young Australians, their families, communities and Government, in the short and longer-term.

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### Australia's economy

A strong and growing economy is key to Australia's current and future economic and social prosperity. Our economy has experienced significant **structural change**, with strong employment growth in the **knowledge sectors** and jobs in these sectors usually requiring **higher skill levels**. Simultaneously there has been a **collapse** in the **labour market** of **full time jobs** for **young people** and a narrowing of **entry-level** opportunities.<sup>1</sup>

### Educational attainment and participation in employment of young Australians

**Educational attainment** is key to employment, yet only 60 percent of young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds complete Year 12 compared to 90 percent of those from high socioeconomic backgrounds.<sup>2</sup>

It has been **conservatively estimated** that **each** young Australian who has not completed Year 12 by age 19 will cost the community close to **one million dollars** over the course of their life, including through welfare, health and justice costs as well as lost taxes.<sup>3</sup>

The poorer school completion rates contributes to **two in five** 24 year olds from low socioeconomic backgrounds **not being fully engaged in work or study**.<sup>4</sup> The consequences of this for individual young people, their family, the community and Government are enormous and include the likelihood of long-term **welfare dependency** and **poor health, wellbeing and life outcomes**.

### Preparing young Australians to participate in the 21st century economy

Research shows young people generally have **low levels of careers knowledge**, but often think they have the information they need to make important career decisions. The **volume** of careers information available is **extensive and growing**, but is **dispersed** across multiple sources and **hard to contextualise**, making it challenging for young people to obtain effective and relevant careers advice.<sup>5</sup>

Despite pockets of excellence in **careers support** for young Australians, the quality of support within the school setting is **inconsistent**. Current approaches also remain influenced by ideas developed for an economy which is markedly different from today.

Twenty first century jobs require a **broader, more diverse set of skills**, including **non-cognitive** skills such as self-efficacy, resilience, problem solving and critical thinking. Technical skills, including in relation to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (**STEM**), and a **life-long learning** disposition, are also critical.

**Networks** have become key for securing employment and growing thriving careers, but these can be much more difficult for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to develop.

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<sup>1</sup> Cuervo & Wyn, (2011), cited in; The Smith Family (2014). *Young people's successful transition to work: What are the pre-conditions?*

<sup>2</sup> Lamb S et al. (2016) *Educational opportunity in Australia 2016: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University for the Mitchell Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Lamb, S. and Huo, S. *Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education*. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Behavioural Insights Team (2016) *Moments of choice: Final report*

### Vocational Education and Training (VET)

The VET sector is critical for ensuring Australia has skilled workers able to participate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy. However many young people and their parents have a **limited** or **inaccurate understanding of VET**.

This includes misconceptions that a vocational qualification is **less valuable** compared to university and that VET largely focuses on **traditional trades**. Current data suggests **VET graduates have higher employment rates** than undergraduates, and earn wages comparable to, if not exceeding, their university educated peers.<sup>6</sup>

The VET sector also provides training for **nine out of ten occupations** predicted to have the greatest growth in new jobs over the next five years.<sup>7</sup>

A **key component** of more effective careers support is helping young people and their parents become aware of the **diversity** of **career** and **employment opportunities** supported by the VET system. The Commonwealth's current **Expert Review** of Australia's VET sector is well placed to make recommendations regarding strengthening understanding about the importance of the sector to young people's careers.

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<sup>6</sup> Wyman, N., McCrindle, M., Whatmore, S., Gedge, J. & Edwards, T. (2017). *Perceptions are not reality: myths, realities & the critical role of vocational education & training in Australia*; Skilling Australia Foundation, Melbourne.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

There is a strong relationship between student participation in **career development activities**, including **direct exposure** to the **world of work**, and positive attitudes to **schooling** and post-school involvement in **work** and **study**.

Young people who can recall **four or more structured career activities** across their school life, are five times less likely to be **unemployed** or disengaged from education or training.<sup>8</sup> Engagement with employers helps young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, find out about a wide **range of jobs** and understand how their **learning at school connects to their future**. This contributes to them **completing school**.

There is a growing body of research about the importance of starting activities and discussions in this area in the **primary school**. This is because children begin to form stereotypes about occupations, careers and participation in post-school education from an **early age** for a range of reasons, including the unconscious influences of parents, friends and others they engage with.<sup>9</sup> Once these limits are set, individuals will rarely consider broader alternatives.

Helping primary school children to see the relationship between what they are learning and the possibilities it opens up for them in later life, helps motivate them to achieve and supports their ongoing engagement in education. Exposing primary school children to a **wide range of people undertaking different jobs** is particularly important for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, who may be exposed to **fewer role models**.

**Quality careers advice** is also critical while young people are forming their post-school plans. **Timely high quality careers advice** supports young people to develop **ambitious** and **realistic aspirations** and helps them put in place **plans** to achieve them.

Despite the evidence of what constitutes **quality careers support** within the school setting, across primary and secondary school, and some **pockets of excellence** across the country, current approaches are very **inconsistent** and often out-of-step with the evidence.

This is **jeopardising** the futures of thousands of young Australians and in turn Australia's economic and social prosperity.

## Disengagement from education and employment

**Disengagement** from education is not a one off event that occurs at the end of a student's schooling. Rather it is a **process** that becomes particularly noticeable in the **middle years** of **high school**, with young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, finding it difficult to see the value of **school completion**.

**Targeted support** for those at risk of leaving school early is critical. This should include greater levels of integration between schools, business and the VET sector, to build skills and insights into employment and further education and training pathways.

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<sup>8</sup> Kashfepakdel, E., Mann, A., and Schleicher, M (2017), *The impact of career development activities on student attitudes towards school utility: an analysis of data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*. UK: Education and Employers Research.

<sup>9</sup> NSW Education and Communities (2014) *The case for career-related learning in primary schools: An introduction to primary school principals*.

## EVIDENCE UNDERPINNING EFFECTIVE CAREERS SUPPORT

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For young people who do **leave school early**, very targeted support is required to ensure they are connected to post-school employment, education, training and related services and do not become “**lost**” in the system.

### Parental engagement

Research highlights the critical relationship between **parental engagement** in their children’s learning, **school completion** and post-school engagement in **work and further education**. Students with engaged parents, no matter what their income or background, are more likely to **complete school** and go on to higher education. Parents are also key influencers of their child’s **employment aspirations**.

Parental engagement can help **close the gap** between young people of different socioeconomic backgrounds, however, it has not yet been systematically leveraged in Australian schools in the careers space.

Parents, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, need to be empowered as their **child’s principal careers advisor**. This includes strategies which raise parents’ awareness of contemporary and future education, training and career opportunities, and the value of them.

Australian and international evidence shows that effective careers support for young people:

- Enhances their **knowledge, skills** and **confidence** regarding careers and post-school planning.
- Supports them to develop **ambitious** and **realistic career aspirations**.
- Encourages them to complete **Year 12**.
- Exposes them to the **contemporary world of work** and builds their **networks** with **employers** and **employees**.
- Engages them with diverse **post-school training** and **education offerings**.
- Empowers their **parents** to be engaged in their education and career planning.

A **model of evidence based careers support** for young Australians is needed which:

- **Connects** the worlds of **education** and **employment** as young people move through school, including **direct exposure** to the world of **work** and opportunities to engage with **education** and **training providers**.
- Supports students in their education and post-school **planning** so they are fully informed about the pathways that **match** their **interests** and **passions**.
- Provides personal **guidance, mentoring, skills development** and **targeted support**, particularly for those at risk of leaving school early.
- Supports **parents/carers' engagement** in their child's educational and post-school planning.

This is particularly important for young people from **disadvantaged backgrounds**, given they are **less likely to complete Year 12** and have much **more limited** access to critical **social** and **cultural capital**.

### Recommendation

That the 2019-20 Commonwealth Budget make **supporting the careers of disadvantaged young Australians** a priority and increase investment in **evidence based models of careers support** for this group as they move through school. This will have significant **economic** and **social benefits** to disadvantaged young Australians, their families, communities and Government, in the short and longer-term.

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### The Smith Family

The Smith Family is a **national independent** children's charity established in 1922. We create opportunities for disadvantaged young Australians by **providing long-term support** for their participation in **education**. We help them gain the **knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours** they need to thrive in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The Smith Family supports over **175,000** children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals a year, in over **90 communities**, throughout **metropolitan** and **regional** Australia.

Our **evidence-based** approaches work with young people in the context of their **families, schools** and **communities**. A core expertise is our capacity to build **effective long-term partnerships with disadvantaged families**, focussed on supporting their child's educational and post-school outcomes. We establish **long-term partnerships** with families, educational, business, community and philanthropic organisations and government, around a **common goal of improving the education and post-school outcomes** of disadvantaged children and young people. Our partnerships **harness a range of resources** (financial, skills, services etc) and are key to the **cost-effectiveness** of our work. Over **8,300 volunteers** support our work.

### The outcomes we are achieving

The Smith Family is supporting disadvantaged young Australians to:

- **Attend school regularly:** this is critical to achieving positive educational outcomes.
- **Complete Year 12:** each completed year of schooling enables better life outcomes.
- **Engage in post-school employment and further study and training:** setting them up to contribute economically and socially in the community.

Contributing to these long-term outcomes is our focus on shorter-term outcomes such as:

- Increasing **confidence** and **self-efficacy**
- Improving **motivation** and **aspirations**
- Enhancing **networks** and **relationships**
- Improving knowledge and understanding of **study options** and **career paths**.

Continuous **evaluation** ensures the effectiveness of our work. Our monitoring and evaluation ensures **targeted** support is provided to students and families experiencing additional difficulties. We have the **infrastructure** and **capability** to support many more disadvantaged young Australians.

### The young people we are supporting

The young people we are supporting are exemplified by the 43,500 Australian students on our educational scholarship program, *Learning for Life*. These students have the following profile:

- They live in a **low income** family
- Around half live in a **single parent** family, with a further five percent living with grandparents, or in kinship or **foster care**
- 40 percent of students and 50 percent of their parents/carers have a **health or disability** issue
- 60 percent have a parent/carer who has **not completed Year 12**
- Over 70 percent have a parent/carer who is **not in paid employment**
- Around one in five is from **Aboriginal** or **Torres Strait Islander** background.
- Around half live in **regional** Australia.

This profile highlights the **vulnerability** of the young people we are supporting. Without targeted and effective support as they move through school, these students are likely to have **poor life outcomes**.

The Smith Family is **targeting, engaging and retaining** highly vulnerable young people and their families over the longer term. Our work's effectiveness is highlighted by the fact that **four in five** former *Learning for Life* participants are in **employment, further education or training** a year after leaving the program. **Only 4 percent** of former participants are not in work, study, training, looking for work and/or volunteering, a year after leaving the program.

### The Smith Family's career suite

The Smith Family is implementing an **effective careers suite** that supports disadvantaged children and young people as they progress through **primary school** and the critical **middle and later years of high school**.

The evidenced-based suite leverages our **long-term relationships** with disadvantaged students and families, and extensive **partnerships** with schools, corporates, employers, community organisations and individuals, and post-school education and training institutions.

In combination, the suite enhances disadvantaged students' **skills, knowledge, confidence, aspirations and networks**, supporting them to **complete Year 12** and move post-school, into **employment, further education and training**. The suite is an approach that is effectively supporting disadvantaged young people with their careers.

The careers suite includes the following integrated components:

1. Primary Careers program
2. iTrack
3. Work Inspiration
4. Post-school options activities
5. Early School Leavers initiative

### 1. Primary Careers program

This new pilot program targets students in **Years 4 to 6** and is informed by the latest research showing children begin to form stereotypes about occupations, careers and participation in post-school education from an early age for a range of reasons, including the unconscious influences of parents, friends and others they engage with.<sup>10</sup> Once these limits are set, individuals will rarely consider broader alternatives.

The purpose of the program is to support students to **increase their understanding of the 'world of work'** by introducing them to a wide variety of jobs and the skill sets needed now and in the future. It aims to broaden students' **aspirations** about their future and encourages them to remain engaged at school and helps prepare them for future careers.

The program:

- Supports students to better understand their own **interests and skills** and helps them develop communication, critical thinking, collaboration and creativity skills.

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<sup>10</sup> NSW Education and Communities (2014) *The case for career-related learning in primary schools: An introduction to primary school principals*.

- Engages students with a range of people from the world of work, from a variety of industry and professions. This helps **widen the students' views** of the world of work and better understand the **transferability of skills** across industries and professions.
- Helps students create and explore a 'job of the future'. This contributes to enhancing their **motivation** around the world of work.
- Facilitates students' **interaction** with peers, teachers, parents and community members around the world of work.

### 2. iTrack

iTrack is an **online mentoring** program that increases high school students' **confidence, aspirations** and **knowledge** regarding **post-school transitions**. Students in Years 9 to 11 are matched with a **supportive adult**, drawn from The Smith Family's corporate and community partners, who provides advice and guidance about workplace, study and career opportunities, and how to plan for them. Weekly chat sessions occur over an 18 week period via a purpose-built platform.

iTrack **extends the networks** young people can draw on, at a **key time** in their lives. This is critical given the **parents** of many disadvantaged students are not in employment, have not undertaken post-school education or are unfamiliar with the Australian tertiary education and VET systems and the labour market. iTrack targets the **middle years** of high school which can be a time of increased **disengagement**.

**Evaluations** show that through iTrack, students:

- Are more **motivated** to try harder at school and more **inspired** to go on to further study.
- Have increased **knowledge** of where to get information on careers and **how** to achieve their career goals.
- Are **more positive** about their career and study options and have **more ideas** about post-school plans.
- Have increased **confidence** about asking for help and advice from adults.

In the words of one of the many young people who have benefited from iTrack:

*My mentor 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.*

### 3. Work Inspiration

Work Inspiration is an **employer-led** initiative that ensures young people's first experience of the **world of work** is meaningful and inspiring.<sup>11</sup> It combines hands-on experiences for students, career conversations between **students** and **adults in the workforce**, and student reflections and feedback.

Students undertake Work Inspiration in small groups with a host employer, which enriches the experience. Evaluations of the program show that Work Inspiration increases students' **school engagement, motivation, confidence** and **knowledge** of careers and post-school pathways. A wide range of **employers** have participated in the program including SAP, Audi, Orora and Hilton.

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<sup>11</sup> Work Inspiration was developed in the UK by Business in the Community and was rolled out in Australia, starting in 2013.

In the words of some of the many young people who have already benefited from Work Inspiration:

*I would **recommend** Work Inspiration to other young people because:*

- *I felt it really helped me to become more **involved in my learning**.*
- *It gives young people a greater **understanding of occupations**.*
- *It's an amazing experience that helps you decide the **right job** for your future.*
- *It does inspire you to **want to work**.*

#### 4. Post-school options activities

This includes a **range of experiences** that help students understand career pathways and training and study options. Activities include **experiential careers** days and **university and VET experience** days, run in **partnership** with corporate, VET and university partners. Employability workshops and employer networking activities are also included.

These activities build students' **confidence, knowledge** and **expand** their **networks** with other students and supportive adults. They are key to helping disadvantaged young people realise they are **capable** of undertaking tertiary study and securing employment.

#### 5. Early school leavers initiative

The Early School Leavers initiative has been designed with input from young people, educationalists, employers and the Career Development Association of Australia.

The initiative targets students identified through The Smith Family's **long-term partnerships** with families and schools in disadvantaged communities, and analysis of the **longitudinal educational data** we have on them, to identify those at **risk of leaving school early**.

Our specialist **Careers Coaches**, provide **individual career advice** and **guidance** to support these students to stay at school and **complete Year 12**. To avoid early school leavers becoming 'lost' in the system, we also use our **existing relationships** with these young people, to **connect them** with post-school services and employment opportunities, increasing the likelihood of them successfully bridging the school to post-school transition.

**Tailored** and **structured post-school pathways** that participants may access include cadetships, such as a **Hilton Hotels cadetship program**, (specifically designed for these students, which combines 12 months paid work with a Certificate III in Hospitality); work placements; and Government funded transition programs.

## APPENDIX – THE SMITH FAMILY



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### Communities The Smith Family is currently working in

<b>ACT</b>	<b>3</b>	Warrawong	Port Adelaide/ Enfield	Kwinana
Belconnen		Wiley Park	Port Augusta	Midland
Gungahlin		Windale	Salisbury North	Mirrabooka
Tuggeranong		Wyong	Smithfield Plains	Pilbara
			Whyalla	Rockingham
<b>NSW</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>NT</b>	<b>3</b>	
Albion Park		Darwin		
Auburn		Katherine	<b>TAS</b>	<b>4</b>
Bathurst		Palmerston	Bridgewater/ Gagebrook	
Blue Haven			Burnie/Wynyard	
Chester Hill		<b>QLD</b>	Chigwell/ Claremont	
Claymore		<b>16</b>	NE Launceston	
Coffs Harbour		Brighton		
Cranebrook		Brisbane	<b>VIC</b>	<b>14</b>
Dapto		Caboolture	Bairnsdale	
Dubbo		Cairns	Ballarat	
Fairfield		Coomera	Bendigo	
Goulburn		Gladstone	Brimbank	
Jesmond		Inala	Broadmeadows	
Lithgow		Ipswich	Collingwood	
Macquarie Fields		Logan	Dandenong	
Miller		Mackay	Epping	
Mount Druitt		Maroochydore	Frankston	
Nowra		Redlands	Geelong	
Orange		Rockhampton	Lakes Entrance	
Raymond Terrace		Southport	Morwell	
Seven Hills		Toowoomba	Shepparton	
Shell Harbour		Townsville	Werribee	
Springfield		<b>SA</b>		
Tamworth		<b>10</b>		
Taree		Christie Downs	<b>WA</b>	<b>8</b>
Tarrawanna		Elizabeth Downs	Armadale	
Tuggerah Lakes		Elizabeth Vale	Collie	
Wagga Wagga		Hackham	Gosnells	
		Morphett Vale		