



# Improving young people's educational outcomes through school business community partnerships

The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers

**The Smith Family** Research Report  
February 2014

[thesmithfamily.com.au](http://thesmithfamily.com.au)



*everyone's family*

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Cover Photo: Winning students and runners up in the Gold Coast 2011 Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge with partner and mentor, Daniel Ridgeway, Owner/Chef from Little Truffle Restaurant.

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# Executive summary

## The importance of Year 12

Educational attainment is an important predictor of future health, employment and welfare reliance. It improves an individual's ability to participate socially and economically. Young people who do not complete a Year 12 certificate or its equivalent, risk serious lifetime social and economic disadvantages (Victorian Auditor General, 2012).

Australia has a strong foundation to build on, but significant challenges remain to ensure that young people are productively participating in the economy.

In 2011, 85.0% of young Australians aged 20 to 24 had attained Year 12 or equivalent. However, there was a large gap in attainment between young people from low and high socio-economic areas (73.7% and 93.2% respectively).

## School Business Community Partnership Brokers program

In recognition of the need to lift Australia's Year 12 or equivalent completion rates, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions in July 2009. The School Business Community Partnership Brokers program<sup>1</sup>, also known as Partnership Brokers, is one of the programs administered by the Federal Government as part of this National Partnership.

The Partnership Brokers program aims to build partnerships to improve education and transition outcomes for all young people, with a particular emphasis on supporting young people to achieve Year 12 or equivalent qualifications.

Partnership Brokers form locally relevant partnerships that harness community resources and share responsibility for young people's learning and development. They encourage the development of partnerships between education and training providers, business and industry, parents and families, and community groups.

<sup>1</sup> The School Business Community Partnership Broker Program is supported by the Australian Government Department of Education.

The infographic is enclosed in a dotted-line border and contains several data points:

- 6,400+ ORGANISATIONS ARE INVOLVED IN 2,500+ PARTNERSHIPS BROKERED THROUGH THE PARTNERSHIP BROKERS PROGRAM** (Accompanied by an icon of two people).
- WHO IS INVOLVED?**
  - 2,300+ SCHOOLS
  - 1,800+ BUSINESS
  - 1,900+ COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS(Accompanied by a map of Australia).
- 92% OF PARTNERS SAID THAT THEIR PARTNERSHIP IS ADDRESSING A REAL NEED IN THE COMMUNITY** (Accompanied by an icon of a group of people).
- 9 OUT OF 10 PARTNERS SAID THAT THEIR PARTNERSHIP IS ADDRESSING A REAL NEED IN THE COMMUNITY** (Accompanied by an icon of ten people).
- WANT TO KNOW MORE? VISIT [www.107brokers.net.au/](http://www.107brokers.net.au/)**

# PARTNERSHIP BROKERS

SCHOOL + BUSINESS + COMMUNITY

### The Smith Family and the Partnership Broker program

The Smith Family is the provider of the Partnership Broker program in six regions (Brisbane North and West, Brisbane South East and Redland City, Gold Coast and Darling Downs in Queensland, the Illawarra in New South Wales and Darwin and Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory, employing 43 FTE Partnership Brokers and support staff.

This report examines 11 partnerships that have been developed and supported by some of The Smith Family Partnership Brokers across the six regions in which it operates. The 11 partnerships have been chosen because of their diversity, impact and maturity, with most of them being developed over a number of years. The partnerships focus on:

- Improving student wellbeing
- Empowering communities
- Introducing young people to the world of work.

### Effective partnerships

The partnerships in this report show that effective partnerships are based on mutual benefit, take time to develop and flourish from having an independent broker. Partnership Brokers have worked as connectors, facilitators and enablers. In many cases they have been able to bring together seemingly competing interests and work successfully across different sectors, in order to improve education and transition outcomes for young people.

Outcomes include a range of new and innovative cross-sectoral partnerships which have resulted in young people who are more engaged in education, have a clearer understanding of career options and how to pursue them and have increased access to the range of supports they need to make a successful transition. There has been a particular focus in a number of the partnerships in supporting improved outcomes for young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, low socio-economic, refugee and migrant backgrounds.

### Challenges

The Partnership Broker program involves a fundamental shift in efforts aimed at improving educational and transition outcomes for young people. It is therefore not surprising that there have been some challenges along the way, primarily in two areas:

- Limited initial engagement of State and Territory jurisdictions by the Commonwealth and a time lag in producing materials about the program, impacted on key partners' understanding.
- The short-term funding for the program is at odds with its strategic intent, impacting on the ability of proven partnerships to share lessons and replicate in other regions.

### Conclusion

The partnerships in this report demonstrate that:

- Skilful Partnership Brokers have helped unlock community solutions to seemingly intractable long-standing problems and improved the wellbeing and educational attainment of disadvantaged students.
- Bringing together representatives from community groups, education sectors, business and other key players can ensure solutions that are mutually beneficial and sustaining.
- Strong employer engagement has been critical to the success of partnerships which offer windows into the world of work aimed at improving young people's engagement, attainment and successful transitions.
- Local partnerships have identified gaps, undertaken necessary research and successfully tested solutions to nationally recognised problems.
- The close alignment between the mission of The Smith Family and the objectives of the Partnership Broker program has contributed to the success of the partnerships, as have the provision of existing relationships, knowledge and complementary programs provided by The Smith Family such, as *Learning for Life*.
- The benefits derived from operating in more than one region include improved performance from sharing of learnings, provision of professional development and faster and more numerous replications of effective partnerships.

# 1. Context and background

## The importance of year 12

Educational attainment is an important predictor of future health, employment and welfare reliance. It improves an individual's ability to participate socially and economically. Young people who do not complete a Year 12 certificate or its equivalent, risk serious lifetime social and economic disadvantages (Victorian Auditor General, 2012).

The impact of completing Year 12 is both short and long-term, with Australians aged 20 to 64 years more likely to be employed if they have attained Year 12 compared to those who have not (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

Post school qualifications are also increasingly important. It is estimated that in the five years to 2015, Australia will need an additional 3.8 million skilled workers with post school qualifications to meet the needs of the growing economy. It is also anticipated that growth in low skilled jobs will effectively flat-line (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012).

## Education and transition outcomes for young Australians

In 2011, 85.0% of young Australians aged 20 to 24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent (COAG Reform Council, 2013). However there was a large gap in attainment between young people from low and high socioeconomic areas (73.7% and 93.2% respectively). In the same year, the unemployment rate for teenagers not in full-time education was 17.7%, significantly above the adult rate (Foundation for Young Australians, 2013). Further, an estimated 27.3% of 17 to 24 year olds are not fully engaged in employment, education or training (COAG Reform Council, 2013).

## Lifting attainment and completion rates

In recognition of the need to lift Australia's Year 12 or equivalent completion rates, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions in July 2009. The Partnership seeks to improve young Australians' educational outcomes and transition to



Above: A collaboration table in Toowoomba to support refugee and migrant students.

further education, training or employment. It includes the targets of increasing the proportion of young people aged 20 to 24 years who have completed Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 90% by 2015 and at least halving the gap in attainment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by 2020.

A number of programs have been developed which support the attainment of these targets. Some of them are predominately the responsibility of the States and Territories, while a number are administered by the Federal Government. The School Business Community Partnership Brokers program, also known as Partnership Brokers, is one of the programs administered by the Federal Government. The program began at the beginning of 2010 with an allocation of \$139 million over the four calendar years 2010 to 2013. The 2013-14 Federal Budget made an additional allocation of \$46.9 million for the 2014 calendar year.

The Department of Education<sup>2</sup> has national responsibility for the administration of the program which is delivered across 107 regions. Each region has a separate contract for the provider delivering the program. Thirty one of the regions are in Victoria where the program is delivered through the pre-existing Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs). Outside of Victoria, over 50 providers deliver the program.<sup>3</sup>

The Partnership Brokers program aims to build partnerships to improve education and transition outcomes for all young people, with a particular emphasis on supporting young people to achieve Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. Partnership Brokers primarily focus on the needs of young people who are in school but at risk of disengaging.

Partnership Brokers form locally relevant partnerships that harness community resources and share responsibility for young people's learning and development. The partnerships are developed between the four key stakeholder groups - education and training providers, business and industry, parents and families, and community groups.<sup>4</sup>

## The Smith Family as a provider

Contracts for the Partnership Broker program were awarded to a diversity of providers (community based youth organisations, Chambers of Commerce, training organisations, career development agencies) and in most cases to a small agency operating only in a local region. The Smith Family is one of only two providers to be awarded the contract in six regions. These regions are:

Region 01 - Northern Territory - Darwin/Tiwi

Region 03 - Queensland - Brisbane North & West

Region 04 - Queensland - Brisbane South East & Redland City

Region 05 - Queensland - Gold Coast

Region 09 - Queensland - Darling Downs

Region 14 - New South Wales - Illawarra

The mission of The Smith Family is to create opportunities for young Australians in need by providing long-term support for their participation in education. This mission is closely aligned to the objectives of the Partnership Broker program.

## About this report

This report documents 11 of the partnerships that have been developed and implemented by The Smith Family Partnership Brokers across the six regions it has been working in. These partnerships were chosen because of their diversity, impact and maturity, with most of them being developed over a number of years. Fifteen Partnership Brokers, 25 partners, as well as a number of senior The Smith Family staff, were interviewed as part of the development of this report. Five of the six regions were visited as part of this process and a workshop with Partnership Brokers was held following these visits. The report also draws on other written material prepared by the Partnership Brokers, and interviews conducted by the Brokers with employers, students, teachers and other partners in late 2012 and 2013.

<sup>2</sup> The former Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) had responsibility for this program until September 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Data derived from DEEWR publication, Partnership Broker Providers, February 2012.

<sup>4</sup> <http://education.gov.au/schools-business-community-partnership-brokers-programme>

## 2. The art of brokering partnerships

The partnerships described in this report highlight that effective partnerships are based on mutual benefit, take time to develop and flourish from having an independent broker.

### Mutual benefit

Partnerships only begin if there is a recognised common goal and a shared understanding that it can be achieved by working together.

*The role of the Partnership Broker is to champion an unfunded model to potential partners and stakeholders. You don't have a pot of money to offer them, you're persuading them that there is something for them and that by working together you can have a bigger impact on solving the problem.*

Illawarra Partnership Broker

To achieve this, Partnership Brokers need to understand the problem, the opportunity or goal, who needs to be involved and what will get them to participate. They need to be able to identify the right partners, see the issue from their perspective and understand and articulate the potential benefits for each.

*A partnership means it works for me and it works for the employer. Otherwise it's not a partnership, it's a service agreement.*

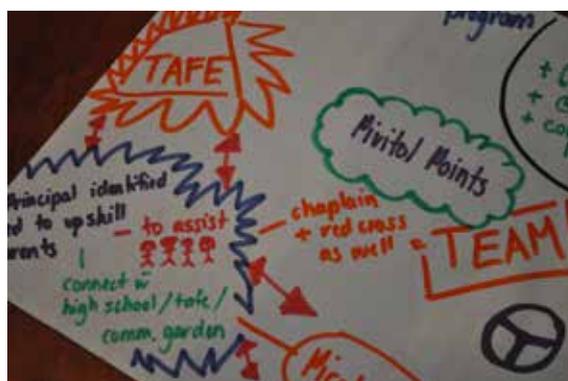
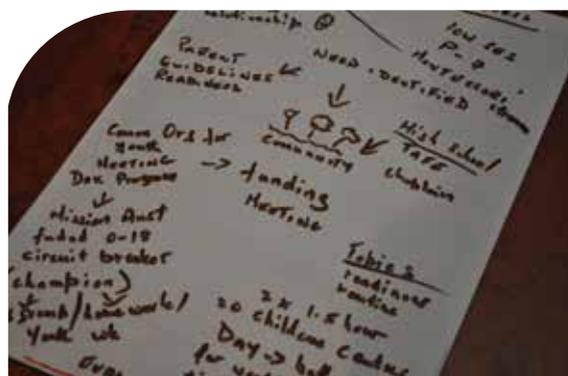
Darwin school principal

### Time

*In our Partnership Broker team we believe partnerships are relationships and these always start with a conversation. Relationships build collaboration and relationships take time.*

Illawarra Partnership Broker

Partnerships which aim to bring together schools and employers need to recognise that both are large complex organisations and relationships often need to be created at multiple levels. Effective partnerships involve leadership from the top and buy-in down the line and this often means a number of people from schools and employers need to be engaged in a partnership.



Above: Partnership Broker's notes.

One partnership aiming to involve a major company required meetings with the National Human Resources Manager in Sydney, the Human Resources Manager in Queensland and the head of their training arm in Brisbane, before they could meet and work with the individual local managers of the three retail outlets which would be directly involved in the pilot. Within an individual school, Partnership Brokers will often meet and establish relationships with the principal, the head of the senior school, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Coordinator, the Careers/Guidance Officer and multiple individual teachers.

There were seven months between initial discussions with Yamaha Motors Australia, the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between all partners and the first hands-on experience for Year 9 students at two high schools; and this was working with what a Partnership Broker described as a dream employer.

Partnerships developing models for replication also take time. One employer reported that:

*You can't document to replicate if you haven't operated and refined the model over several cycles.*

### Independent

Interviews with employers, schools, community groups and Partnership Brokers repeatedly stressed the value of being involved in an independent program, which is not a subsidiary of any of the major partners. The independence of the Broker means they stay focussed on improving outcomes for young people and were not overwhelmed with other agendas or priorities that partners may bring. It also meant they could work across all education systems and bring potential partnership opportunities with employers to all schools.

The partnership created around the Industry Facts and Jobs Pathway resource brought together Federal and State government departments as well as state, independent and Catholic schools and organisations working with unemployed people and families, ensuring maximum reach for the resource. It also enabled it to be developed further into an App for mobile devices.

The Partnership Brokers' independence contributed to their success in connecting sometimes disparate and competing groups to work together to solve a problem.

*They are honest outside brokers who did not have a history or agenda of their own.*

Toowoomba partner

The Partnership Brokers' ability to show 'tough love' and walk away from something that is not serving the interests of young people was also valued by partners. In particular, one employer was impressed with the Partnership Broker being prepared to respectfully tell a partner who was not contributing to leave the partnership so they could find someone who would. The Partnership Brokers' involvement and creation of independent partnerships around long standing and

often vexed issues has made partnerships a safe place for others to join.

### Creating sustainable and replicable partnerships

Partnership Brokers have been critical to the success of all of the partnerships detailed in this report with employers, teachers and other partners attesting to the value of their work.

*The Partnership Broker has made it possible for all of it to come together - without them we couldn't have done it, especially in this timeframe.*

Gold Coast TAFE teacher commenting on the Yamaha Work Inspiration Partnership

*With the help of Partnership Brokers we've been much more effective in being able to help young people.*

Stockland Manager of Community Development

*We couldn't have got to where we have without The Smith Family.*

ANZ District Manager

*We've benefited from and value their drive, knowledge and connections and the partnership has made the work with Power and Water faster and richer.*

Roseberry Middle School principal



Above: Senior Partnership Broker Manager, Julie Bell with participants of the Diabetes Australia 'Need for Feed' program, Jack Martin Centre, Toowoomba.

*The Partnership Broker had a 'can do' attitude and worked hard to overcome some tough barriers. The Broker had the desire, energy, time and skills to coordinate the logistics of the project.*

Council partner

## Connectors, facilitators and enablers

Interviews with brokers and partners from business, schools and community groups, identified three key attributes of Partnership Brokers. They are connectors, facilitators and enablers, with each of these roles critical to the success of the partnerships.

### Connectors

Schools and businesses are important partners and while there are huge needs on both sides, there can be challenges to engagement.

*There can be misunderstandings about how each works. Business may interpret a school or teacher's inability to respond quickly to a call or email as disinterest but the reality is teachers aren't on email all day or near a phone, they're teaching.*

Brisbane North Partnership Broker

Across the partnerships the following drivers for employers and industry emerged:

- Skill shortages, with young people seen as a source of recruits.
- An opportunity to provide meaningful employee staff development.
- The possibility of attracting new customers and increasing market share.
- Being seen as a 'good' employer by potential customers, the local community and government.

However,

*Employers don't have much understanding of how school students can fit into their businesses and they know even less about educational structures and funding.*

Chamber of Commerce member

The Manager of Community Development at Stockland noted:

*Corporates need that connection, someone to join the dots, be that conduit. We face a lot of hurdles in getting through to schools directly. When we tell them we want to get involved and help build the school, they sometimes don't know what to do with that. The Partnership Broker role has been integral to connecting us with schools and getting the right message across as to what we want to do. They have been able to facilitate the discussion and get it to the point where it works for the school and it works for Stockland.*

*The Partnership Broker program came to our rescue and made that connection between ourselves as the industry and the schools. They've been able to get the message into schools about the industry, and really have been a bit of a life saver for us.*

Yamaha National Training Manager

Similarly for schools, developing partnerships with employers may prove more difficult than they expected. In developing the Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge,

*It became very obvious that many schools do not have established industry links, are unsure how to establish or maintain them and in some cases do not have a great understanding of the limitations or time restraints that industry work within. Many schools needed help to partner with an industry mentor, a core element of success of the program.*

Gold Coast Partnership Broker

Once established, partnerships which connect employers to schools demonstrate real benefits, which include offering more meaningful and deeper experiences for students at risk of disengaging, and getting their teachers up to date skills and currency in the industry.

In addition to connecting business and schools, the partnerships have often involved a number of other local players, including some who wouldn't necessarily work together. That has particularly been the case in

partnerships working to bring communities together to ensure access to opportunities such as for students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, refugee or migrant backgrounds.



Above: Partnership Brokers with the Principle and Head of Industrial Arts at Sandgate District State High School planning for the Partnership Action Committee

## Facilitators

To enable the partnerships to be successful, a considerable amount of the work is often undertaken by Partnership Brokers. They may need to facilitate communication between partners, arrange meetings and facilitate the assignment of tasks and timeframes. At the start, many have undertaken research to understand the problem or issue in the community. In many cases this work would not occur without the additional resource that a Partnership Broker brings to a community.

*It's all about outcomes for kids, getting them engaged and opening their eyes to what's out there. The Brokers have done a good job, we wouldn't have time to go out there and find an industry partner. They really drove it. It makes it a whole lot easier and makes it long lasting and sustainable.*

Year 9 teacher commenting on the Yamaha Work Inspiration pilot

*Partnership Brokers are always available to help facilitate meetings, forums or develop programs. We were both on the same page from the start.*

Stockland Manager of Community Development

A number of Partnership Brokers spoke of the need to do quite a bit of project work early on to get a reputation as a 'can do' person and to get credibility with partners.

*From that the relationship flows and that's when strategic change can happen and people start to come to you. You need to work on small problems and get*

*results first to get credibility and then move to a more strategic response to address underlying cause and structural issues.*

Illawarra and Brisbane South East Partnership Brokers

One of their key tasks is to make it easy for partners to participate.

*For ANZ, they didn't want to understand all the various funding pots needed to make the program happen, they just wanted it to be made easy for them to participate.*

Illawarra Partnership Broker

*It has been very valuable to have a process with a Partnership Agreement and then develop an agreed detailed action plan which incorporates clear responsibilities for each partner and a monitoring process. Creating tools along the way, such as guidelines for employees speaking to school students, makes the program more relevant to the curriculum and makes replication a real possibility.*

Power and Water employee

A Brisbane South East Partnership Broker brought the partners together to create the Industry Facts and Jobs Pathway CD resource, facilitating the entire product life cycle:

- Conception (research the need)
- Design (test and validate)
- Realise (build and distribute).



Above: Partnership Brokers facilitating a workshop

He consulted with a large number of diverse potential users to identify the problem and involved them in testing and validating the tool to ensure it could meet their needs.

*departments and employers are donors while schools, non-government organisations, parents and students are recipients of the donors' largesse.*

Partnership Broker

The Partnership Brokers' attention to detail and project management skills gives partners confidence and enables them to feel supported. Their professionalism underpins success and is why partners stay. Employers valued obtaining partnership outcomes in a form they could use to report back internally. The Partnership Brokers' ability to hold partners to account and their clear and strategic thinking were also valued. A marker of their value is that they are invited to take part in the strategic planning processes of the schools involved, particularly in the partnerships in Darwin. Many partners also spoke about the value in being able to document the projects and ensure implementation was monitored and evaluated, skills not necessarily held by other partners.

In early meetings, the ANZ were unable to decide what their participation in the Illawarra would be – it could possibly involve staff from one branch going into a high school and providing resumé assistance on a one-off basis. The Partnership Brokers encouraged the ANZ to take a much greater role, and have a more profound impact on the students by developing a model which could be adopted nationally.

Many Partnership Brokers spoke about the need to facilitate the partnership and allow the details of how the project might be shaped to come from the partners, thus giving them ownership which leads to sustainability.

## Enablers

Partnership Brokers often need to envision the bigger picture and encourage partners to be strategic and brave. Central to the approach is encouraging capacity building within the community, to help them to understand the problem, own it and start to develop solutions that work for them.

*Our role is to be a conduit, not to be precious about owning the partnership, it's not ours or mine. You need to be willing to throw something out if that's what the partners want, not be too invested in it.*

Brisbane North and South East Partnership Brokers

*It means moving away from the donor-recipient relationship which is how many organisations on the ground operate - government agencies, state education*

An example of how partners begin to get more involved and start to 'own' it is the Chamber of Commerce's Opening Real Pathways workshops in South East Brisbane.

*The schools have become very involved in contributing ideas to enhance the workshops. The ideas to use school*

*students studying business as additional resources to help run the events and create a networking coffee for participating employers before the event came from the schools, not the Chamber or Partnership Broker.*

Local Chamber of Commerce President

*We value their ability to listen to what the partners want and then nurture it.*

Power and Water employee

Practical examples of capacity building include the tools developed by Partnership Brokers. In many cases a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or Agreement was developed to clarify roles and aims of the partnership and to enable it to continue over time. A number of partners spoke about the importance of ensuring the partnerships had commitment at a formal organisational level.

*We need the work to continue long after a particular person has changed jobs.*

Darwin non-government agency involved in primary school partnership

The value of these MOUs was highlighted when partnerships were replicated across locations. Operational Guidelines and Workbooks and other tools have also been developed for some partnerships so they can be more easily replicated.

## Challenges along the way

### Communication

The Partnership Broker program is a key component of the National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions, a partnership between federal, state and territory governments. In practice, the federal Department of Education<sup>5</sup>, developed the program and tendered for its provision. The Partnership Broker National Network has noted that *key government officers in most jurisdictions were unaware of the commitment their jurisdiction had made, or that it would require active support to be successfully implemented* (Partnership Brokers National Network, 2012). The Interim Evaluation of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions found that while *jurisdictional support for the Partnership Broker model is critical to success, it was lacking* (Dandolo Partners, April 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Previously DEEWR.

Given the scale and complexity of the National Partnership Agreement, it is unsurprising that communication at all levels was not perfect and this had implications for the early work of Partnership Brokers. The lack of communication with State and Territory education departments meant that in some cases, these departments did not communicate or endorse the program with regional teams and schools. As one Partnership Broker summed it up, *if they didn't understand the program, how could they realise the possible benefits, let alone support or promote it?*

This meant many schools did not know what the program was trying to achieve and how they could become involved. Some were at first resentful as it was seen as replacing a service delivery approach that could *do something directly for them*. It also meant Partnership Brokers had to spend a lot of time communicating basic messages to individual schools.

There was also a paucity of documents that clearly explained the program in the early stages. By its nature, a program focusing on strategic change within communities is harder to explain than one that is essentially service delivery. Partnership Brokers themselves initially had trouble understanding the program and the role. The delay in obtaining nationally agreed messaging hindered the ability of Brokers to engage potential partners in their communities.

The interim evaluation found that *the Partnership Broker program would be further strengthened by a continued focus on the broad promotion of the program to regional education authorities and schools, local government and business* (Dandolo Partners, April 2012). Since this report, there has been an increased effort by the federal department to better engage education sectors and systems in understanding the program and the opportunities it provides for schools.

## Short term funding

All reports on the program to date have agreed it is an innovative and strategic approach.

*The Partnership Broker program represents a significant shift in the Commonwealth's approach to supporting the formation and operation of partnerships between schools, businesses, parents and community groups. This shift was driven by the view that strategic, regionally owned and driven partnerships would provide greater impact and more sustainable change than the approach taken by preceding programs, which provided services for and on behalf of schools and were seen to displace effort and create dependence.*

Dandolo Partners, December 2012

The Partnership Brokers National Network argues that such a paradigm shift requires a lot longer than four years, given it takes significant time to establish effective partnerships (Partnership Brokers National Network, 2012).

When the program commenced, contracts were offered for two years except in the Illawarra Region in NSW where the initial funding was for one year only. As the program continued, The Smith Family regions were able to secure a further two years. The additional funds provided in the 2013-14 Federal Budget were welcome but this only committed funding for an additional year.

A number of interviewees said that the short term funding hindered their work:

*Industry finds it really difficult to work with the stop start nature of government, funding programs and then de-funding them.*

Gold Coast Partnership Broker

Once relationships were established and success was evident, Partnership Brokers reported a strong desire from existing and new partners to work with them.

*Once proven, everyone wants to be part of success.*

Darling Downs Partnership Broker

The short-term funding has also hindered the ability of proven partnerships to replicate to other regions and to learn from and disseminate good practice. *Before we share what we've done, we need to have our own patch in order and have some maturity.* Many established successful partnerships were not being replicated to their potential at the beginning of 2013, the fourth year of the program. The focus was on local capacity building and handover, not replication to other regions as the program was initially due to cease at the end of 2013. The year extension has enabled more replication of good practice.

## 3. Partnerships to ensure opportunities for all

This section provides examples of some of the partnerships that have been developed by The Smith Family Partnership Brokers which focus on:

- Improving student wellbeing
- Empowering communities.

The partnerships span the Darwin and Darling Downs regions and the Shoalhaven sub-region of the Illawarra in NSW and focus on students who are socially and educationally excluded. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are at the centre of three of the partnerships. To date none have been replicated, but the strategies employed have lessons beyond the communities in which the partnerships have taken place, especially in relation to building community capacity.

The partnerships are:

- Intensive work at Darwin primary schools to engage very disadvantaged Indigenous communities and improve educational outcomes and transition to further schooling.
- Empowering a divided Indigenous community in Toowoomba to come together and create a centre for learning, culture and sport.
- Creating a collaboration table in Toowoomba as a circuit breaker and catalyst to assist refugee and migrant students make successful transitions into education, training and future careers.
- Overcoming the physical barriers to educational attainment by enabling free transport for vocational training and work experience within the Illawarra.

### Improving student wellbeing

In Darwin and Palmerston, two partnerships have focused on supporting primary schools in areas of high disadvantage. These schools have large numbers of Indigenous students and newly-arrived refugees. These partnerships have built on the work of The Smith Family since it commenced programs in the Northern Territory in 2006. This work has involved a place-based model, designed to respond to the

needs of schools with high numbers of disadvantaged students.

The rationale for the Partnership Brokers working in primary schools has been that to make progress on attainment and transition for older students, work needs to occur much earlier than Year 10. In the words of one partner, *we need early intervention to break the cycle of disadvantage*. Data shows Indigenous students have poorer attendance rates than non-Indigenous students and are at much greater risk of not transitioning well to high school or completing Year 12 or equivalent.

### Partners Engaging Gray School

Gray Primary School is located in the satellite city of Palmerston about 20 kilometres south of Darwin. Indigenous students make up nearly half the student body and new migrants, for whom English is not their first language, make up a further quarter of the school's population. Over a quarter of pupils have been assessed as having 'special needs'. Gray ranks almost 200 points below the national average of 1,000 on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage.<sup>6</sup>

For the principal, the high needs of the school underpins the rationale for broad community engagement, as one organisation can't do it all. The approach recognises the need to improve student wellbeing and behaviour and student and family aspirations, as the first steps towards higher academic engagement and achievement. If families get the support of the community, they realise they're not on their own and that they are supported. It also makes the work of the school easier.

Since 2003, there have been a large number of wellbeing and support programs operating at Gray School, provided by a range of mainly non-government service providers. They commenced at different points in time, were not planned together and gaps existed in the range of support available.

<sup>6</sup> 2011 and 2012 data from My Schools website, accessed 20 May 2013. <http://www.myschool.edu.au>



Above: PEGS partnership launch.

The Smith Family Partnership Brokers helped establish the Partners Engaging Gray School (PEGS) partnership which brings together the school and eight partners, including the School Council. Partners meet regularly to work through issues at the school, share information, plan joint programs and ensure services work together effectively. There is a formal Co-operation Agreement and an agreed action plan. Partners have a better understanding of the services each provides and for some families there are holistic family care plans which involve a number of partners working together. Other benefits of the approach according to one partner are to de-stigmatise the need to seek help if the services are part of the school and working well together.

The partnership has drawn on the strong relationship The Smith Family has had with the principal and school stemming from several years of close work. The on-site Family Centre which started in 2010 is funded by The Smith Family and offers parenting classes, internet access and group programs. It also hosts a playgroup for young mums provided by one of the partners and refers parents to counselling services which can be accessed nearby. The service is well used by parents and the Family Centre Coordinator is often the family's first point of call, taking pressure off the principal or other school staff.

The partnership has organised fun events for parents and students – *previously, for some parents their only*

*engagement has been negative, when they've been called to a meeting about problems with the behaviour of their children or concerns about attendance.* By hosting informal social activities, parents see the school as a place where they can feel comfortable and get support for their children.

The partnership aims to draw everything together and ensure that there are no gaps or duplication, one of the benefits cited by a children's non-government service provider who is an active partner. Individual partners say they now use the language of "we" and agree to common goals which are included in the Co-operation Agreement and shared action plan. The Agreement formalises and escalates responsibility to the organisational level which makes it less reliant on individuals who may move jobs. As one community partner has stated *all partners have ownership of the PEGS' workplan. PEGS is now part of our core business and we allocate staff time to undertake PEGS' business.*

## Millner Primary School partnership

Millner Primary School in Darwin serves just over 200 students, 42% of whom are Indigenous. Students come from 42 language backgrounds, including 12 Indigenous language groups. Half of the children who sat the 2012 NAPLAN assessment registered as speaking a language other than English at home.<sup>7</sup> The school works to integrate Indigenous students, especially those living in nearby town camps. Since 2001 the school has developed a strong relationship with the Minmarama community, which has 25 houses but at any one time may accommodate a population of 250. The town camps in which these children live have many social and economic indicators of disadvantage including cultural isolation, low literacy and numeracy, high unemployment, overcrowded housing and domestic violence.

Initially working with the non-government organisation, Save the Children, the school and community ran a playgroup to engage children and families. Relationships have been established and progress made on engaging Indigenous students living in this community and for Millner to be a school of choice for the community. Support includes a dedicated bus which collects children in the morning and returns them after school.

Since 2008, the school has focused on a sub-group of this community - children who move between living in town and their remote Indigenous communities. This movement is because of the need to visit Darwin to access medical services or because of outbreaks of serious violence in their remote community.

*We had made some considerable progress in bringing a culture of learning to the town camp community, and we had kids coming to school. We didn't want their out of town cousins keeping them home.*

Millner Primary School principal

The solution was to find a way to bring these potential students to school whilst they are in Darwin and to engage them in learning. Many students display signs of trauma such as short concentration spans, withdrawal and violent outbursts.

The Educating Remote Area Indigenous Children in an Urban Setting (ERICUS) program was developed and largely driven by the school itself from 2008-09 but in October 2010 they sought assistance from The



Above: Partnership Brokers. Image supplied by the Australian Government Department of Education.

Smith Family on how to sustain the intensive work and find longer-term funding for it. Early health screening undertaken after the partnership commenced found 60% of students had a diagnosed medical condition or disorder requiring ongoing medical or therapeutic intervention. Students' ability to engage in and achieve at school was also impacted by the fact that when they spent time in their remote community, they most likely did not attend school. The partnership builds on the considerable work driven by the school and brings together a number of non-government services working with the town camp community and school. These include health, arts and sport based programs, as well as intensive literacy and numeracy programs. Outcomes achieved through the partnership in 2010-12 include:

- Health improvements for students, as most have had full health screening and been referred to specialist services.
- Significant improvements in attendance and literacy levels with 56% of students progressing six levels in their reading over the time they have been engaged.
- Circus skills training offered by the arts community agency partner has boosted concentration, co-ordination and confidence.
- Students are actively involved in the life of the school.
- Parent and carer knowledge about how they can support their children to continue and do well at school has increased.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to bringing in new partners to support the

<sup>7</sup> Data from My Schools website, accessed 20 May 2013. <http://www.myschool.edu.au>

<sup>8</sup> The Smith Family Partnership Broker Case Study on Millner Primary School partnership for DEEWR, September 2011.

varied aspects, the partnership is now working with the school to integrate the program into the school as a whole. The partnership has also assisted Millner win a National Australia Bank Schools First Impact Award leading to funding for increased engagement by Minmarama parents in education and employment. To date two mothers and an adult sister (and former Millner student) are working at the school in classroom assistant traineeship roles. As well as providing paid employment for these families, it helps strengthen the relationship between the community and the school and assists with raising aspirations and educational engagement and attainment. The partnership has also added a higher level of accountability which is deeply valued by the principal:

*Yes we are accountable to educational authorities, students and community, but it means we are also accountable to our partners.*

it has been largely dormant for at least 12 years and it's nearly 20 years since it has operated to full capacity as a community and sporting facility.

Elder Uncle Darby was involved in securing the original ownership in the late 1980s in his role as Chair of the local Aboriginal Housing Co-Op. He drove 900 kilometres to Canberra with his wife and children to negotiate the agreement with Charles Perkins, then head of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and he recalls, *we secured eight houses, the club and grounds, making it the first Indigenous owned sports club in Queensland.* But three years later, Uncle Darby was gone. *I walked away when there was so much fighting. I thought 'there's no winners here.' I got involved in other issues in the community I thought were worthwhile.*

The caretakers appointed an Administrator based in Brisbane, 125 kilometres away. All property title and deeds should have been handed to an Indigenous organisation agreed to by the community at the time the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was abolished in 2004. However, a long running dispute between various Indigenous community members meant there was no agreement on an entity which could claim to legitimately represent the Indigenous community and sign the lease to the Centre. This hindered the success of many Aboriginal organisations and the programs they have tried to deliver across the region for many years.

The clubhouse became dilapidated and the grounds unusable for sporting fixtures. However it was still seen as an important gathering place by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and used for wakes, sorry business and other cultural events. One of the

## Empowering communities

### The Jack Martin Community Centre Toowoomba

There are around 5,000 people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living in the Toowoomba region in south-east Queensland (ABS, 2011 Census). While the traditional land is generally accepted as being Gaibul/Jarrowair country, there are a large number of Aboriginal people who have re-located to the Toowoomba Regional Council area. The Jack Martin Community Centre and football grounds are an important asset for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of the Toowoomba region. However



Above: (from Left) Robert and Alex Woodbridge and Uncle Darby McCarthy. Photo by Dave Noonan, The Chronicle

local groups keen to see the facility operating again was the Warriors Rugby League Committee. They invited the Indigenous Smith Family Partnership Broker to a meeting in April 2011 and explained the history. The Broker realised that if the community could come together to run the centre, this could be the beginning of progress more widely with Indigenous issues across the region, as well as a practical resource from which training, cultural and sporting opportunities could operate.

Over 20 months she negotiated with the Administrator, accountants, regional council and most importantly members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of Toowoomba, to gain community control of the centre. She was instrumental in bringing two competing Indigenous bids together and mediated the partners through what were often heated discussions. Her approach centred on supporting them to focus on the fact that their priorities and goals were very similar. After many hours of negotiation the groups agreed they would come together and apply to the Administrator to propose a joint venture to take over the lease.

*Without The Smith Family Partnership Broker we wouldn't have gotten this far. This was a great outcome, as previously these two groups had refused to work together.*

A local elder and Board Chair

The Partnership Broker provided a high level of assistance to help create and support the newly appointed committee to understand their new roles and build the skills and competencies needed to regain

ownership of the Centre for the Toowoomba Indigenous community.

*This is the first time I've seen the whole community come together and try and sort it out. We had an Administrator who wouldn't budge, we had no money, but I saw there was someone here who was positive, someone to help us, we needed to keep on pushing.*

Indigenous elder

The local community have stated that NAIDOC celebrations in Toowoomba 2012 were one of the most successful to date with the whole community coming together. For many years families would only attend the functions or events that their own families had organised.

The Broker worked alongside the committee assisting them to identify a number of interim goals, helped them access formal governance training to enhance their capacity as a Board, and assisted them to become a not for profit incorporated body which would allow them to be eligible for funding grants. She was able to build the capacity of the new committee and continually energised and motivated them, often in the face of a range of challenges as they sought to re-open the Centre.

Finally in early February 2013, the new joined-up Committee signed a 10 year lease with the Administrator. As an Indigenous elder reflected, *I said I'd never get involved again, never come back, but I have gotten involved as I've seen this is a worthwhile project.* Since then more than 60 Aboriginal and Torres Strait



Above: Diabetes Queensland Need for Feed program at the Jack Martin Centre.

Islander people have attended fortnightly community meetings to help write the constitution and develop the rules around membership. Some 30 people have been involved in working bees to restore the centre to basic operations. A number have come together to fund a ride-on-mower.

*Taking back the club house and grounds and signing a lease for 10 years, that's a great achievement*

Uncle Darby, now Board Chair

Two years since the Partnership Broker became involved, the first training program ran out of the Indigenous run Jack Martin Centre in the April 2013 school holidays. Seventeen students aged between 12 and 17 from high schools across Toowoomba took part in a three day Diabetes Queensland's *Need for Feed* program. The program teaches young people how to read recipes, work their way around the kitchen and see the results that healthy cooking can bring. The Mayor visited the Centre to present the completion certificates to the students and have a tour of the grounds and club.

The Council is strongly supportive and will assist with refurbishing the Centre and grounds. Other funding applications can flow now that the lease has been attained and there is a strong governing committee. The committee will also work with Indigenous young people in Years 10 to 12 to partner with a board member, so they can begin to learn about governance. This will lead to the development of a junior steering committee who can contribute their ideas to what should be delivered from the Centre.

There are numerous plans to use the Centre as the hub of Indigenous activity for schools, sports days and for senior students to undertake a range of training and qualifications there. An employment services provider is proposing to run all their Indigenous training from the Centre and it's anticipated that the Warriors sports club will also use it. Uncle Darby's vision includes using the Centre to run dances, discos and a battle of the bands. *Our kids can bring their white mates along, let's make it cross cultural.*

## A collaboration table assisting refugee and migrant students in Toowoomba

*We feel that important challenges were tackled; we are tired of meetings with no real actions. It is important to now focus on the future.*

African community representative at the conclusion of the inaugural Collaboration Roundtable, August 2011

Toowoomba began accepting refugees from Sudan in 2000 and it has become a recognised settlement site for refugees and migrants, a large proportion coming from African backgrounds including the Sudan, Rwanda, the Republic of Congo and more recently Burundi and Eritrea.

The new arrivals include significant numbers of children and young people, many of whom have lived in refugee camps all their lives and can arrive with little or no formal education and very little English. A number of non-government and government agencies across federal and state jurisdictions are charged with providing the specialist help needed to ensure these students of various ages settle into their new Australian schools and thrive.

More than 10 years after the first arrivals it was widely accepted that while there had been much effort, there were considerable challenges still to be addressed. Language support was not getting students to an acceptable level of comprehension and written English, and there were problems for older students moving between school, TAFE and to employment. While there was an inter-agency group, it largely focused on information sharing and networking, rather than on actions to address specific challenges and barriers to education and transition outcomes. There was also a level of fatigue and people didn't feel empowered to influence what was happening and make strategic change.

Between July 2010 and March 2011, the Partnership Broker undertook research and consultations with all the agencies involved, including those who did not attend the existing inter-agency forum. According to a key partner, *The Smith Family Partnership Brokers*

# Improving young people's educational outcomes through school business community partnerships

The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers

*listened well, were very respectful of all players, and demonstrated a high degree of professionalism which was valued by everyone.*

It was clear there needed to be a safe place for all agencies involved, including the Department of Immigration, to hear each other without fear of suspicion and criticism, and then work collaboratively to commit resources and change systems to improve outcomes for young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds. Collaboration Tables have been used successfully in Indigenous communities and it was felt that the concept could be a circuit breaker for the refugee and migrant community in Toowoomba. As well as representatives from the African communities, *it was very important to get decision-makers in the room. There had previously been many meetings with frontline workers which focused on problems and blame sharing, rather than creating solutions they had the power to act on*, said a key partner.

After identifying a respected independent Chair for the Collaboration Table, the Partnership Brokers and Chair jointly designed a day which took place in August 2011. Fifteen key decision-makers participated, including senior officials from all school and higher education sectors, representatives from the Queensland African Communities Council, the non-government agency responsible for refugee settlement in the area, as well as other relevant community groups, the police service and state and local government agencies working with refugees and newly arrived migrants. It was a significant achievement and is attributed to the fact that *the Partnership Brokers were regarded as honest outside brokers who did not have a history or agenda of their own and because they were very patient. It became clear they weren't going to give up or go away.*

Some of the agencies were based in Brisbane and their attendance at the Collaboration Table gave them the opportunity to see for the first time, the enormous hurdles for young people in a regional area. The Regional Director for the state education department was powerfully engaged on the day hearing directly the lived experience of the African community members.

As a member of the Catholic education sector said, *It was critical to have senior community leaders and senior decision makers represented and to then authorise the operational staff to follow through.*

For another partner it meant, *we were able to have a shared purpose and focus on better outcomes for young people and not blame each other for past failures.*

Phase one of the day asked the decision-makers to present two challenges and two things that were working well. This helped everyone view the situation from each other's perspective and a large number of challenges were identified. Phase two included operational staff and involved voting on the top three challenges. Phase three involved a facilitated workshop focused on the three priority challenges agreed by the group.

The partners agreed to develop a number of partnerships to progress the solutions with the support of the Partnership Broker. These included developing a reception school or process to provide intensive English classes and other supports for new arrivals entering school in Australia for the first time, and a career pathways focus for older students. It also established a critical reference group comprising representatives of all organisations. The Collaboration Table provided a *clean slate, a new beginning* and the careful planning of the day was regarded as important to its success.

There is now a collaborative cross sector reception process for refugee and newly arrived migrant children of all ages. One primary and one high school operate as lead schools and most students attend these. Primary school principals are now *openly receptive to assisting parents*. The two lead schools also work with other schools serving refugee and newly arrived migrant students and an English as a Second Language reference group has been established within Education Queensland.



Above: CALD Summer School - Stahman visit.

Agencies are sharing information and offering joint case conferencing to support newly arrived families. All education officials now regularly meet at TAFE and there are *strengthened relationships and good dialogue* flowing through to other areas. The schools have agreed to share data on 15 and 16 year olds with TAFE and the settlement and English language provider.

Partners are currently focussed on the development of a tracking mechanism to ensure that students leaving Year 12 are supported into a successful pathway. As one partner noted, *for people in refugee camps, lawyers and doctors are often the only professionals they see and they may think they are therefore the main professions. They aspire to that for their children when they migrate to Australia and believe the only successful pathway is university. Trades are seen as having low status.* As another partner states, *we need to turn that perception around* so there are opportunities for all young people.

In order to support that, a two-week program aimed at exploring vocational pathways to careers in Health and Community Services, Mining/Energy/Resources and Agriculture was developed. Fifteen students aged 15 to 18 from an African refugee background

listened to guest speakers, undertook industry tours and completed TAFE units of competency and work experience in December 2011, with two entering a school-based traineeship.

The critical reference group continues to meet bi-monthly and the Collaboration Table ensures high level decision-makers attend to review progress and unlock barriers. Partners have also signed a formal agreement to reflect their joint commitment to this work. The partnership will merge with the Local Area Coordination Youth Education and Employment subcommittee in 2014 to improve efficiencies and link with the wider community of services supporting people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Young people are less likely to fall between the cracks because sectors are working together.

*These are real wins. I regularly see the youth class at TAFE, they are engaged and learning. There is now the potential for even more wins.*

TAFE partner



Above: Summer school for refugee and migrant students in Toowoomba

## Shoalhaven Student Pathways Pass

The Shoalhaven Student Pathways Pass Partnership has negotiated a 12 month trial for free bus travel across the Shoalhaven bus network for students who hold a current School Free Travel Pass with a local bus operator. In addition to their school service, this provides free bus transport for work experience, vocational training and additional off-school curriculum studies. This is the first time in NSW that such a scheme has been formally adopted and by more than one bus provider.

*New relationships have been forged for the betterment of the local community and seeds have been planted for future projects that will also hopefully see increased and more equitable transport options for the residents of the Shoalhaven.*

Council partner

The Shoalhaven Local Government Area is situated on the NSW South Coast. With a population of close to 100,000 people scattered throughout 49 towns and villages, transport is a perennial issue. It is especially important for the more than 6,000 secondary school students in the region. It can cost \$10 or more each way (even with a student discount) to reach the regional centre of Nowra from an outlying area.

Under the NSW School Student Transport Scheme, students are granted free travel to and from school with the bus operator which provides that journey. The problem for young people was two-fold – to be

able to travel to offsite vocational training and work experience, and to be able to travel across Shoalhaven using other bus providers. Five separate bus companies are contracted to provide services in the area.

It took nearly two years from the initial meeting which set up the partnership in May 2011 for the new pass to be available for students. Over the course of the partnership most Shoalhaven High Schools launched alternative curriculums for Year 11, requiring offsite vocational training and work experience for part of each week. This made free transport even more important for low-income students.

There were no contractual obligations from Transport NSW on any bus company to agree to the Shoalhaven Student Pathways Pass. It took attendance at a number of meetings of the relevant decision-making body - the Shoalhaven Transport Group - over approximately 18 months, to persuade the bus companies and Transport for NSW to agree to a solution. Central to this was developing a proposal which made use of services which were mostly under-utilised and was therefore cost neutral. Strategies included conducting a survey of 32 local educational and youth organisations to document the transport problems affecting young people (this evidence gave the partnership the initial invitation to the Shoalhaven Transport Group), and arranging for a Year 11 work placement student to present to a meeting of the bus companies. Her presentation made the problem real as she graphically



Above: Shoalhaven Student Pathways Pass Launch. Photo by Adam Wright, South Coast Register

described what a lack of transport meant for her, including struggling to attend classes held out of school hours, work experience travel costing \$20 a day and discontinuing with counselling services because of the cost of transport.

As one of the NGO partners stated, *it wasn't a new need, it was constantly being raised. What was new was that we had the Partnership Broker as a driver and resource.*

The Partnership has the potential to be replicated across NSW as a cost effective sustainable solution and information on the Shoalhaven scheme has been shared with all NSW regional Coordinators. There have also been discussions between the Shoalhaven bus companies and Transport NSW around fare parity following the achievement of the Student Pathways Pass.

Locally, partners have gained confidence around solving what was seen as an intractable issue and this has led to a flowering of other partnerships around transport, including working to identify solutions to gaps in transport for students in Homework Clubs, TAFE or other training related activities outside existing bus routes, as well as support to attend medical appointments.

Success required persistence, research and considerable negotiation skills. One of the early challenges was to inspire the youth not-for-profit community to believe that the problem was not too big to tackle and that they did not have to wait for more funding or for government to start owning it. As the Partnership Broker says *The principles of asset based community capacity building were central to this shift, they had to be led to stop thinking in a deficit model and look at a strengths based model.*

Other partners have also expressed similar views as to why the partnership was successful.

*The Partnership Broker was able to bring everyone together, leverage resources for the research and articulate the need and practical solution in a clear and concise way. She was passionate and followed through on everything. None of this could have happened without the Partnership Broker tying it all together and pushing it ahead.*

Non-government youth services partner



Above: Partnership Brokers' event

## 4. Partnerships to introduce the world of work

This section provides examples of partnerships focused on introducing the world of work to young people and inspiring them for the future. Employers are key partners and critical to their success. The initiatives have been evaluated, documented and replicated across schools or regions and a number have the potential to have national impact.

The partnerships are:

- The development of an Industry Facts and Job Pathways CD and mobile App resource.
- Using entrepreneurship as a window into work for students.
- Industry-led career workshops.
- The Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge.
- Queensland Museum and Yamaha Work Inspiration pilots.

### Industry Jobs and Pathways CD and Career Hunter App

*What are the industries that make up our economy? How many people work in them? What are the top 20 jobs in each industry? Where are the skill shortages? What are the pathways to those jobs? What industries will grow in the next five years, what will contract? How much can I earn doing that job?*

Brisbane South East and Redlands Partnership Brokers found there was no simple tool available which answered these questions for young people, their parents or teachers. Nor was there any simple tool for unemployed people and others looking to join or re-join the workforce. Feedback from teachers, career advisors and community groups working with young people was that information available on career choices was complex, time consuming to access and hard to navigate. A lot of the information sent to career advisors focuses on jobs requiring university qualifications or trades, with less focus on jobs requiring other vocational qualifications and non-professional roles. Once the gap was identified, the challenge was to develop a solution which contained enough information to be useful in a concise and easy to use format.

The initial partnership involved the federal department

responsible for compiling industry data, the Department of Employment<sup>9</sup>, Regional Development Australia (Brisbane) (RDA) and the South East Region of the Queensland Department of Education Training and Employment (DETE), together with the Partnership Brokers. The Partnership Brokers consulted with teachers, Vocational Education and Training Coordinators and deputy principals from state, independent and Catholic schools, staff of community organisations working with young people, Indigenous leaders, parents and Parent Associations, in order to develop and test a simple tool. Data was collected from various relevant websites.

The Australian Industry Facts and Job Pathways resource summarises key facts about the 19 industries that make up the Australian workforce. It explains: the size of each industry as a percentage of the entire workforce now and the expected growth over the next five years; employees by gender; the average wage for each sector within the industry; and outlines jobs which are difficult to fill. It also sets out most occupations within the industry and the career pathways and qualifications needed to attain them.

It gives young people the chance to look at careers that match skill shortages within each industry and gives teachers industry information which can simply be added to the current curriculum. The tool was launched as a CD resource at a forum organised with the partnership members including DETE and schools from across Brisbane.

*We knew from the launch where we distributed over 100 copies in a room of about 60 teachers we had hit a goldmine as far as impact was concerned.*

Partnership Broker

The resource was also piloted through The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program. Around 40 parents came together at an evening seminar where they were shown how to use the tool, both to help their children with subject selection and career information and to assist them with their own job and career options. All

<sup>9</sup> Formerly the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

attendees were given copies of the CD resource and nearly a year later, feedback from *Learning for Life* staff is that they are still using the tool and referring to the information they found in it.

The CD resource has been a great success with follow up requests from across Australia and New Zealand. Its popularity also created a challenge as the Partnership Broker says, *we were severely limited by the lack of physical copies that we had budgeted for*. One solution was to allow the tool to be uploaded onto websites. It was also promoted by Career Development Australia via their newsletter which has a national reach to 4,000 career advisors across Australia. Between August 2012 and March 2013, the site recorded over 1,000 hits on the tool.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive:

*There is such a great need for this information at schools, both for teachers who need to be educated about industries and career choices, but also for students and parents.*

VET Coordinator, state high school

*It is a really great idea to bring together such key statistical information about industries of employment into one tightly focused reference and link it with information about training pathways.*

Department of Employment officer

*Schools and young people need a more simple way of starting career searching strategies... you have nailed that process.*

Career Development Association of Australia

*This is great. You have captured critical industry information in a one stop shop format.*

Regional Development Australia (Brisbane)  
Executive Officer

Following its initial success, it was clear a better option was needed to distribute it more widely and keep it up to date. The solution - a mobile App - emerged following partners' attendance at the Click Digital Expo, hosted by RDA. The Career Hunter App transforms the resource into a much more interactive learning tool with the opportunity to enable data to be automatically updated and linked to current apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities and live job ads.



Above: The Career Hunter App.

In order to make the App a reality, the initial partnership was expanded and a range of agencies committed to financial and in-kind support for a three year period. The App has been very well received and number of national organisations have committed to ensuring its distribution is widespread including the National Employment Services Association, Group Training Australia, the RDA Network and My Career Match<sup>10</sup>. The Queensland DETE has also committed to forums in regional areas to launch the App and plans are underway for The Smith Family to run a series of local parent engagement workshops through the *Learning for Life* programs, on how to use the App.

<sup>10</sup> The Career Hunter partners have recently agreed to accept an offer from Busy at Work to host and manage the further development of the App.

## The Young Entrepreneurs program

*I was shy before doing the program, wow, now I can chair a meeting and boss people around.*

Female Indigenous student who returned to study after participating in the entrepreneur program

*I wasn't going to school very much in Year 11. If it was a day full of maths or English I'd do something else like go surfing. The young entrepreneur course, they made it fun, the business approach made me want to go there. The course showed me a lot of things I wanted to learn about business, things I needed to start a business.*

Student who now combines post-school studying at TAFE with running his own fashion business

*We've learned what the business world is like.*

Student participant

The Illawarra region is characterised by low Year 12 retention and attainment rates and has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in Australia. Designing new models to engage young people at school is a key priority for Partnership Brokers working in the region.

In mid-2010 the ANZ expressed interest in working directly with local young people and approached The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers due to an ongoing association between The Smith Family and ANZ.

*Previously we had tried a few one-off things, we wanted something more.*

ANZ District Manager

The Partnership Broker worked with them to develop a partnership that would reflect ANZ's core business skills - finance and customer service - as well as develop skills for disengaged young people, typically in Year 10 and aged 16. Two local community agencies with expertise in youth services (Access Community Group, the Youth Connections provider and CareWays Community) were brought in to help design and deliver an 'Interest Based Learning' model based on the premise that *if you spark a kid's passion, they will learn.*

Both Access and CareWays were interested in developing and testing this model of learning. They had never previously worked together and usually

competed for funding. The partnership provided an opportunity for them to pool their expertise and jointly develop the program. The partnership capitalised on the resources of ANZ which has 12 branches across the region, the community youth groups and key partners TAFE Illawarra and the NSW Department of Education and Training.

### The model

The Young Entrepreneurs program aims to re-engage young people in education through an interest based challenge. The challenge is to set up and run a micro business of their choice. Teams of young people meet one day per week for between 20 and 26 weeks and build their micro business from planning and developing to marketing and sales.

Learning avoids a classroom style format and takes place out of school and sometimes outdoors. Young people are formed into teams and they decide who will take responsibility for roles such as keeping minutes, doing research or making something. Roles can be rotated among the group and operational support is provided by the youth service provider.

The corporate business partners become mentors to the team and introduce the young entrepreneurs to the world of work in a friendly and constructive way. Volunteer micro business coaches, ideally with expertise in a similar business area, also work with the teams.

As the Illawarra Partnership Broker says, *it's not a training program; you have to run a micro business through a business cycle.*

### How it worked

In 2011, ANZ supported the formation of six teams of 10 to 12 participants across the Illawarra region. The teams included Indigenous and non-Indigenous young people, reflecting the diversity of the region. All students were identified by their schools as either 'at risk of disengaging' or already 'disengaged', with some not attending school at all. ANZ contributed a volunteer group of Branch Managers who acted as mentors to the teams and small seed funding of between \$300 and \$1,000 per team. ANZ staff helped teams set up bank accounts and provided mentoring on a personal level.

*We only gave one hour a week but have seen so much change.*

ANZ employee

Over the period each team brought their idea for a micro business to fruition. Business ideas included graffiti removal, jewellery making and marketing, T-shirt

printing, web design, commercial art and design, regeneration of an Aboriginal Reserve and domestic gardening.

Learning included personal development, building self-esteem, resilience, team building and basic business skills, including developing a business plan and putting it into operation. Access Community Group, which is a registered training provider, adapted and wove in units from certified training courses including business studies, land management, information technology, screen printing and retail services.

*They have experienced the complete sequence of events, emotions and thinking needed in forming an idea, planning for it and seeing it come to fruition.*

State high school head of welfare

At the end of the program, each team made a final presentation of their achievements and showcased their products at a mini expo and market day attended by parents, business mentors, coaches and teachers.

*We got to see them transform themselves, from something of a rabble, often unable to make eye contact or speak in a group, to articulate business people who could make presentations to a group of adults in the ANZ Boardroom as well as individually introduce themselves to Branch Managers.*

ANZ District Manager



Above: ANZ Young Entrepreneurs program.

## Outcomes

There have been a range of outcomes from the program including:

- 80% of the 130 participants who completed the program have either returned to school as engaged students, continued at school and are no longer disengaging, transitioned to post-school studies or entered the workforce in a VET area<sup>11</sup>.
- 80 students have achieved at least five units of competency from the Certificate II in Business Studies designed and delivered by Access Community Group. Eleven of the 80 also received an additional four units in design and IT and six attained additional competencies in the Certificate II in Land Management. Another 23 have attained Certificate I in retail services or car detailing.
- Two students have become apprentices and one student became an ANZ trainee.

*Another benefit for ANZ has been seeing the students realise that big business has an interest in them.*

ANZ District Manager

- Three of the 18 micro businesses are continuing to operate.
- One student who graduated in 2011 has kept his business operating for more than 18 months while continuing at school and completing his Higher School Certificate. Before participating in Young Entrepreneurs he attended school less than a day a week. After finishing the course he continued with his business and went back to school and completed Year 12. *I've made money from my business; I made enough profit to go to schoolies week.* He was accepted into a prestigious fashion design course at Sydney TAFE which he attributes to the young entrepreneur course. *It gave me the confidence to do what I wanted to do. Before I was scared to follow-up on fashion. The course gave me a portfolio, something I didn't know how to create.* He has also worked as a volunteer at Fashion Week and a year and a half after completing the young entrepreneur course, is combining his TAFE studies with working in his own fashion design business.
- Significant personal changes for the students reflected in increased motivation, purpose, self-esteem and improved learning outcomes.

<sup>11</sup> Data from 2011 and 2012 and includes young people aged between 15 and 17 years in Illawarra and Sydney.

# Improving young people's educational outcomes through school business community partnerships

The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers

*We witnessed a tremendous sense of pride and self-respect from the students.*

ANZ District Manager

*The students have an air of confidence and a positive attitude to their future, and are more confident in talking about goals, plans and ideas for their future.*

State high school head of welfare

## Role of the Partnership Brokers

The Partnership Brokers encouraged the ANZ to take a much greater role than initially intended by them and meet an identified need in the local community.

They also worked with partners to develop a 'Partnership Understanding' to ensure a shared vision and understanding of the roles of each partner. Partnership Brokers ensured communication between partners and provided a secretariat service for partnership meetings. They brokered specialised business coaches to support each team, documented the program and developed an evaluation strategy. In 2012 they worked closely



Above: ANZ Young Entrepreneurs program.

with two Partnership Broker sites in Sydney where ANZ was keen to replicate the program. The Bankstown and Penrith-Richmond program which commenced in 2012 has assisted 35 young people working in five teams.

The Young Entrepreneurs program is continuing in Illawarra and Sydney and operational guidelines have been sent to a further eight Partnership Broker regions across Australia who have expressed interest in running it in their areas.

## Power and Water Corporation

The Power and Water Corporation is the only supplier of utility services throughout the Northern Territory, providing services to 80,000 customers. It is one of the largest businesses in the Territory, employing over 1,000 people. Power and Water has a commitment to increase Indigenous employees to seven percent of their total workforce by 2020. One of their strategies is to engage Indigenous students while still in the middle years of school. To this end, they aim to form strong partnerships with five NT schools. Rosebery Middle School in Palmerston has been the first of these schools, an opportunity afforded by the Partnership Broker program.

The partnership has embodied the two way focus of bringing work into the classroom and taking the classroom to work. It brought the Indigenous employment consultant at Power and Water together with the Rosebery Middle School science teacher. Working together, the science teacher and Power and Water staff were able to enhance the science curriculum by providing a series of industry guest speakers in the classroom.

During Terms 3 and 4 of 2012, year 7 to 9 science students, their teacher and Power and Water staff turned an under-utilised garden into a 'mini-Darwin', renaming the beds into suburbs and installing water to each. Students were able to understand how water supply is established and maintained in a community. Additional benefits have seen the now-flourishing garden as a hands-on learning centre for design and technology and nutrition and health as it grows vegetables and incorporates a chicken coop. The garden has become a popular site for students with special needs who have also been actively engaged in these activities.

Science students have taken part in site visits to the Mitchell Centre, the commercial hub for the Power and Water Corporation and to the Ben Hammond complex,

a workshop facility in Darwin. For some students, this was the first time they have made the 20 kilometre journey from Palmerston. It was there that the science teacher saw a light bulb moment for his students when one of them said, *now I can see you can get paid to do science.*

Partners all agree it has been very valuable to have a structure and process with a Partnership Agreement, followed by developing together an agreed action plan which incorporates responsibilities for each partner and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Creating tools along the way, such as guidelines for Power and Water employees speaking to school students, ensures the program is relevant to the curriculum and makes replication a real possibility.

As a Power and Water employee says, *Doing it successfully with one school in one place gives us confidence to do it in others and confidence is a stronger concept than trust, it means actions flow.* The principal of Rosebery Middle School says: *the partnership has made the work with Power and Water faster and richer.*

Kormilda College is an independent school run jointly by the Anglican and Uniting Churches. It teaches Years 6 to 12, and serves approximately 900 students from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, including about 300 Indigenous students, the majority of whom are boarders and come from remote areas. Kormilda is the second school to partner with Power and Water and the learnings from the partnership with Roseberry Middle School have been transferred. In particular, there is great potential for Kormilda students to undertake work experience with Power and Water when they

return home to their remote communities. Already the adjustments to the science curriculum have been shared between the schools.



Above: Power and Water Corporation Partnership.

### Local Links Initiative 'Opening Real Pathways'

A number of partnerships have been developed by the Brisbane South East and Redlands Partnership Broker team to bring together businesses, schools and higher education agencies across South East Brisbane to deliver outcomes for young people.

Hosted by the South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, the Local Links Initiative is employer led and has been adopted into their constitution and strategic priorities. The Chamber works collaboratively with local schools to deliver activities focussed on inspiring local business leaders of the future. A major focus of the initiative has been the Chamber leading a partnership involving eight local schools across the state, independent and Catholic sectors, a local TAFE and university. Together they have developed a series of industry-led Opening Real Pathways workshops for students in Years 10 to 12 which focus on industry sectors with local employment opportunities. A School Liaison Sub-Committee has been formed to provide support. This involves Chamber members and is led by a School Liaison Coordinator who acts as a conduit between the Chamber and the sub-committee.

In October 2012, the concept was piloted with a Media, Information and Arts theme involving 80 students from six high schools and 10 local businesses. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. As a teacher reported, *the kids all came back smiling, it wasn't a chore for them to be there*. The concept was refined in 2013 to include TAFE

and university representatives. Students pre-selected three of the six 20 minute workshops, five of which were run by two local employers and the sixth with higher education representatives. The workshops explained the qualifications required and the breadth of career pathways to jobs in the industry, including how courses can link together with entry points and accreditation.

*We keep the workshops small, usually around 10 students at a time which gives them a chance to have a real conversation with employers and ask questions. They've had no problem finding willing employers. We go to Chamber members first and they use their contacts to bring in others if we have gaps.*

South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce  
President

At the March 2013 Health and Community services workshop, 180 students from five schools had the chance to discuss the range of careers available with professionals from across this diverse sector. Some students realised they wanted to rethink their choices after speaking directly with employers about their jobs and many students had new choices opened up to them.

*A Year 10 student originally had a desire to be a flight attendant but since attending the workshop she has now decided she would like to pursue a career as a midwife/nurse. This is exactly the type of student that I wanted to expose to something she hadn't ever considered.*

State high school staff member

Teacher involvement in the workshops has also ensured they gain contemporary industry knowledge to support their practice.

Through the partnership, schools have taken it in turns to host workshops and invite interested students from all local schools. Business students have also taken responsibility for events management to gain real life experience. This is more efficient for all partners, as the Chamber and local businesses don't have the capacity to duplicate workshops for every school and each school only has to host a workshop approximately once every three years but their students have access to all of them.

According to a Chamber member, *this streamlines the process for us and ensures no one school is overburdened*. The focus and scheduling of the workshops are collaboratively agreed amongst the partnership. *We set the dates and decide the host schools well*



Above: Local Links Initiative first workshop, hosted by Balmoral State High School

*in advance, giving everyone plenty of time,* says the Chamber President.

The aim is to involve all 12 schools; to date eight have joined with a good representation across the state, Catholic and independent sectors who were previously working in silos. As the Partnership Broker says, *we're slowly but surely knitting it together* and further workshops with employers in the hospitality and tourism and business industries are planned.

*Schools are now talking to each other and working together. There is tremendous value in seeing the impact on kids, giving them a chance to meet real employers in the field they think they may want to enter.*

South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce  
President

Participating schools have also joined the Chamber of Commerce which becomes another opportunity for them to strengthen ties with each other and local employers. As the local President of the Chamber says, *we encourage schools to bring their students to our business breakfasts and lunches.* The Chamber benefits from a wider membership but the real benefit, according to its President is *we're helping to grow the next generation of business leaders.*

Early work of the partnership included distributing an industry survey developed by the Partnership Broker to all Chamber members. This identified the type of support business, parents and community organisations could offer to local schools, including mentoring, mock interviews and work experience. The survey has helped identify businesses to participate in the Opening Real Pathways workshops. A growing database is being compiled and the Chamber has agreed to manage subsequent surveys or requests from schools, ensuring this continues. A Schools-Business webpage is under consideration with a view to potentially developing an interactive members' page where schools can match requests for help with available businesses.

The local provider of a program to support mentoring for apprentices and trainees has also been connected to businesses in the Chamber and schools through the Local Links Initiative. As a result, more employers are getting access to free mentor training to support trainees and apprentices attain their qualifications.

Information about this model is being shared with the Redlands Chamber of Commerce and Partnership

Broker for this area. The South East Brisbane Chamber of Commerce and the school cluster are now confirming commitments for the future, with a partnership agreement and support kit with roles and responsibilities now in place.

## Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

*We need to get young people into our industry. This is a way to make our industry sustainable.*

Australian Culinary Federation Queensland  
President

*This is a great opportunity for kids to develop hands on skills that they can use every day.*

State high school teacher

*It's given them an understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the job and the need for flexibility and quick thinking skills.*

Gold Coast teacher

*It's been a really great experience, we've learnt new skills, how to organise ourselves and get everything done within the hour and we really love working with Chef Daniel.*

Student finalist, 2011 Gold Coast Junior  
Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

The Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge is a competition for Year 10 students studying Home Economics or Hospitality run by the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland, the peak body for commercial cookery tradespeople and apprentices. Its aim is to encourage more students to enter the commercial cookery industry as well as gain confidence and learn about teamwork, healthy eating, and how food is grown and sourced.

The Gold Coast partnership brought together the Queensland branch of the Australian Culinary Federation, the local TAFE, a high school, Nutrition Australia, Queensland and Diabetes Australia, Queensland to develop the Challenge. Each partner had a particular interest and joined the partnership when the Culinary Challenge was identified as a great vehicle to achieve them.

## Improving young people's educational outcomes through school business community partnerships

The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers

The hospitality sector is one of the Gold Coast's most significant industries, employing one in ten residents and major skills shortages exist nationwide for chefs and food tradespersons. The region also hosts a growing agri-food industry, fuelled by an increasing consumer demand for sustainable paddock to plate produce. There are immediate and future labour and skills shortages in this area and in a rapidly developing health precinct.

At the same time, the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE was experiencing a declining number of students entering commercial cookery. They wanted to promote hospitality career pathways, showcase their facilities and forge closer links with the local high schools.

The Australian Culinary Federation Queensland already conducted a successful Year 11 and Year 12 Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge leading to the International Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge. They wanted to raise awareness of the career opportunities for students at an earlier stage, in time for their career planning and subject selection for Years 11 and 12, undertaken in the latter part of Year 10.

The Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge provided a focus to bring together students, teachers and industry over several months. The competition approach is particularly relevant for this industry as commercial cookery is done under significant time pressure – it mirrors what it's really like to work in a restaurant or hotel with paying customers waiting for the food prepared. Students also have the chance to

be ambassadors for their schools at an increasingly prestigious public event.

Judges are certified by the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland which develops the Challenge criteria, guidelines and policies for the competition, which are recognised within the industry worldwide. Each team must cook a main course with the same core ingredients and they are judged on the look and taste of the meal, that it's prepared within the timeframe, how they've worked as a team, and hygiene and safety in the kitchen. Competing students must also provide details of the ingredients and costs, nutritional balance and portion size.

Each participating school nominates a maximum of two teams of two students. Some schools run an in-school competition to determine who will represent them, others let students self-select. Students must be studying hospitality or Home Economics in Year 10. The head of the department of hospitality at one of the Gold Coast state high schools is a very active member of the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland and champion of the program. Her input was invaluable when designing the program to ensure it worked from the schools' point of view, in terms of scheduling and integration with the curriculum.

For schools who do not already have a chef or cook who can act as the industry mentor for their teams, the Federation will assist with establishing industry connections. The mentors work with the students to design their dish and develop their skills in the run up to the competition heats. In 2011, 25 Gold Coast



Above: David Tupper from the Australian Culinary Federation supervises students from 11 schools at the first Sunshine Coast Queensland masterclass event.  
Photo by Lee Shea from Sustainable Partnerships Australia

restaurants or hotels were involved. In addition to the chef mentors the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland conduct a series of Master classes, in conjunction with TAFE, to provide students and teaching staff with further skill development, food knowledge and cookery techniques.

For some, seeing the impact on students has re-energised them and made them want to stay in the industry.

*We are finding the chefs are getting a lot out of it. We see an increasing number of them coming to the competitions and becoming mentors.*

Australian Culinary Federation Queensland  
President

*The chef mentor was very important. To have mentors with such experience to oversee, comment and give advice for improvement was priceless.*

Parent

The Challenge is also a way of promoting the hospitality industry in the wider community – over 100 parents, teachers, students, industry sponsors and mentors cheered their teams on at the final in 2011. Local media cover the events, showcasing the students' achievements and the positive support they are receiving from the industry. It also provides an opportunity for students from across the range of Gold Coast schools to meet while participating in the event. In 2011 13 schools on the Gold Coast participated.

*We've learnt lots of techniques and things you need if you want to go into the hospitality industry.*

Student finalist, 2011 Gold Coast Junior  
Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

There is also the opportunity for participating students to enter the Year 11 and 12 Australian Culinary Federation competitions and even compete internationally.

Educators and parents have repeatedly commented on the engagement of the students in the competition, which translated into a greater willingness to participate in other school studies and activities.

*It has opened her eyes to the real world and what is expected in the industry.*

Parent

*Stepping out of her comfort zone...performing in front of a crowd of people was great for her confidence.*

Parent

The Challenge also incorporates nutrition, healthy eating and how food is grown and sourced. As student participants say, *we've learnt a lot about fresh produce and buying locally*. The kitchen becomes a venue for a hands-on maths lessons and what it's really like to work in a team under pressure.

*We've learnt to make sure you're ready with your partner and that the more we practice, the easier it's coming to us.*

Student finalist 2011, Gold Coast Junior  
Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

The pilot was expanded to the Darling Downs and Brisbane North in 2012, with the support of The Smith Family Partnership Brokers in these regions. Six schools and Bracken Ridge TAFE participated in Brisbane North. Four high schools representing private and state sectors in Toowoomba and the surrounding region participated, as well as the College of Wine Tourism in Stanthorpe and chefs, restaurant managers and resort operators. The final took place at the annual



Above: David Tupper from the Australian Culinary Federation supervises students at the first Sunshine Coast masterclass event. Students left to right – Joshua Santari (Pacific Lutheran College) and Taylah Holt (Glasshouse Country Christian College). Photo by Lee Shea from Sustainable Partnerships Australia

Toowoomba Wine and Food Festival which showcases fresh regional food.

*For the industry, it's a chance to see some prospective young apprentices as well as give something back.*

Ex-chef and trainer at hospitality training organisation, Toowoomba

In 2013 the challenge involved six Queensland regions using the expertise of the Partnership Broker program and supported by a formal Memorandum of Understanding between the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland and the Partnership Broker State Network. The Federation elected a member as coordinator to work with the Partnership Broker in each region.

*They added a level of professionalism and helped it be sustainable and grow at a much faster rate.*

Australian Culinary Federation Queensland President

In 2013, 52 schools and 190 students representing the six Queensland Regions participated in the Challenge. Each region conducted a regional cook-off final, identifying the top two teams who travelled to the Brisbane EKKA where the Grand Final Cook off was staged. The Challenge offered over \$4,000 in prize money donated by industry sponsors. The students prepared their meals in purpose built kitchen workstations in front of a large spectator crowd.

The Challenge has already had a big impact on students' careers. To date, 20 young people at the Gold Coast and eight from Toowoomba have moved into school based apprenticeships or trainee opportunities in commercial cookery as a direct result.

*Hospitality was maybe in the back of our heads and this completion has pushed it forward, we're doing it in Year 11 next year.*

Student finalist, 2011 Gold Coast Junior Secondary Schools Culinary Challenge

Winning an encouragement award at the Darling Downs Challenge has been life changing for one student. Through the competition he identified that Commercial Cookery was a career that he wished to pursue, however opportunities were very limited in the Darling Downs. His family made the decision to move to the Sunshine Coast and through the Australian Culinary Federation Queensland's network, he was offered an apprenticeship. Prior to this he was not achieving

academically or at sport, had low self-esteem and was fairly disengaged from school.

The Challenge revitalised the hospitality curriculum and in-classroom learning experiences for participating students. As a direct result of the Challenge, the Gold Coast Hospitality and Home Economic teaching staff network, bringing together all educational sectors was created, to provide quality professional development and to act as a support network. Working with the Gold Coast TAFE, the network developed a Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) specifically for teaching staff's professional development. To date 16 educators have completed this qualification.

## Queensland Museum - Work Inspiration

*What are the big issues facing our world today? What is the role of a museum? If you could collect anything, what would it be?*

These were the questions posed to students who spent three days of their summer holidays in 2013 behind the scenes at the Queensland Museum trialling a new approach to work experience.

*I think it's really useful for young people to experience things, not just learn it from a book or just talk about it in a classroom. Some of the most important things that you learn is how to work with people, and how to work in an organisational setting, understanding what those dynamics are, and where your job fits. It's not just about having knowledge in a specific technical thing, it's about how to communicate that and how to make it work in a bigger setting.*

Museum employee

Eleven students entering Years 10, 11 and 12 from nine schools across the North West of Brisbane took part in an intensive three-day Work Inspiration<sup>12</sup> project at the Queensland Museum. Work Inspiration programs generally include two to five days in the workplace and involve a series of career conversations that give students insights about themselves, the roles at the workplaces they visit, and how careers happen<sup>12</sup>.

The young people involved in the Queensland Museum

<sup>12</sup> Work Inspiration is an employer-led campaign that aims to ensure that young Australians' first experience of the world of work is meaningful and inspiring. It was introduced to Australia by the National Partnership Broker Network in 2011. In 2013 the Foundation for Young Australians, The Smith Family and the National Australia Bank became the founding partners responsible for piloting the approach in Australia. Work Inspiration evaluation report 'Work Inspiration: Findings and lessons from the Australian pilots' August 2013 <http://bit.ly/1dgk4qm>

initiative visited the South Bank Museum as well as the Museum's suburban facility which houses loans, storage, artefact restoration and the development of educational resources. Students met 15 employees working across all aspects of the Museum including the scientific and cultural research areas, exhibition design, business units, loans and the Queensland Museum Foundation. The Museum's CEO, Dr Ian Galloway welcomed the students on their first morning.

*It was really quite eye opening for the students to see within a museum there's so much work going on behind the scenes in some really specialised areas. They can see that school is not just about doing the equations and the boring part of maths or science, but that there are these really interesting research opportunities at the end.*

Museum employee

The Museum initially spoke with Partnership Brokers from The Smith Family for help in arranging focus groups with young people. The 15 to 18 years demographic is difficult to engage and the Museum wanted to identify ways to increase their attendance.

*We were really interested in getting young people's insights into how the Museum could improve its own services. We want to co-create with our community.*

Museum employee

The Partnership Broker saw it was a good fit for a Work Inspiration pilot and suggested the Museum offer a learning experience for students at the same time as obtaining their ideas about how to encourage more young people to come to the Museum. The key for Work Inspiration and many other youth attainment and



Above: Queensland Museum Work Inspiration Program

transition partnerships is that it provides a benefit to both students and employers.

The opportunity was promoted in state high schools and students were asked to submit their written applications directly to the Museum. The Partnership Brokers and Museum staff worked together to produce the promotional poster, application form and student Workbook.

Work Inspiration uses three key Insights to explore career pathways directly with staff across an organisation or business and the Workbook gives an opportunity for students to record *what they saw, who they met, how they felt.*

Insight One 'All about me' takes students through a personality profiling exercise, focussing on their passions and interests. Insight Two 'Look behind the scenes' provides an overview of the range of jobs that might appeal to the young person, based on their personality profile. This provided an opportunity to investigate roles in the Museum and particularly those that matched their identified personality type.

*We were quite keen to show young people that the Museum does a lot more than they think. It is so much more than the exhibitions. We have full scientific research that is active every day and a gigantic loans facility and storage facility that is still in the heart of Brisbane.*

Museum employee

Student engagement escalated over the three days.

*Students after a period of time were not just responding to our questions but posing questions back, that's when you can see the value.*

Museum employee

Insight Three 'Careers Happen' asks students to choose one of the employees they met and create a story board showing their education, work history, career path and bumps along the way.

*There was value for the staff in being asked how they got to where they are. We also saw some honest and funny conversations happening with students and staff. Some people you never see on the floor can become the heroes of this program.*

Museum employee





Above: Queensland Museum Work Inspiration Program

Students also worked in small groups to develop their ideas for new museum experiences, which was a good opportunity to develop friendships with peers from different schools. They presented their ideas to senior managers at the end of the three days, explaining their idea, who it was targeted to and why the Museum should do it. It was their opportunity to contribute to something at the heart of the organisation and it was the Museum's chance to hear directly from young people about what would appeal to them.

*The biggest benefit of Work Inspiration was that we were able to get young people's perspectives on how our organisation works. A lot of the time they were pointing out things 'why is it being done like that?' It makes us question it, 'well maybe we shouldn't be doing it like that, maybe we should try it a different way.'*

Museum employee

Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. They particularly liked seeing behind the scenes and speaking with everyone in each of the different departments and learning about their career paths.

*It gave me lots of ideas about options for my career. It has made me think twice about what career I want to pursue.*

Student

*The students were also inspired by the fact that people who work here are actually really passionate about their jobs and are able to convey that passion.*

Museum employee

The staff who participated were very positive about the experience and demonstrated a high level of buy-in, as was reflected in follow-up comments such as *how do we make this more engaging or more meaningful for the students?*

*By getting young people involved and speaking directly to the people who make things happen at the Museum, we were able to get a much better insight into what would be a more effective and engaging experience for that market in the future.*

Museum employee

Participants are enjoying their ongoing engagement with their 'insider at the Museum.' The Museum is also exploring the possibility for participants to take on roles as Museum Ambassadors at their schools. Another Work Inspiration was run at the Queensland Museum in the 2013-14 summer holidays. There are also plans to discuss expansion to their other sites across the state: Cobb and Co in Toowoomba, the Museum of Tropical Queensland in Townsville and The Workshops Rail Museum in North Ipswich.

## Yamaha Student Grand Prix – Work Inspiration

*Bringing in companies like Yamaha has changed participants' view of schooling. The feedback from parents is that they are a lot more engaged, they try harder, they're keen to come to school, and their marks are improving. It's shifted their attitude towards education, which is really fantastic.*

Year 9 teacher

*I want to go to school as I know what I can get out of it, what careers I can take.*

Student participant

*The Yamaha program in schools is to not only find really good people to work in the industry, it's also a way to give focus to those who at risk of disengaging from schooling. We've been able to show them that there are employment pathways beyond school but that you actually need a solid grounding in your junior years, before you go onto further study.*

Year 9 teacher

The South East Queensland Yamaha partnership is one of the Work Inspiration pilot programs supported by The Smith Family and the Foundation for Young Australians. Yamaha Motor Australia and associated industries have been experiencing a skills shortage in marine and motorcycle mechanics, partly due to competition from the expanding mining sector. Yamaha

decided to try to reverse this trend and recruit school leavers but as their National Manager for Training says, *we've struggled to communicate our message to school students. The Partnership Broker program came to our rescue and made the connection between ourselves and the schools. They've been able to get the message into schools about the industry, and really have been a bit of a life saver for us.*

Commencing with a Partnership Broker team from another provider in Sydney in 2011, the partnership expanded to South East Queensland in 2012 at Yamaha's request. This was due to the size of their business and demand for new employees there.

In 2012 the partnership spanned parts of Brisbane and the Gold Coast serviced by Yamaha Motor Australia as well as eight local dealerships, two high schools (Sandgate District State High School and Upper Coomera State College), and two TAFE facilities (the Coomera Marine Campus of the Gold Coast Institute of TAFE and the Bracken Ridge Campus of SkillsTech Australia).

The partnership also offers a competition for students - the Yamaha Student Grand Prix. The Queensland Yamaha Student Grand Prix partnership creates opportunities for students in Year 9 to have a first-hand experience of the marine and motorcycle mechanics industries. Engagement at this stage of high school is seen as ensuring students get a chance to make senior subject selections and stay engaged with education. This has been developed by the partnership, modified



Above: Yamaha Student Grand Prix Work Inspiration Program

## Improving young people's educational outcomes through school business community partnerships

The Smith Family's Partnership Brokers

from Yamaha's already prestigious Grand Prix industry competition for technicians. Basing the student Grand Prix on the existing competition meant it was easy to explain it to the industry and get buy-in from Yamaha employees. It has also been another opportunity to connect teachers and students with industry. Alongside the Student Grand Prix, teachers from the two schools competed in a challenge with the assistance of their students. Through the collaboration of three regions, the Inaugural Yamaha Student Grand Prix was created and held concurrently in Sydney and Brisbane in 2012.

### Benefits of the approach

Yamaha Motor Australia, with their associated dealerships, has led this partnership. There has been interaction with multiple members of the organisation from senior management to local technicians in the dealership and various levels in between. The strong commitment shown by Yamaha has been extended by inviting other industry players, including competitors,

to participate in future years so it can help address the industry-wide skill shortage. The benefits of being a major employer with high brand recognition meant other employers were willing to join the partnership. At school too, *everyone acknowledged Yamaha as a big player*, says a Year 9 teacher.

The partnership has had an impact on a large number of students. In 2012, more than 340 Year 9 students attended assemblies at two high schools where Yamaha brought staff and some products (a motor bike and a wave runner) to demonstrate and explain the skills and career paths available to them. It also started a conversation for many students, even those not interested in motor or marine mechanics about, *what career path might I like to follow and how can school play a role?* For some students, it brought a realisation that work did not just have to be about earning money and *that they could do a job they loved*. The success of this approach has inspired the schools to bring other employers face-to-face with Year 9 students to have career discussions.

It has had a deep impact on students who selected to find out more about the motorcycle and marine industries, including:

- Excursions to TAFE and associated businesses near the port in Brisbane and the Gold Coast City marina for 85 students.
- A training day for 25 students with Yamaha technicians at a Yamaha training facility.
- Selected students from each school being offered the chance to compete in the Yamaha Student Grand Prix.
- Winners and families from the Student Grand Prix attending the Yamaha Technicians Grand Prix, featuring dealer representatives from across Australia and New Zealand.

These hands on opportunities have been exceptionally popular with students.

*I've never seen permission slips come in so fast, there's no chasing them.*

Year 9 teacher

The Grand Prix competition also created a buzz within the schools and the chance for students who were not necessarily academic or sporty to represent their school.



Above: Yamaha Student Grand Prix Work Inspiration Program

*It gave status and an opportunity to shine for kids who are practical and want to pursue a vocational career.*

Partnership Broker

It has provided an opportunity to involve parents and other family members including those not necessarily likely to attend school career sessions. As the Partnership Broker says, *coming to a workshop can be a lot less intimidating than going into a classroom or school.* As one father commented, *it's been a lot more than another one of those school excursions that you do once and forget about.* Another father, while proudly watching his son compete in the Student Grand Prix said, *I would have loved to have done something like this when I was your age.*

The initiative has had a positive impact on the local TAFE and schools too. TAFE was looking to move away from marine technician training due to a perception that the marine industry was in decline and didn't have a need for technicians. The Partnership Broker initiated a conversation between TAFE, Gold Coast City Marina and local industry to raise awareness of industry needs. This contact and the Yamaha program provided TAFE with new information, industry insights and connections to re-think their training course and extend options for a Certificate II traineeship pathway.

A Year 9 student from Upper Coomera State College has commenced a school based traineeship with a Gold Coast Yamaha dealer. School has adjusted his timetable to allow TAFE and work placement time for the now Year 10 student – something that had not been undertaken before for a Year 10 student.

As a Gold Coast TAFE teacher said, *we haven't really done anything like this before with industry, it's been really different and new for us. The partnership has been very good for us and now it looks like we can offer a motor mechanic apprenticeship as well as pathways to marine mechanics. Other industries and trades could follow this lead.*

With strong endorsement from the local businesses who had participated in the partnership, Sandgate High School was successful in their application for a Trade Training Centre.



Above: Yamaha Student Grand Prix Work Inspiration Program

# 5. Conclusion

The partnerships included in this report highlight that:

- Effective partnerships are based on mutual benefit, take time to develop and flourish from having an independent broker. Partnership Brokers have worked as connectors, facilitators and enablers. Each is critical to the success of the partnerships and are valued by schools, employers and other key partners.
- In many cases Partnership Brokers have been able to bring together seemingly competing interests and work successfully across different sectors. The skills of Partnership Brokers are highly regarded by partners and have been critical to the success of the partnerships.
- The close alignment between the mission of The Smith Family and the objectives of the Partnership Broker program has contributed to the success of the partnerships, as have the provision of existing relationships, knowledge and complementary programs provided by The Smith Family such as Learning for Life.
- The benefits derived from operating in more than one region include improved performance from sharing of learnings, provision of professional development and faster and more numerous replications of effective partnerships.
- Skilful Partnership Brokers have helped unlock community solutions to seemingly intractable long-standing problems and improved the wellbeing and educational attainment of disadvantaged students.
- They have brought together representatives from community groups, education sectors, business and other key players to ensure solutions are mutually beneficial and sustaining.
- Strong employer engagement has been critical to the success of partnerships which offer windows into the world of work aimed at improving engagement, attainment and successful transitions.
- Local partnerships have identified gaps, researched and tested solutions to nationally recognised problems.
- Limited engagement of State and Territory jurisdictions by the Commonwealth in the early stages of the program, and a time lag in producing clear materials, impacted on key partners' understanding of the program.
- The nature of relatively short-term funding contracts is at odds with the program's strategic intent and has partially impacted on the ability of proven partnerships to share lessons and replicate to other regions.



Above: Partnership Brokers. Image supplied by the Australian Government Department of Education.

## APPENDIX

### About the study

The author interviewed all senior The Smith Family Partnership Brokers by phone to identify one to two partnerships in each region which had had significant impact, either locally or nationally. In all cases these were mature partnerships with established successful outcomes. She then visited five of the six regions during January and February 2013 where she interviewed 15 Partnership Brokers and approximately 20 partners involved in the partnerships covered in this report. In particular around 10 employer, education and non-government organisation partners working with the three Darwin partnerships generously gave of their time for focus group interviews lasting several hours each. Unfortunately the planned visit to the Darling Downs was thwarted by flooding and poor road conditions in late January 2013.

In addition, six Partnerships Brokers were interviewed by phone as well as a further five partners. The report also drew on a large number of interviews by Partnership Brokers of employers, students, teachers and other partners which had been pre-recorded or recorded during in late 2012 and 2013, particularly in relation to the three Work Inspiration pilots.

Other material written by The Smith Family Partnership Brokers in the regions was examined including partnership snapshots, case studies, regional environmental scans and strategic plans.

A workshop with the Partnership Broker Managers from the four Queensland sites was held in late February following completion of the site visits. A number of senior staff at The Smith Family were also consulted during the course of the study.

Questions to partners focused on:

Why did they get involved with the partnership?

Why did they stay involved?

What are the greatest achievements so far?

What has been difficult along the way?

What was most valuable about the role of the Partnership Brokers?

Questions to Partnership Brokers covered the above, as well as:

What was there before the partnership or have you filled a gap?

What is relevant about The Smith Family as an organisation delivering the program?

Have you linked with other Smith Family programs in your area?

What qualities are most valuable in the role of the Partnership Broker?

Additional information on the partnerships in this report and other partnerships can be found at The Smith Family website [www.thesmithfamily.com.au](http://www.thesmithfamily.com.au)

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Toni has advised Ministers and Shadow Ministers in Australia from across the political spectrum, as well as business, non-profit organisations and unions. She has also worked in the UK, USA and Japan, including as Research Director for the UK's National Employment Panel, an employment-led organisation advising UK Ministers on labour market policies and performance.

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**THE SMITH FAMILY**

Originally established in 1922 to provide traditional welfare services, The Smith Family is a national, independent children's charity helping young Australians in need to get the most out of their education, so they can create better futures for themselves.

**Our vision**

A better future for young Australians in need.

**Our belief**

Every child deserves a chance.

**Our mission**

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

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