



Nevaeh, Jacob and Sebastian

# Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives.

Spring 2019



*everyone's family*

## You are helping students to overcome lifelong disadvantage

**I can't thank you enough for your support. Your generous gifts to students in need last a lifetime.**

Living in poverty can have a devastating effect on a child's life. Without books and learning materials at home, many disadvantaged children start school already behind.

Each year, the poverty they're experiencing widens the gap between them and their classmates. Over time, they fall behind, lose confidence and may leave school early.

Without the chance to complete Year 12, securing work is more challenging. Sadly, the cycle of poverty can then continue with their own children.

When your generosity is combined with that of thousands of other caring supporters, it empowers students to overcome the barriers of poverty at every stage of their education. Inside, you'll hear why 18-year-old Alice says speaking to an adult mentor through *iTrack* changed her life. I hope you enjoy the stories throughout.

Thank you for helping students to break the cycle of poverty – that's a future that benefits all Australians.



**Dr Lisa O'Brien**  
**Chief Executive Officer**



# THANK YOU!

**Our supporters donated \$5.02 million to our Winter Appeal, which will provide 11,952 children with the vital learning and mentoring program support they need in Term 3 and 4.**

# Disadvantage at every stage

In Australia, 1.1 million children and young people live in poverty.\*



## EARLY YEARS

### The challenge

Children growing up in poverty often start school already behind their peers.

### How you help

Our early-years programs help young children to develop the reading and numeracy skills before starting school.



## PRIMARY YEARS

### The challenge

Disadvantaged children often need extra help with reading and homework. Without it, they can lose confidence in themselves and are less likely to participate in class.

### How you help

Your support provides access to our learning programs that help children catch up on core skills, complete their homework and gain the confidence they need to participate in class.



## SECONDARY YEARS

### The challenge

Limited access to support to guide study/career paths makes it difficult for students to set career goals and know how to achieve them.

### How you help

Our mentoring programs provide opportunities for students to talk to adults from a range of professions who help them build aspirations for the future.



## POST-SCHOOL YEARS

### The challenge

Without access to a network for advice, students can find it hard to manage the demands of study and the transition to employment.

### How you help

We help disadvantaged young people to study at university or TAFE and provide specialised support to help them navigate the transition to employment.

\* Poverty in Australia, 2018, ACOSS/UNSW Report.

## Early support gave Kellyanne's children a great start to school

**When Kellyanne's husband had to stop working due to disability, everything turned upside down. The couple were juggling three young children, one of whom had autism. With so many challenges at home, the children were at risk of starting school already at a disadvantage.**

While Kellyanne understood the importance of reading to her children, she struggled to find the time and didn't have money to buy books. So before Kellyanne's youngest children started school, we connected them to our *Let's Read* program, which you help to make possible. It gives parents tips about reading to their children and free books to enjoy together.

"I remember when my daughter, Nevaeh, got the book 'Dear Zoo'. I think we read it 10 times a day for at least a couple of months. She was 12 or 18 months old at that time," said Kellyanne.

Now Nevaeh is six years old and excels at reading.

**"Recently I had the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools assessment come back for Nevaeh. She was in the top 96th percentile in Australia for her literacy. She's reading big books!" said Kellyanne.**

When Kellyanne was able to return to work, she jumped at the chance to train as a *Let's Read* facilitator. And she loves seeing how it benefits the whole family.

"I tell families about the early reading tips sheets, DVDs, free books and other resources available at the local library. They can put the DVDs on and the kids can read along with the TV, or even just watch them and still be exposed to literature," said Kellyanne.



Kellyanne and her children  
(Left to right: Jacob, Nevaeh and Sebastian)

**"In communities with low literacy, the program helps the whole family. When I was a child, my dad learned to read when my mum was teaching me. I think that happens in this community as well."**

Kellyanne's eldest child, Jacob, was in kindergarten when he was diagnosed with autism. He was able to go to a mainstream school but needed extra learning support. Reading to an older student buddy through another of our literacy programs, *student2student*, did wonders for Jacob's confidence.

"The problem Jacob was having was more to do with comprehension and confidence. He has caught up since doing *student2student* twice," said Kellyanne.

"Because Jacob is autistic, he lacks social skills. Reading to another student helped him a lot. He really looked forward to the phone call. It was something special for him.

**"I don't know how to thank The Smith Family's supporters. It's hard to put into words, but they've helped our family a lot!"**

**“I don’t know how to thank The Smith Family’s supporters. It’s hard to put into words, but they’ve helped our family a lot!”  
said Kellyanne.**

Nevaeh, *Let’s Read* participant



## EARLY YEARS

### The challenge

Children growing up in poverty often don’t have books and learning materials at home and therefore start school already behind their peers.

### How **YOU** help

Our early-years programs help young children to develop the reading and numeracy skills they need before starting school. Through programs such as *Let’s Read* and *Let’s Count*, we provide training and resources for parents and early childhood educators who work with disadvantaged families and their children.

**24,332**  
children aged from birth  
to five participating  
in *Let’s Read*

## Learning Club helps Phoenix to learn at her highest level

**When Phoenix's mother, Stacey, left an unsafe home environment to protect her daughters, she found herself alone with no support. Then an accident put her in hospital. Throughout it all, our programs have ensured her daughter, Phoenix, could keep doing her best at school.**

"After leaving my ex-husband...I didn't ask anyone for help because I didn't want to admit what was going on in our marriage. There was domestic violence and I was very embarrassed," said Stacey.

"Then we were in an accident. My daughters and I were in a dance studio and a driver drove into the building. I got my daughters out of the way, but I got hit badly. I was in the Intensive Care Unit with broken ribs, a head injury and second-degree burns on my back."

Research shows that the early years of life play a key role in laying the foundations for children's future learning and lifetime outcomes.<sup>1</sup> Stacey didn't want their hardship at home to affect Phoenix's education. But focusing on her recovery as well as trying to help Phoenix with homework was too much to do by herself.



Phoenix, Learning Club participant

So we enrolled Phoenix in our *Learning Club* program. It's a safe and supportive space outside of school where Phoenix gets help with her homework from volunteer tutors.

"Before *Learning Club*, Phoenix lacked some confidence. Now she's much more confident reading out loud. She really animates words and acts out what's going on in the book," said Stacey.

**"Phoenix is very spirited. She wants more homework. She's always asking questions. She really loves Learning Club because there's always more. It's just a lovely program."**

"And she's so happy there because she is seeing her friends and building best friendships. So *Learning Club* has become her special time."

Now Phoenix is going from strength to strength at school. And Stacey is so grateful to all the supporters like you who are helping Phoenix to reach her potential.

"Many of the volunteer tutors are university students. So Phoenix gets to interact with people who are more mature than her. It is a really great group of peers modelling good behavior," said Stacey.

"Because of that extra time at *Learning Club*, I could see the difference between Phoenix and some of her peers. She has even been nominated by her teacher for the Student Representative Council.

**"I feel like we've received a lot of personal support from The Smith Family. We're very lucky."**

1. McLachlan R, Gilfillan G & Gordon J (2013) *Deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia*, rev., Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper: Canberra

# Our students love *Learning Club*

Read some of their heart-felt messages here.

## From parents:

Learning Club has given Chbe more confidence in all aspects of her schooling as well as building on current friendships & it also gives her something to look forward to after school.

Marcus now completes his weekly homework without meltdowns and stress which used to affect the whole family. Completing his homework means rewards at school on Friday.

## From students:

Because my parents don't know lots of English so coming here has helped me when I don't understand my homework.

12-year-old Rakulan

I like coming to Learning Club because I can finish my homework quicker than I would at home because there's no one there to help me finish it.

12-year-old Massah

It helps me with reading and writing and I feel really safe and it makes me want to go to school.

11-year-old Matilda



## PRIMARY YEARS

### The challenge

Students' participation in learning is strongly linked with their long-term academic success. Yet disadvantaged students report lower levels of engagement than their advantaged peers.

### How YOU help

Our *student2student* reading program and *Learning Clubs* help students to develop core literacy and numeracy skills, complete their homework and do their best at school.



In 2017-18, of students agreed that going to a *Learning Club* helped them do better in class

## Having a mentor boosted Alice's confidence about the future

**For a disadvantaged student, setting goals and making a plan for the future can be daunting. Our iTrack program connects students in Years 9 to 11 with volunteer mentors from professional backgrounds. Alice gained a lot from her mentor's guidance.**

### **Q. Why did you take part in iTrack?**

"iTrack is a good opportunity to get the point of view of someone else who isn't a friend or relative. Your mentor can give you advice that nobody else can give you, or that no one else has experienced in your circle."

### **Q. What did you learn from your mentor?**

"My mentor definitely changed my life. I feel more motivated and confident."

"I learned to keep studying and that it works. And when I was going for a job interview, my mentor gave me some tips. She told me, 'Don't worry. It will be scary, but just be confident.' She told me to practise answering questions with a friend beforehand."

### **Q. What advice will you never forget?**

"My mentor wrote me a card that said, 'Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the things you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.'"

"It meant something to me. It felt really nice and warmed my heart."



iTrack participant, Alice

### **Q. What are your goals for the future?**

**"I want to become a primary school or kindergarten teacher. But I do also have a back-up plan of being a hairdresser, just in case."**



# You connect students to career advice and networks

**Sam has a successful career and decided to give back as a volunteer mentor through *iTrack*.**

“I’m in quite a senior role. I’m probably 5-10 years ahead of the curve realistically. This happened because I got lucky in relation to mentors and networks,” said Sam.

Evaluations of mentoring highlight that mentors can form a ‘bridging’ and ‘bonding’ function. Bonding strengthens the social networks of the young person. And bridging helps a young person to seek out new opportunities which might lie outside their realm of experience.<sup>1</sup> It is something Sam understands well.

“Many people are in senior roles because they’ve got strong networks,” said Sam.

**“For those students who grow up in disadvantage, they might not have a network or someone who is going to sit down with them and say, ‘Hey, this is how you do it. I can introduce you to so-and-so.’”**

“One of my students wanted to play AFL. Together we researched the recruitment process for the AFL. We also discovered that he was interested in studying physiotherapy as part of that journey. By the end of *iTrack*, he had a solid plan for where he wanted to go. It was studying physiotherapy whilst working hard to join the AFL.

**“Being an *iTrack* mentor is about giving students that leg up, because no one in their circle can give them that. What I really want for my mentees is to see them define their goals, then go out and achieve them.”**



Sam, *iTrack* mentor



## SECONDARY YEARS

### The challenge

Many factors can limit secondary school students, including lack of access to technology. Lower confidence levels and limited access to support network can make it difficult for students to set career goals and know how to achieve them.

### How YOU help

We help secondary school students to stay engaged, create aspirations and plan future study and career pathways. Many students lack supportive networks, so we provide them opportunities to talk to adults from a range of professions. We do this through our *iTrack* online mentoring program, university campus visits and career exposure days.

1. Phillip, K. (2008). *She's My Second Mum: Young People Building Relationships in Uncertain Circumstances*. *Child Care in Practice* 14, 1, January: 19-33.

# Now Zahra has her foot in the door for her career

**Zahra was 11 years old when she arrived in Australia. Her family had fled their home in Afghanistan due to the war. With a fresh start, Zahra put her best efforts into her education. But pursuing her career was always going to be more difficult without any networks here. Then she was accepted into our *Cadetship to Career* program.**

“My parents fought hard for us to have a better future than they did overseas. Mum had no chance to finish her education and women weren’t able to work. My family is so proud and happy I have the opportunity of a better life to look forward to,” said Zahra.

When Zahra was accepted to university, it was a huge milestone. And she really appreciates all the amazing people who helped her achieve her goal. Thanks to supporters like you, Zahra was able to take part in our learning programs during high school. And financial support from our sponsors means she can now afford the extra cost of university textbooks and materials.

“Ten years ago it would have been impossible for me to imagine what I’ve achieved,” said Zahra.

**“I dreamt big because I knew I had support and motivation from The Smith Family to help me achieve my dreams. I was inspired. Now I’m in my third year of university and studying a Bachelor of Biomedical Engineering.”**

Yet without networks and role models from professional backgrounds, many disadvantaged students lack the guidance and opportunities to help them break into their career. That’s why participating in our *Cadetship to Career* program has been life-changing for Zahra.

“*Cadetship to Career* offers networking events. That’s where I made the connection with my employer, which is a biomedical company. The program gives young adults like me a head start in the workplace before we finish university,” she said.

## What is *Cadetship to Career*?

***Cadetship to Career* is a youth employment program developed by The Smith Family and the Business Council of Australia. It links our tertiary students with employers for paid cadetship opportunities. This helps students to develop practical experience and skills for future employment.**

Employers provide the cadets with:

- eight weeks’ full-time paid employment per year for the duration of their sponsorship (typically between two to four years)

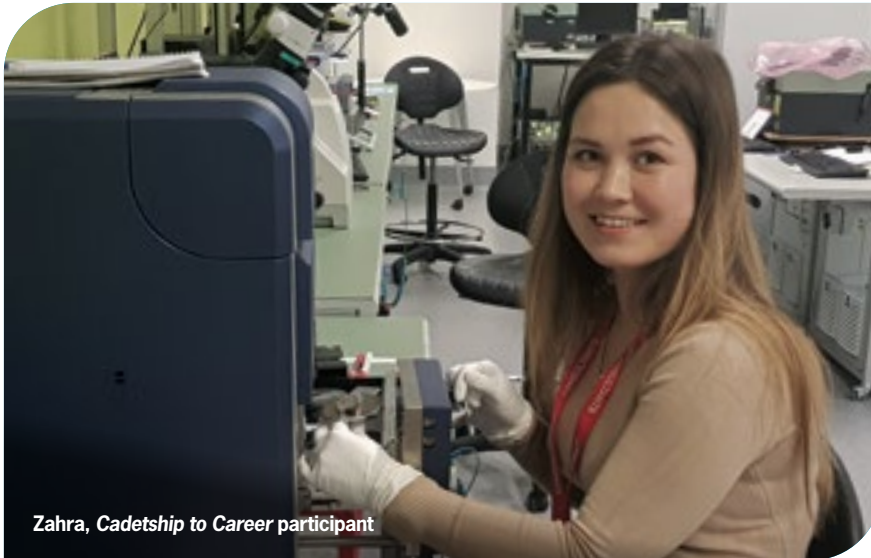
- training in skills that are important to succeed in the workforce
- the prospect of a graduate role when cadets complete their studies
- the opportunity to explore career options and build valuable networks.

Cadets also receive:

- the continued support of tertiary sponsorship to assist with education-related expenses
- participation in workshops to develop further workforce skills.



## POST-SCHOOL YEARS



Zahra, Cadetship to Career participant

Around 41% of 24 year olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not fully engaged in work or study, compared to 17% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds.<sup>1</sup> Acquiring such tangible experience and making inspiring connections is a powerful springboard for Zahra's long-term success.

**“My cadetship is amazing. It has given me opportunities I could never have anticipated. I now have a better understanding about my future career, which helps me perform better at university,” said Zahra.**

“It expands on my university learnings in a workplace environment while allowing me to network and see what types of jobs there are in the industry.

**“I’m so grateful! I’m always learning from my workplace mentors who are there to help me reach my potential. My dream career is to work with medical technology design or fixing prosthetics, like artificial limbs.”**

<sup>1</sup> Lamb, S, Jackson, J, Walstab A, and Huo, S (2015), *Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Mitchell Institute, Melbourne.

### The challenge

Many students we support are the first in their family to study at tertiary level. Without access to a network that can provide study and career advice, students can find it hard to manage the demands of study and the transition to employment.

### How YOU help

We help disadvantaged young people to study at university or TAFE and transition to work. Through our partnership with the Business Council of Australia (BCA), last year 78 sponsored students received cadetships with BCA member companies. Our sponsors also provide students with financial assistance and access to specialised support, such as a career mentor.

# What your gift can do for students in need



**1** Put a disadvantaged child on The Smith Family's proven out-of-school learning support programs, like *Learning Club*.



87% of students agreed that going to a club helped them do better in class.



**2** With help from a *Learning Club* tutor, they will build the skills and confidence they need for their education.



**3** Our research shows that as students' grades start to improve so will their school attendance.<sup>1</sup>



**5** Graduating from school will give a young person greater opportunities for further study and employment.



**4** Because they are attending school more regularly, we know they will be more likely to complete Year 12.

<sup>1</sup> The Smith Family *Attendance lifts achievement: Building the evidence base to improve student outcomes report*, 2018.

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