



everyone's family

Tasmanian Government Community Consultation

Lifting Literacy; Lifting Tasmania

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THE SMITH FAMILY

The Smith Family is a national charity founded in 1922 to improve the lives of disadvantaged children in Australia. Our vision is a better future for young Australians in need. Our purpose is to create opportunities for them by providing long-term support for their participation in education. Our belief is that every child deserves a chance to thrive.

We take a place-based approach and are currently working in 90 low SES communities across every state and territory. In Tasmania, this includes, Glenorchy, Brighton, North East Launceston and Burnie/Wynyard.

Our commitment to supporting children in Tasmania has seen very significant growth in both the numbers supported on our highly effective long-term educational scholarship program *Learning for Life* (LfL) and our other educational programs. We now support close to 2,600 young Tasmanians on LfL and this will grow to over 3,000 this financial year, up from 515 in 2015. Further information on *Learning for Life* is included in Appendix A. In total in FY21, we supported over 8,300 disadvantaged children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals in Tasmania.

Our work leverages partnerships with families, schools, business, philanthropy and the wider community. We have formal partnerships with 34 Tasmanian schools, which sees our work complementing and enhancing the efforts of schools. We have a strong focus on measuring the educational and post-school outcomes achieved by the children and young people we support.

CONTEXT FOR OUR COMMENTS

Educational Outcomes and Socio Economic background

The Smith Family commends the Tasmanian Government and the Literacy Advisory Panel on both the ambition to implement a community wide approach to improving literacy for all Tasmanians and the broad based consultation being undertaken with stakeholders to design and implement the framework.

As noted above, The Smith Family's work is focussed on supporting children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to stay engaged with their education and create better futures for themselves.

Research shows a clear and persistent relationship in Australia, between socioeconomic background and the educational outcomes of young people at all stages (Lamb et al 2020). This includes performance on the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), Year 12 completion and postschool engagement in employment, education and training.

The underpinning causes of the ongoing inequity in outcomes achievement in more disadvantaged communities are many and complex and in our experience include:

- Material divide: Households' more limited access to basic resources needed to support children's literacy development, including books and other literacy stimuli.
- Parental support: Some primary carers not being well prepared or able to cope with remote learning or learning in the home (for example not feeling confident to support their child's learning) (CIRES 2020).
- Digital divide: Families' gaps in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources and knowhow (for example computer, software, internet connection, limited ICT skills etc)

Responses to specific questions posed in the Panel's consultation paper are informed by this focus, and endeavour to draw on our experience over many years, of working with families and communities to reduce inequities.

Our responses are limited to those areas where we feel we can add value, rather than seeking to address all questions posed.

Programs supporting literacy development that are not listed

We congratulate the Literacy Panel on comprehensively mapping a range of existing programs focussed on supporting literacy development and in particular the inclusion of initiatives that scaffold literacy support in recognition of their role within the child and family service system. There are two programs delivered by The Smith Family in Tasmania that may be of interest in this mapping:

Learning Clubs

Learning Clubs provide a safe and supportive out-of-school learning environment where primary or secondary students can participate in activities that develop their academic skills, such as homework, numeracy and literacy. Clubs usually run in terms two and three each year, and children attend once or twice a week at no cost.

Through regular attendance at our *Learning Clubs*, students are able to enhance their learning and development skills. Students' involvement with *Learning Clubs* enables them to access local volunteer tutors who have appropriate skills and knowledge to support Club activities.

Learning Clubs are implemented through our partner schools and are adapted in accordance with the specific focus of the school community. For example, some clubs provide homework support, tutoring or help with a specific skill set (cognitive or non-cognitive) that assists participating children and young people to benefit more fully from their school based learning. Further information about Learning Clubs can be found at: <https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/programs/learning-clubs>

Catch Up Learning

In response to anticipated challenges for students due to remote learning during Covid 19, The Smith Family piloted *Catch-Up Learning*, an online tutoring program, with qualified teachers providing one-on-one sessions in literacy and numeracy to financially disadvantaged students on The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program, over a six month period. The tutoring occurred in the student's home.

The design of *Catch-Up Learning* was informed by analysis from the UK's Education Endowment Foundation (EEF 2018). This indicated there was strong evidence that one-on-one tutoring with a trained teacher is very effective in helping learners catch up, particularly for younger learners who are behind their peers in primary school, and for subjects like reading and mathematics. The EEF noted the effects of one-on-one tutoring for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be particularly positive.

The *Catch-Up Learning* program was a small pilot, but there is very promising evidence of its capacity to engage students and support greater than expected gains in literacy and numeracy for disadvantaged students who are struggling in these areas. It appears to offer particular value for students who may have previously struggled to attend school for a range of reasons.

Ninety six percent of *Catch Up Learning* participants improved their literacy to at least the level of progress expected, with 72 percent improving the skills beyond what would be expected over a six month period. The program was also successful in supporting improved numeracy outcomes for participants.

The program also contributed to participants' increased love of learning and confidence, which are contributors to academic achievement.

The Smith Family is currently undertaking a second stage pilot of this program, with 32 students from Tasmanian schools who are struggling with literacy or numeracy participating in the program.

The pilot evaluation report can be found here: [Catch Up Learning Evaluation](#)

Organisational mapping of literacy focussed initiatives

The organisational mapping provides a wide ranging list of both universal and targeted initiatives being implemented in Tasmania and it is likely that the consultation process will uncover further initiatives being implemented through local community based initiatives.

There is an opportunity to look at how these programs could inform a comprehensive cross-Tasmania strategy that is strongly evidence based, co-ordinated, inclusive and appropriately targeted.

There are a number of international examples of comprehensive literacy strategies that may be of interest in this regard. The Irish Government's 10 Year National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People addresses six key areas aimed at improving literacy and numeracy outcomes. These are: ■

- Enabling parents and communities to support children's literacy and numeracy development
- Improving teachers' and early childhood education and care practitioners' professional practice, through changes to both pre-service and in-service education ■
- Building the capacity of school leadership to lead improvements in the teaching and assessment of literacy and numeracy in schools ■
- Getting the content of the curriculum for literacy and numeracy right at primary and post-primary levels by making sure that the curriculum is clear about what students are expected to learn at each stage
- Targeting available additional resources to learners with additional needs, including students from disadvantaged communities, students learning English as an additional language and students with special educational needs
- Improving how teachers, schools and the educational system use good assessment approaches.

The Strategy is underpinned by clear outcomes measurements, using existing data and assessment processes at a national and local level.

The Strategy is also underpinned by a public campaign to improve attitudes to literacy and numeracy, including a focus on raising public awareness of the importance of oral and written language in all its forms (including print, writing and digital media) and articulates clear targets across Early Childhood, Primary School, Secondary School.

Further information on this Strategy and associated outcomes reporting can be found at: <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3b9186-literacy-and-numeracy-learning-for-life/>

Further information about other international community wide strategies can be found at Appendix B.

Measures and targets

The Literacy Panel's discussion paper sets out the range of existing datasets for use as a potential baseline to track progress over time and The Smith Family endorses this approach. Aggregate data sets can mask challenges for specific cohorts or communities who may need additional support, so ensuring that there is a specific, non-stigmatising focus on areas for improvement and additional support within the data will be key to supporting transparency and enabling appropriate intervention. Again, the approach utilised in the Irish Government's strategy provides a template for a structured approach, utilising (in the main) existing data sets to track and report progress.

In addition, consistent with the principles of Outcomes Based Reporting, The Strategy should:

- Be underpinned by a clear overarching Theory of Change setting out the key assumptions underpinning the overall approach and individual interventions. The Theory of Change should include interim progress measures and have a clear focus on outcomes rather than outputs.

- Be confident that each of the individual initiatives is evidence-based, has been evaluated and proven to deliver outcomes for the client group it seeks to serve. Consistent with Implementation Science principles, the focus could then be on monitoring fidelity and quality of implementation at a local level.
- Report on a regular basis and adjust the approach in accordance with what the data is identifying.
- Have regard to the broader service system and the constraints for families with very complex lives in accessing service system support. Accessibility in all its forms needs to be considered and addressed in the underpinning assumptions.

Conclusion

The Smith Family commends the development of a community wide approach to improving literacy for all Tasmanians and the inclusive approach being pursued to design and implement the framework. This submission identifies some additional evidence-based programs being implemented by The Smith Family in Tasmania that aim to improve the literacy of children and young people. It also identifies some international initiatives that could inform the Tasmanian framework. Central to the strategy is the implementation of evidence based initiatives and the development of appropriate measures and targets to track progress and guide further investment.

The Smith Family looks forward to contributing to the implementation of the framework, and to supporting children, young people and families experiencing disadvantage to strengthen their literacy skills and confidence.

APPENDIX

Appendix A: *The Learning for Life program*

The children and young people The Smith Family supports on *Learning for Life*

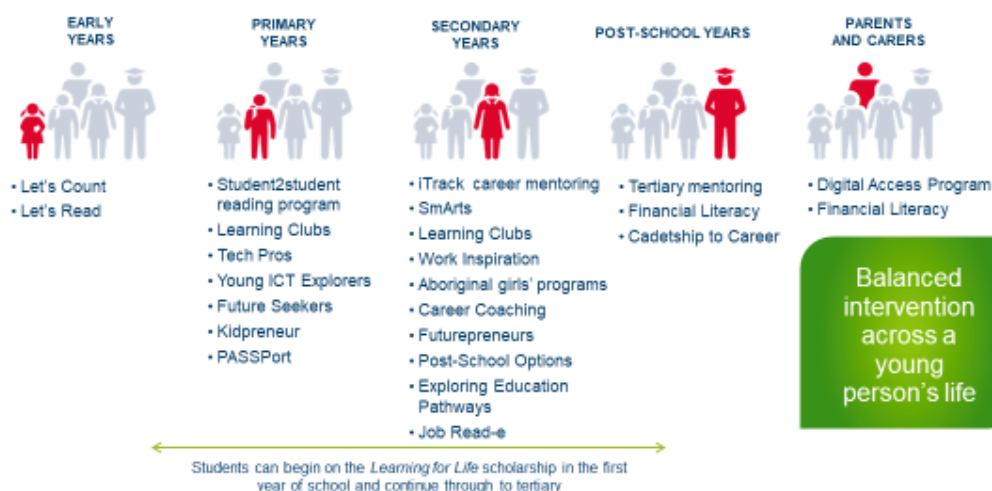
A profile of the Tasmanian *Learning for Life* students and families is indicative of those we are supporting in this state:

- All are financially disadvantaged, as evidenced by having a Health Care Card or Pensioner Benefit Card.
- 58 percent of parents/carers have not completed Year 12 or equivalent.
- The parent/carer of two in three *Learning for Life* students are not in paid employment.
- One in four students are from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.
- 57 percent of students live in a single parent family.
- Around one in three students have a health or disability issue.
- The Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)¹ of The Smith Family's partner schools in Tasmania range from 818 to 954, where the national average is set at 1000. One third of the Tasmanian partner schools have an ICSEA of below 900.

Learning for Life has three components:

- A modest biannual payment made to families to help them cover education-related expenses.
- A *Learning for Life* Family Partnership Coordinator who works with the family to support their child's long term participation in education.
- Access to a range of short programs that begin in the early years and continue through to the tertiary level as identified in the figure below.

KEY PROGRAMS AT DIFFERENT LIFE STAGES



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¹ ICSEA provides an indication of the socio-educational backgrounds of students in a school.

Outcomes and research

The Smith Family has a strong focus on and internal capability to measure the outcomes of the children and young people supported on its programs. We use Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) to measure the effectiveness of our programs, and for those on the *Learning for Life* program, we longitudinally track their school attendance, school completion and post-school engagement in employment, education and training. By way of example of the impact of our work, four in five of the highly disadvantaged young Australians who are on the *Learning for Life* scholarship program, are in work, study or training, 12 months after leaving the program.

The Smith Family partner schools

We have formal partnerships with around 740 schools nationally, including 34 primary schools, high schools and Colleges in Tasmania, around a shared goal of supporting disadvantaged students to achieve educationally. The current list of our Tasmanian partner schools is below.

South	North	North West
Glenorchy and Brighton	North East Launceston	Burnie/Wynyard
Austins Ferry Primary School	Brooks High School	Burnie Primary School
Bowen Rd Primary School	East Tamar Primary School	Cooee Primary School
Brighton Primary School	Invermay Primary School	Havenview Primary School
Claremont College	Lilydale District School	Hellyer College
Cosgrove High School	Mowbray Heights Primary School	Montello Primary School
East Derwent Primary School	Newstead College	Parklands High School
Gagebrook Primary School	Queechy High School	Romaine Park Primary School
Herdsmans Cove Primary School	Ravenswood Heights Primary School	Somerset Primary School
Jordan River Learning Federation Senior School	St Leonards Primary School	Table Cape Primary School
Montrose Bay High School	Waverley Primary School	Wynyard High School
Moonah Primary School		Yolla District School
Springfield Gardens Primary School		
Windermere Primary School		

Appendix B: International community wide strategies

1. Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement

Key Objectives

The literacy goal of Ohio's education system is to ensure all learners have access to high-quality, evidence-based language and literacy instruction and become proficient readers.

There are four objectives to achieve the vision:

1. Support quality planning and data-driven decision-making through district and school engagement in the Ohio Improvement Process.
2. Ensure districts, community schools and early childhood education programs develop meaningful, usable evidence-based language and literacy plans aligned to the state literacy plan, District Improvement Plan and that are sustainable.
3. Support the fidelity of implementation of evidence-based language and literacy practices.
4. Provide financial support for literacy improvement efforts and help identify and implement sustainable practices

Action Areas

Shared Leadership: Build capacity for leaders and systems to advocate for evidence-based literacy for all learners.

Multi-tiered System of Supports: Create systems within state regional and district levels for community of support for evidence-based literacy.

Educator Capacity: Professional development and technical assistance tied to evidence-based language and literacy development and instructional practices are key to building the capacity of teachers to maximize their impact.

Family Partnerships Plan emphasizes how state, regional and local educational entities can develop goals and strategies for supporting families in their critical roles in children's literacy development.

Community Collaboration Everyone in the community can contribute to children's literacy development. There must be a shared understanding and mutual reinforcement of efforts in organisations' approach to developing children's reading skills. State-, regional- and local-level partnerships help drive literacy improvement.

Source/Additional information

Ohio Department of Education. (2020). Accessed 21/03/2022. Available at [Ohio's Plan to Raise Literacy Achievement](#)

2. UK National Literacy Strategy 1997 - 2011

Key Objectives

National strategy with a focus on lifting primary school-based literacy.

Background

In 1997, the UK government developed the first phase of the National Literacy Project (NLP) 1997-2002 with the aim by 2002 of 80% of 11-year-olds reaching the standard expected for their age in English. This was followed by the national Numeracy Strategy; Strategy for 11 to 14 years olds and an Early Years Foundation stage. Subsequent phases focused on a phonics program and those targeted to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse students.

Action Areas

- National targets
- Framework for teaching (daily literacy hour; Government funded Literacy training & professional development; learning materials and resources)
- Community based: media campaign and events; summer literacy school

Assessment

2011: Evidence included:

- Increase in the percentage of children achieving a good level of development (10point increase)
- Decrease in the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest (5% point decrease)
- Decrease in percentage of children at risk of language delay
- Increased in writing attainment

In 2015, 80% of 11-year-olds achieved at least the expected standard in reading, up from fewer than half in 1995, with major increases made under the Primary National Literacy Strategy from 1997 to 2000.

Sources/Additional information

[The National Strategies 1997-2011 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Efficacy: The first Four years: [OFSTED Literacy \(ioe.ac.uk\)](http://ioe.ac.uk)

Academic paper: outlining main influences in the National Literacy strategy: [The National Literacy Strategy: the Research Base \(ucl.ac.uk\)](http://ucl.ac.uk)

[Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy \(1997\) \(educationengland.org.uk\)](http://educationengland.org.uk)

References

Education Endowment Foundation (2018) Teaching and Learning Toolkit, EEF: London.

Lamb S. Huo S. et al. (2020) Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out, CIRES for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.

Lamb S. Maire Q. et al. (2020) Impact of learning from home on educational outcomes for disadvantaged children, CIRES for the Mitchell Institute: Melbourne.