



The Smith
Family

everyone's family

Trends in and challenges of government and social research and evaluation: A not-for-profit perspective

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Context: 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 HISTORY

Established in 1922 by a group of businessmen

OUR REACH

- 94 communities across all states and territories
- 134,265 children, young people, parents/carers pa

OUR FINANCES

\$81 million in 2013-14:

- One-third from government

Trends and challenges

- Increasing complexity of disadvantage: individual, family, community
- Cross-sectoral/jurisdictional responses
- Nationally comparable data, esp for disadvantaged groups
- Joys of Federation
- Are we comparing apples with apples?
- Increased expectations of program staff and supporting them
- Research – policy – practice interface
- High quality research and evaluation, esp longitudinally, takes time, skills, systems and \$
- Increased expectations of funders
- Monitoring or evaluation?
- Up front or after thought?
- Evidence based/evidence informed/we don't yet know?
- Insufficient evaluation and sharing of what does/doesn't work

Educational data and evaluation

- Review of School Funding – insufficient data to assess impact of \$4.4 billion annual investment in programs to address educational disadvantage
- Limited evaluations and only small proportion focussed on student outcomes
- Demise of COAG Reform Council
- Closing the Gap and ROGS



The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program



Parent and community engagement

Key programs at different 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

POST-SCHOOL YEARS



- Tertiary mentoring
- Financial Literacy

PARENTS AND CARERS



- *Tech Packs*
- Financial Literacy



Learning for Life
scholarship

Outcomes we're aiming to achieve



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- LONGER TERM OUTCOMES**
- Young people are in education, training and/or work
 - Young people complete Year 12 or equivalent
 - Young people stay engaged with learning

**ENGAGEMENT
ADVANCEMENT
ATTENDANCE**



SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

OBA:

- How much did we do?
- How well did we do it?
- Is anyone better off?

- 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

INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY

Programs build skills and knowledge and influence attitudes and behaviours

Learning for Life scholarship, student2student, iTrack mentoring, Learning Clubs, smArts, Careers/Post school options workshops, Let's Count, Let's Read, Work Inspiration, Tertiary Mentoring, Tech Packs, Financial Literacy

Learning for Life – scale and characteristics

- 34,000 students from 18,000 families
- 94 communities across all states and territories
- Low income families – Health Care Card or pension
- 16% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background
- 68% of parents not in labour force or unemployed and low % have Year 12
- 60% sole parent families
- More disadvantaged as a group than school peers, even in disadvantaged schools
- Over half of secondary students on program for 5+ years



How disadvantaged are LfL students relative to their peers?

	Total student population for 50 NSW schools (n=31,478)	TSF LFL students in the same schools (n=2,591)
Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background	14.3	24.7
Parent/Carer Year 12 completion or Post-school education	80.3	39.4
Parent/Carer University education	12.5	3.4
Parent/Carer Employed	79.0	18.4

LfL students as a group are **more disadvantaged** than their peers:

- They are more likely to be of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background
- Less likely to have a parent who has completed Yr 12 or university
- Less likely to have a parent who is employed

Measures of effectiveness of *Learning for Life*

- Improve school attendance over time to 90%
- Increase the proportion of students who advance to Year 12
- Increase proportion of students engaged in employment and further education after they leave the program



1. Increased school attendance

Learning for Life 2013 average school attendance rates

91.2%

For *Learning for Life*
primary school students

86.0%

For *Learning for Life*
secondary school students

86.9%

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



All are improvements on 2012

**70% of students had
attendance rates same or
better than peers in same
schools**

2. Improved Year 12 completion

The Smith Family's advancement rate

62.5%

Learning for Life students who were in Year 10 in 2011 and advanced to Year 12 or its equivalent by 2013. Up from 60% for the period 2010–12.



3. Successful post school transitions

Fully engaged



Partly engaged



Learning for Life students in work or study 12 months after leaving the program. This is of students who left the program in Years 10, 11 or 12. Of the 20% who were not engaged, two thirds were actively seeking employment and one in 7 was volunteering.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, 56% were fully engaged and 14% were partially engaged.



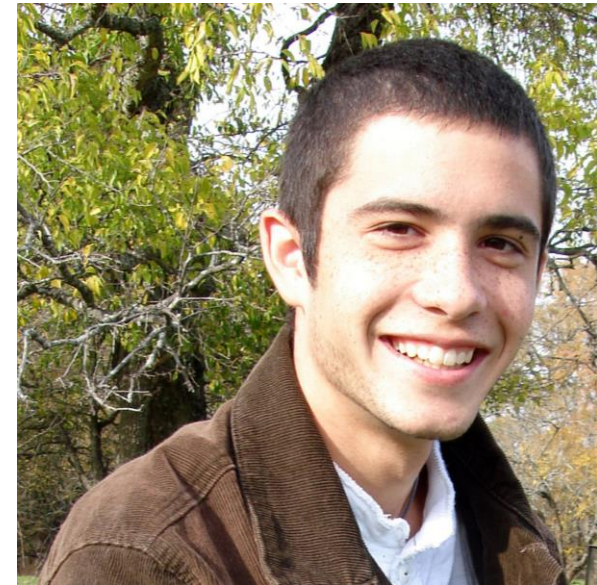
Using data to improve effectiveness

- Detailed analysis of *LfL* longitudinal data across range of characteristics, admin and outcomes data, leading to changes in program implementation
- ARC Linkage grant – survey of 10,000 students and parents/carers + interviews.
- Improvements in outcomes being achieved by highly disadvantaged young people – research and evaluation informing, and being informed by, policy and practice



Critical factors for The Smith Family

- Embedding small number of longer term outcomes in strategic plan gives organisational focus, clarity, internal & external accountability
- Staff want to make difference in young people's lives – get data back & this informs & changes practice in a range of ways
- Cross organisational engagement critical inc Board, CEO and Executive
- Training and supporting staff
- Clear capacity to inform public policy given scale & long-term nature





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