

Enabling Relationships

Students connecting with Sponsors

*“Education is the most important gift that we can give our children.
Being a sponsor is, in a small way, a direct investment in the future of our children
and our nation.”*

- Eddy, *Learning for Life* sponsor since 1990, NSW

The Smith Family
85th Birthday Special Report Series

February 2008

The Smith Family's 85th Birthday Special Report Series

Enabling Relationships forms part of a special series of reports marking the 85th birthday of The Smith Family. The series provides insights into the various distinguishing features of our organisation in supporting disadvantaged children and their families to participate more fully in society through education.

The evidence has shown that in a 21st century knowledge society, wellbeing depends more than ever on the **relationships** individuals form with others. For disadvantaged children and their families, the opportunities to build these relationships are few by virtue of their social and economic isolation. The key to closing the gaps between these groups and the wider society and creating a more caring and cohesive community is therefore connecting different people in different ways.

This is achieved through The Smith Family's innovative dual agenda, providing opportunities for greater **participation** of marginalised children and their families and connecting them with others who have the time, talent and dollars to invest through our **engagement** strategy. The diversity and impact of these relationships, nurtured through our *Learning for Life* suite of programs, has enabled tens of thousands of disadvantaged children and their families to improve their lives through education, while at the same time providing caring Australians with vital opportunities to contribute to the wellbeing of others. It is through these bridging relationships that The Smith Family truly becomes 'everyone's family'.

This series of reports celebrates these relationships from a variety of perspectives, and comprehensively illustrates how and why they form the basis of who we are ('*Our History*'), what we do (our *Learning for Life* suite of programs focusing on developing a range of literacies) and how we do it ('*Enabling Relationships*', '*Building Relationships*' and '*Innovation Relationships*'). In this way, they mark the continuing achievements of The Smith Family and our supporters as leaders in the journey towards a more caring and cohesive Australian community.

To read other reports in The Smith Family's 85th Birthday series,

see our website:

thesmithfamily.com.au

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Message from Elaine Henry, CEO

In our 85th birthday year it is timely to look back and reflect on the journey of The Smith Family from 1922 to 2007 – to look at our origins as an organisation and our achievements, and also to review the contemporary Smith Family and take a glimpse into our future. This report, *Enabling Relationships*, takes a closer look at the scholarship and sponsorship components that are the foundation of our *Learning for Life* strategy and suite of programs, and is complemented by two other reports in the series, *Building Relationships* and *Innovation Relationships*. These detail respectively how we build on the basic connection established between a sponsor and student (described in this report) to create a more in-depth relationship through our personal mentoring initiatives, and how, at a higher level still, our cross-sectoral innovation relationships allow us to achieve scalability and impact.

The Smith Family's focus on children and education, determined in 1999 as we set about our comprehensive transformation, is the strategy developed by our organisation to remain relevant while embracing the challenges of 21st century Australia.

Research told us that Australia was entering the knowledge era and that this required at a national level an increase in the **participation** of those who had previously been marginalised in order to lift our pool of 'human capital', and an increase in the **engagement** of those who had the ability to give of time, talent and dollars to secure our 'social capital', the glue that binds us together, which was in danger of disintegrating.

Embedded within the organisation at that time was a kernel of an idea – the *Learning for Life* financial scholarship - which, with the assistance of research findings, had the potential to grow into a suite of programs. *Learning for Life* was seen to have many positive attributes, not least that it came about not in response to the needs of the organisation but the wishes of our families receiving emergency help. Way back in 1987, they identified education as the way out of the cycle of disadvantage for their children. The development of the *Learning for Life* scholarship (initially called 'EDU-CATE') not only enabled their greater participation in education, but also provided opportunities to engage caring members of the wider community in a more involved manner through sponsorship.

Through the scholarship/sponsorship, these two intertwining strands of participation and engagement gradually gained acceptance from sponsors, supporters and families alike during the 1990s, and gave us the confidence to see *Learning for Life* as the platform to build upon as we transformed the organisation. Importantly, *Learning for Life* also allowed us to recapture the enterprising culture of our forebears, whose philosophy required us to determine a key priority for disadvantaged children at any point in time, work to find a solution and then move onto the next priority. To this end, it took us out of aged accommodation and emergency help, which we deemed as being inconsistent with our strategic directions.

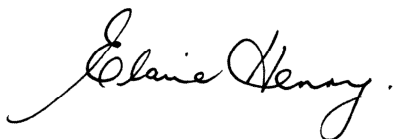
Interestingly, as we embarked on our journey through the first years of the 21st century, these scholarships/sponsorships also facilitated The Smith Family's entrée into communities around Australia as they were seen to be adding value to what already existed. Without this value-add 'product', our ability to be embedded in communities might not have been so readily accepted.

Today, the scholarship/sponsorship is but one component of a wide suite of *Learning for Life* programs providing support to disadvantaged children and their families across the life course. By successfully intertwining the elements of participation and engagement, it exemplifies the DNA underpinning every aspect of the contemporary Smith Family and our societal change agenda.

Enabling Relationships relates the journey towards this achievement by following the evolution and extension of financial scholarships into a full-blown *participation* strategy. It reveals how what began as financial support in the context of case management for disadvantaged junior secondary students in inner-city Sydney has become a contemporary 'relationship enabler' embedded within the *Learning for Life* strategy and suite of programs, increasing the connectedness of disadvantaged students to their families, peers, communities, schools and our broad range of supporters. The report also provides an overview of our sponsorship *engagement* strategy, which has been fundamental to the *Learning for Life* scholarship component in terms of bringing together those who have the capacity to give and those who are in need of their support.

Through the ongoing evaluation of the merit, worth and significance of the scholarship being undertaken by the Centre for Program Evaluation at The University of Melbourne, we will soon have a significantly enhanced evidence base about the particular contribution of the *Learning for Life* scholarship in facilitating The Smith Family's mission that together with caring Australians, we will unlock opportunities for disadvantaged families to participate more fully in society.

I hope you enjoy reading this report.



Elaine Henry (OAM), Chief Executive Officer, The Smith Family

The genesis of Learning for Life

- 1987 -

“Help us help our children get an education” – the scholarship

The Smith Family conducted focus groups with our emergency help families in 1987 to determine how best we could help them overcome the various forms of disadvantage they were experiencing. To some extent the participating parents accepted their lot in life, but they wanted to help their children have a better future. Quite simply, they asked us “to help them help their children get an education”.

On the basis of this evidence, The Smith Family took the initiative in 1988 to commence a pilot project called ‘EDU-CATE’ with the aim of providing ‘scholarships’ to 60 junior secondary students in the inner Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst. It was in these years that the problems of illiteracy were manifesting, with many students at risk of ‘dropping out’ of the school system.

As part of EDU-CATE, these students and their families received cash assistance as well as advice and support from Smith Family Workers, who managed the relationships with their families. The financial element was deliberately referred to from the start as a ‘scholarship’ to reflect its educational purpose. Its key objectives were (and still are), in concert with the other elements of the suite, to:

- Ensure that students from financially disadvantaged families are able to take part in all mainstream school activities;
- Provide information to the parents that may help them secure a better education for their children (in many ways the education system was seen as alien to disadvantaged families);
- Encourage students to stay at school and undertake tertiary education, or provide them with information regarding other vocational training options;
- Provide any further information and support to parents and students which may help them develop their confidence and self-esteem;
- Provide a range of support activities for students to assist them in their learning;
- Build up an evidence-base around problems which students from disadvantaged backgrounds experience in the school system that need to be overcome.

The key value in the program has always been that communicated by the research: if we work like this, giving children from disadvantaged backgrounds the opportunity to participate more fully in education, we greatly reduce their chances of remaining in a cycle of disadvantage.

- 1995 -

Mentoring assistance

In 1991, Bruce Callaghan and Associates conducted the first external evaluation of the *Learning for Life* program, using a variety of sources including postal questionnaires, telephone surveys, focus groups, interviews and document analysis. The study indicated high levels of support for the program from parents who acknowledged the importance not only of the financial assistance but also of the personal support from the welfare workers, which they saw as a ‘distinguishing element of the program’.

In 1995, some of the students participating in EDU-CATE found themselves eligible to go to university, and this is where two key benefactors stepped in, Barbara and David Thomas. The Thomas’s had been strong supporters of The Smith Family for a number of years, for example, helping with the establishment of our first customer relationship management system. They knew how hard it would be even with a scholarship for some of our students to thrive in the world of university, especially when they were most likely the first in their families to attend such establishments.

Recognising these factors, the Thomas's worked together with Bruce Callaghan to assist The Smith Family to develop what became the Tertiary Scholarship Program. In a pioneering development for its time, the program paired each participating student with a personal mentor to support them throughout their tertiary studies (see the next report in this series, '*Building Relationships*'). It was about this time, in 1997, that the EDU-CATE scholarship program became known as *Learning for Life*, combining financial assistance with personal support to assist disadvantaged children with their education.

Transformation – Our Guiding Principles

- 1999 -

In 1998, the Board determined that a very different response was required from The Smith Family to meet the challenges of the 21st century which the knowledge era posed to our families and, indeed, our nation, and also to ensure that we remained an effective and relevant organisation. We undertook a year of research to determine how best we might respond without duplicating the work of others, and it became clear that prevention and early intervention were pivotal requirements for stopping financial disadvantage and all that leads to it becoming an intractable social problem. We needed to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage, particularly for lone parent families, which had become a feature of our society in the later decades of the 20th century.

In 1999, the Board accepted the findings of our research and adopted the embryonic *Learning for Life* program as the basis for moving the organisation forward in accordance with the following *Guiding Principles*:

That we should:

- Be about societal change
- Refocus on disadvantaged children within the family context
- Work with and through other organisations
- Be evidence-based and community focused
- Move steadily along the change continuum to the prevention and early intervention end
- Diversify our sources of funding
- Be national in presence as well as spirit
- Enhance our internal capacity particularly using technology

These *Guiding Principles* were in many ways ahead of their time, integrating the key elements of human capital (building individual capacity) and social capital (family and community capacity) that were the basis of the framework developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics three years later in 2002¹ for measuring how far Australia had become embedded in the knowledge era.

(1) Be evidence-based...

To give effect to this guiding principle, The Smith Family established its own internal research capability. While we had collected evidence around our work previously (through, for example, the 1987 survey of emergency help families), this represented a more systemic commitment to ensuring that evidence drove our agenda. It was also crucial to ensuring that development of the fledgling *Learning for Life* program would be informed by national and international research, providing the right kinds of support at the right time and to the right people.

One of the key lessons from the research of this period, and acknowledged in the title of our strategy and suite of programs, was the importance of lifelong learning, understood as the provision of educational opportunities for individuals throughout the life course. It had become clear from the

early 1990s that new forms of social exclusion were appearing as a consequence of rapid developments in information and communications technology, and that the skills required to participate in the knowledge era were changing accordingly. The motivation and capacity to learn, and continue learning on an ongoing basis throughout life was quickly becoming a pre-requisite to both social and economic participation.

Between 2001 and 2003, a major external evaluation of *Learning for Life* was conducted in collaboration with the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT) at the University of Sydney through an Australian Research Council linkage grant. Analysing student survey data collected over three consecutive years, the findings showed that *Learning for Life* was having a positive effect on their participation in education. Two-thirds of the students were satisfied with how the program had helped them participate in school electives; while over three-quarters were satisfied with how the program had helped them participate in school excursions.

Importantly, while the financial aspect of the program was seen to be crucial, many students also acknowledged the benefits of having a 'significant other' – in this case their *Learning for Life* sponsor – supporting them. In fact, almost half (46 per cent) of Year 11 students surveyed felt that having contact with their sponsor was either 'very important' or 'fairly important' in their decision to remain at school.²

These sentiments were confirmed in evaluations of the Tertiary Scholarship Program. A survey of 100 *Learning for Life* tertiary students in 2002 concluded that the scholarship was influential in the decision of one in three students to attend university. In addition, almost half (48.5 per cent) reported that the scholarship was important to the completion of their university studies. In total, 80 per cent of the students believed the scholarship contributed to their academic achievement. This was largely because the scholarship support reduced financial stress and students had less need to engage in paid employment. 70 per cent also reported that the mentoring aspect contributed to their academic progression, as both a social and an emotional support.³

Sponsor support and mentor motivation – Karen's story

As a teenager growing up in Sydney's south-west, becoming a lawyer wasn't something 26 year old Karen ever thought too seriously about. "It wasn't that I didn't want to, but rather I didn't think I could", the *Learning for Life* and University of NSW graduate says.

Years on and possessing a confidence that would make a few seasoned professionals green with envy, Karen is now a solicitor with leading Australian law firm, Mallesons Stephen Jaques

"I love the law. It is so exciting to think that I have made it when I once wouldn't have dreamed it was possible," Karen beams. *"But because of the generosity of a very special sponsor, I have had the opportunity to prove what I could do – and that was all I ever really wanted, a chance."*

Karen's background is similar to that of many children and young people receiving *Learning for Life* scholarships. She grew up in a single parent family in Sydney's south west. As the youngest of three, Karen and her sisters weren't brought up to feel 'poor'.

"When I was accepted onto The Smith Family's Learning for Life program, I made a commitment to study law and take advantage of absolutely every opportunity that I was given."

In 2001, the then third year law student with a huge crush on Shakespeare was selected as one of just 150 students from 24 countries to participate in an intensive Summer School at Cambridge University in England. For three weeks, Karen spent five hours a day in lectures, wrote two 3000 word essays and read 13 plays and 126 sonnets – and loved every minute of it.

"I would not have had that opportunity had it not been for my sponsor and The Smith Family who took a chance on a girl from the south western suburbs of Sydney. For this, I'll always be grateful. The Learning for Life program and the opportunities that came my way as a result have changed my life."

Equally important has been the presence of her mentor, Kate, a lawyer who provided Karen with an insight into the legal world and helped prepare her for a life beyond university.

"I was introduced to Kate through my Learning for Life worker at the start of my degree. She was the first lawyer I ever met. Through her, I've learned exactly what type of lawyer I want to be", Karen says. *"Before my first day of work experience at Mallesons I was so nervous. But with a little nudge from Kate, 'Big smile, big voice and hair back in a ponytail please', I was on my way to the 60th floor of Governor Philip Tower in the heart of Sydney's CBD. That's one of the most important things Kate has taught me, to speak up for myself."*

In addition to being a graduate of the program, Karen continues to be a *Learning for Life* supporter.

(2) ...and community focused

A Feasibility Study conducted by The Smith Family in 2000 into the best ways to respond to disadvantage in rural, regional and remote Australia had two important findings for our strategy: firstly, that a 'one size fits all' approach was ill-suited to the many forms of disadvantage experienced across communities, and that individual capabilities needed to be supported by investing in family and community capacity through programs which were sensitive to cultural and geographic diversity; and secondly, that the most effective and sustainable approach to tackling disadvantage was through a focus on *place*, or a particular community, providing an intensity of interventions over a longer time-frame.

As the evidence revealed, such an approach required an empowerment model that would move away from doing things 'to' or 'for' communities to increasingly acting 'with' community and eventually working 'as' community. To this end, we adopted 'place management' in late 2000, recognising that enhancing community capacity and family wellbeing involves building on existing strengths, rather than focusing on deficits.

Being part of community also meant that our welfare workers, renamed Education Support Workers, needed to be embedded in the institutions of community, rather than working alongside them. It was at this point that they moved from being located in The Smith Family offices to collocating within schools and community centres, shifting the relationship so that we went to the families rather than waiting for them to come to us.

(3) Work with and through other organisations

During the financial year 2002/03, The Smith Family, with the assistance of Bain International, conducted an eight-month Environmental Scan to lay the groundwork for The Smith Family's Council of Governing Members, Board and senior management to consider The Smith Family's future role in the domain of educational support for disadvantaged Australians.

The Environmental Scan provided The Smith Family with a better understanding of trends in disadvantage and the evolving roles of other organisations in Australia, along with learnings from overseas, such as the development of franchising models, which we currently understand as our community partner model.

With a view to testing the potential of this franchising model, The Smith Family undertook a pilot collaboration during 2002/03 with Mallee Family Care to jointly deliver the *Learning for Life* scholarship in the Mallee region of Victoria. This was an innovative partnership, combining The Smith Family's experience as a large national organisation with the local knowledge and networks of Mallee Family Care, an organisation that had grown from and developed strong relationships within its local community.

The evaluation of this pilot collaboration confirmed many of the findings from previous research, notably:

- That the delivery of the *Learning for Life* scholarship component was important to students and their families, both in the sense of receiving financial assistance and in building their social capacity in the broader community; and
- That the Education Support Worker role was crucial to the success of the *Learning for Life* suite of programs in rural areas, especially in terms of providing support and facilitating students' access to opportunities for greater participation.

It also confirmed the importance of working with and through other organisations by revealing clear long-term advantages of the partnership, including the cost savings and efficiencies resulting from the collaboration, and the possibilities of further expansion to better meet our mission. In particular, the evaluation noted that the local trust in Mallee Family Care appeared to be a key element of the program successfully encouraging community involvement in rural areas.⁴

Since this pilot collaboration, during which Mallee Family Care delivered 412 *Learning for Life* scholarships across the Mallee region, The Smith Family has developed partnerships with 18 additional Community Partners with an allocation of 5000 scholarships to be delivered in more than 30 communities across Australia.⁵

The scholarship component has therefore proven valuable not only as a relationship enabler for our students and families, but also for The Smith Family in building relationships with a range of community partners. Feedback from these partners has so far been very positive, reflecting the respect they have for The Smith Family in 'sharing' this work and remaining faithful to the principle of working with and through others.

(4) Move steadily along the change continuum to the prevention end

In accordance with emerging research pointing to the importance of prevention and early intervention in tackling disadvantage, *Learning for Life* moved into the primary school years and then into the pre-school years with two pilot projects PAT (Parents as Teachers) and SHELLS (Support at Home for Early Language and Literacies).

Parents as Teachers (PAT), run in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, worked to develop and strengthen the skills of parents in their role as their child's first teacher. The program provided families with intensive, targeted education and support from pregnancy through to the child's third year, with continued limited service and support up to age five.

SHELLS, run in partnership with The University of Newcastle, was also designed to assist families with children under the age of three, and focused specifically on building their capacity to provide supportive environments for early language and literacy development. Importantly, it also acted as a research initiative, providing valuable insights into the early stages of literacy development that together with PAT, helped to inform our continuing investment in improving the early childhood education and care of disadvantaged children.

By 2006, at the end of our organisational transformation period, the case for investing in early childhood education and development had grown ever stronger through a rapidly expanding research base. In response, The Smith Family Board made the decision to adjust the balance of our resources and concentrate on the preventive end of the change continuum, particularly the early years.⁶ This rebalancing was an opportune time to review the *Guiding Principles* that had set us in good stead during the transformative years, and prepare ourselves for the next growth phase.

The resulting contemporary *Guiding Principles* are:

That we should, as a national, independent social enterprise:

- Be about societal change for the benefit of all Australians;
- Be focused on disadvantaged children within the family context
- Concentrate on prevention and early intervention over the life course, with an emphasis on key transition points;
- Be evidence-based, using a multi-disciplinary approach;
- Be embedded in the community;
- Work with and through other organisations;
- Significantly increase and diversify our sources of funding and our resource base;
- Enhance our internal capacity and in turn use our resources to build the community's capacity

Development of the Learning for Life suite

Entering the 21st century, it became clear that our families were experiencing new forms of exclusion related to the rapid expansion of information and communications technology within the new knowledge society. It was obvious that the current financial assistance and personal support from Education Support Workers would need to be extended within a more diversified *Learning for Life* suite in order to meet these new skill demands.

Building on the relationships laid down via the scholarship, The Smith Family began to pilot programs offering broader tutoring and coaching to support the cognitive development of our students within the classroom, while also introducing personal development opportunities to improve students' informal learning and socialisation outside the classroom. Key points of focus throughout these streams were (and continue to be) literacy support, early childhood development, supporting transitions and adapting scholarships for Indigenous communities.

(1) Literacy support

In 2003, our research into *Barriers to Participation* identified three distinct literacies needed for fuller participation in the 21st century: comprehension literacy (encompassing reading, writing and numeracy); technological literacy (computer and Internet skills); and financial literacy (the ability to make informed and appropriate decisions about money).⁷

Comprehension literacy

The need for better comprehension literacy support raised in the *Barriers* report has been underscored by the most recent Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2006, which found that around 46 per cent (or 7 million) of Australians aged 15 to 74 years had not reached what experts considered to be 'the minimum level required for individuals to meet the complex demands of everyday life and work in the emerging knowledge-based economy'. This proportion rises to 53 per cent (or 7.9 million adult Australians) with regard to numeracy, clearly pointing to the need for stronger literacy and numeracy support for children in their early years and throughout their schooling.⁸

By virtue of our close relationships with disadvantaged parents and their children, The Smith Family has been aware of the need to better support comprehension literacy since the introduction of our EDU-CATE program in 1988. Subsequently, we have been able to attract increasing investment for our work in this area through a range of corporate and community partnerships, and now provide a number of focused literacy support programs. These include *Let's Read*, an initiative developed by the Centre for Community Child Health in partnership with The Smith Family, assisting parents to support the development of emergent literacy skills in their infants and toddlers through shared reading; and *student2student*, an innovative program through which students in Years 3-8 who are behind in their reading receive support from older students over the telephone. For more on these programs, see the 'Early Years', 'Building Relationships' and 'Innovation Relationships' 85th Birthday Special Reports.

Technological literacy

National and international research has shown that today, technological literacy is a key component of engaging individuals in lifelong learning and contributing to social inclusion. It has the capacity, if used in the right environment and with sufficient support, to influence attitudes towards learning. Education levels, opportunities and motivations to learn are strongly tied to a person's ability to access and use technology to its fullest capacity. This has significant implications for individuals who have become disengaged from learning – largely those with the lowest skill, education and employability levels. These individuals are usually those who could benefit most from training or education, but who often lack the motivation and understanding of the benefits of further education and/or training. Informal, community-based education where learning can be self-directed and self-paced has been found to be successful in engaging these individuals.

The Smith Family has worked to provide technological literacy support to our families and their children since our first Computer Clubs opened in Victoria in 2000, offering after-school access to computers for *Learning for Life* children in a safe, informal learning environment. Since then, our support has expanded in collaboration with a variety of corporate partners, notably Microsoft Australia, with whom we now provide access and basic computer training to disadvantaged individuals through Community Technology Learning Centres across Australia as part of the *Unlimited Potential* program. Recognising the importance of connecting more families to technology within the home environment, we have also developed the *Technology Packs* initiative, through which disadvantaged families are able to purchase a subsidised home computer with Internet access and undertake basic training to improve the technological literacy of family members through shared learning. For more on these programs, see the *Technological Literacy 85th Birthday Special Report*.

Financial literacy

National and international research has revealed a convincing link between socio-economic status (SES) and adult financial literacy levels, understood as the ability to make informed judgements and effective decisions about the use and management of money. In Australia in particular, the following characteristics have been revealed in an ANZ-commissioned series of studies as being strongly associated with lower levels of financial literacy:

- those having lower education (Year 10 or less);
- those not working (for a range of reasons) or in unskilled work;
- those with lower incomes (household incomes under \$20,000) ;
- those with lower savings levels (under \$5,000);
- single people; and
- people at both extremes of the age profile (18–24 year olds and those aged 70+).⁹

These characteristics are typical within the disadvantaged families with whom The Smith Family works, and so we were delighted when ANZ formed a partnership with us to deliver a pilot of *Saver Plus* in Queensland in 2005. *Saver Plus* is a financial literacy and matched savings program developed to help people on low incomes set and achieve a savings goal, and establish a long-term savings habit. This is achieved by: (a) providing financial management training; (b) offering personal coaching support and guidance from a trusted community organisation – in this case The Smith Family; and (c) matching every dollar saved with an additional \$1 (up to \$1,000) towards education costs for participants' children or their own vocational education.

In 2005, ANZ announced they would also support The Smith Family to deliver *MoneyMinded*, a suite of financial education resources that we were able to tailor to the particular needs of our families around the country. This has allowed us to provide a comprehensive financial literacy program with technical and practical steps for managing money and making the most of limited resources. A distinguishing feature of the way we deliver this course is our focus on changing participants' behaviour towards money, and allowing them to explore and understand the habits that will lead to greater financial literacy.

More information on our financial literacy support and the *Saver Plus* and *MoneyMinded* programs can be found in our '*Financial Literacy*' 85th Birthday Special Report.

(2) The early years

In 2001, The Smith Family entered Western Australia for the first time. This greenfield site enabled us to look at how we might implement our place management model and also to explore opportunities for working in the early years. One of our first activities was to carry out an audit of the Mirrabooka community, where families had very few resources to draw upon in supporting the development of their children. This bore fruit in 2004, when Phase II of the Australian Government's 'Stronger Families and Communities' strategy was announced and The Smith Family was invited to be the Facilitating Partner in establishing a *Communities for Children (C4C)* site in Mirrabooka.

Focusing on the early learning and care needs of children aged between 0 and 5 years, C4C is an innovative model incorporating elements of the National Agenda for Early Childhood, with large organisations undertaking much of the 'back office' activity. This includes being stewards of the Government's investment in the community and leveraging it to attract additional resources from state and local governments and business, as well as brokering services with grass-roots organisations in accordance with the informed decisions of community participants.

The Smith Family's experience in facilitating a systems approach to service delivery in seven C4C sites across the nation has been extremely valuable for a number of reasons:

- It has confirmed the importance of concentrating on prevention and early intervention and of developing a new level of early years scholarships building parental capacity in this period;
- It has helped us develop a new set of relationships around early childhood, and confirmed the importance of reconceptualising the case management approach of Education Support Workers as *Learning for Life Workers* embedded in and working to support a particular community;
- It has developed our capacity for facilitating a consensus around need, developing a range of partnerships, coordinating funding streams and overseeing implementation;
- It has reinforced the value of working through a place-based approach in a more intensive way, and with the introduction of the Australian Early Development Index¹⁰, has also provided us with a snapshot of how well children in a particular place are faring across a number of key educational and developmental indicators;
- It has provided us with the capacity to observe more intensively that many of the parents with whom we built trusting relationships in supporting their children are now hungry for learning opportunities of their own, creating the demand for our future demonstration project *Families Learning Together*.¹¹

More information on The Smith Family's investment in the early years can be found in the 'Early Years' 85th Birthday Special Report.

(3) Supporting transitions

Increasing the participation of disadvantaged children and their families is not simply about unlocking the *right* learning opportunities in the right *communities*, but unlocking them at the *times* when individuals need them most. Over the life course, individuals are required to make a series of significant transitions as they move between various life stages, e.g. from school to work or further education. Research has shown that these transitions pose difficulties for all children and individuals, and particularly for those from low-income backgrounds who have far fewer supporting resources to draw upon. To this end, The Smith Family committed to concentrating our *Learning for Life* strategy and suite of programs around supporting three key transition points where the research has shown disadvantaged children and young people typically struggle. These are:

1. The home to primary school transition;
2. The primary to secondary school transition; and
3. The school to work / further study transition.

These three transitions reflect the findings of national and international research and The Smith Family's *Guiding Principles* in moving towards prevention and early intervention as the most effective strategies for breaking the cycle of disadvantage. They also help to guide the level and focus of our investment in each state and territory across Australia. For example, our work in Tasmania concentrates particularly on the home to primary school transition as prioritised by our research into community capacity and need.

(4) Flexible scholarships for Indigenous communities

As The Smith Family expanded our work with indigenous communities in a number of locations around Australia, it became clear that the manner in which we distributed scholarships needed to be more flexible in response to their particular community needs.

For example, in 2002 we commenced The Swan Nyungar Sports Education Program (SNSEP) in partnership with the WA Department of Education and Training in response to declining school attendance of Indigenous students in the Swan Education District. The program was initiated at Balga Senior High School with a strong focus on Aboriginal language and culture, AFL football and netball. The aim was to help students identify with the program, provide them with opportunities to integrate with students from other programs through both class time and recreation time, and encourage them to develop a healthy sense of responsibility to both themselves and their community, including respect for their school.

To build its capacity to engage the community, The Smith Family provided scholarship funds directly to the school (rather than the individual families) to cover the educational expenses of the students involved in the program. This enabled the school to cultivate closer relationships with their students, and distribute the scholarship funds more flexibly to meet any additional general needs that would further engage the students in education.

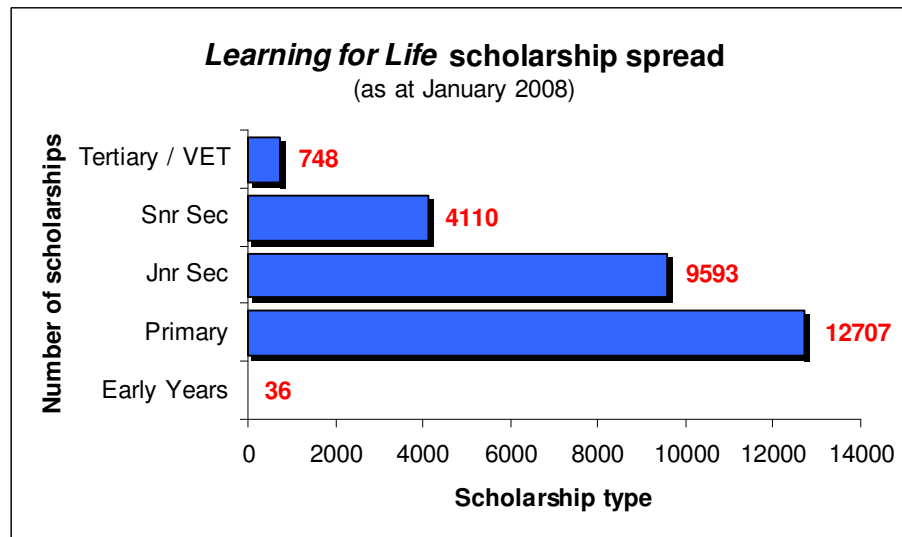
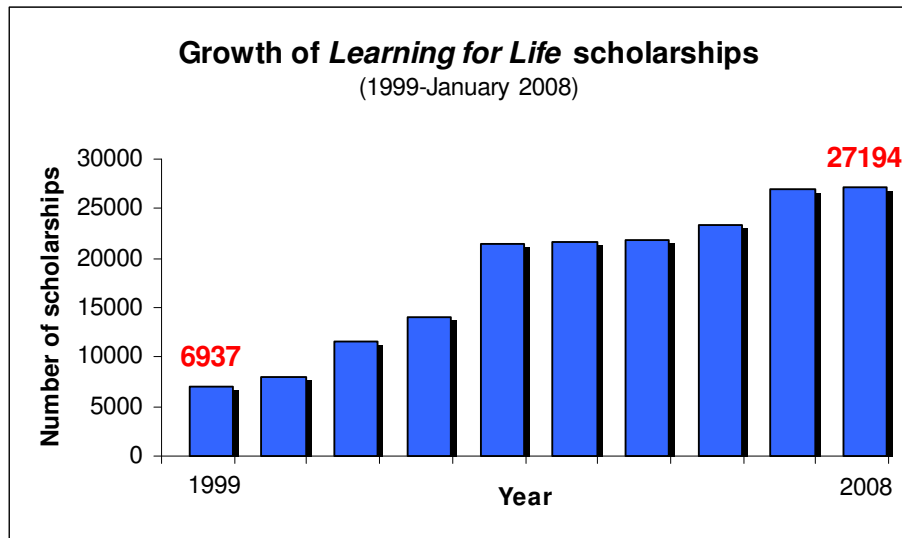
Similarly, when The Smith Family moved into another Indigenous area in WA, Port Hedland, we negotiated a further adaptation for the application of the scholarship. After establishing a Perth Scholarship Fund, scholarships were awarded to disadvantaged families, but this time the funds were administered by The Smith Family's *Learning for Life Workers* and made available through products from retail outlets so that families could acquire school items for their children as they needed them throughout the year.

These experiences reveal the spectrum of possibilities for the distribution and application of the scholarship - from directly to families, to intermediaries on behalf of the families, to schools. For more information on The Smith Family's work with Indigenous groups, see our 85th Birthday Special Report, '*Indigenous Relationships*'.

Scholarships for Participation

The scholarships today

Our transformation in 1999 was a critical juncture in the evolution of the *Learning for Life* scholarship and subsequent supporting suite of programs. Through our *Guiding Principles* and with a foundation of evidence collected through regular research and evaluation, the scholarship has grown and adapted in response to our changing capacity and shifting trends in the external environment. The charts below respectively illustrate the growth in the total number of scholarships from 1999 to 2007, and the spread of scholarships supporting students across the education sector.



The spread of scholarships across the educational spectrum demonstrates our deliberate focus on supporting children in the primary years of schooling, soon to be augmented by the broader roll out of our early years scholarships. This emphasis is not only reflective of our focus on prevention and early intervention, but is again a deliberate strategy to build sustained and supportive relationships with disadvantaged children and their families as they progress through the educational system.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) scholarships

The Vocational Education & Training (VET) sector has always been of importance to disadvantaged groups, who for over a decade, have had approximately half the likelihood of participating in tertiary education as Australians with medium and higher socioeconomic status (SES) despite extensive equity initiatives across the higher education system. Compared with higher SES students, those from lower SES groups:

- a) have a stronger belief that a TAFE course would be more useful to them than a university course;
- b) are less confident that their parents want them to do a university course; and
- c) exhibit a stronger interest in earning an income as soon as they leave school¹².

Recognising the multiple post-secondary learning pathways that exist for Australian students, The Smith Family took steps in 2006 to incorporate this flexibility in career planning for our *Learning for Life* students through the introduction of VET scholarships. With these in place, our scholarships are now able to support students across universities, VET and schools to enable them to move from one level of study to the next and across institutional and employer boundaries.

Embedded within a comprehensive whole of community approach, the scholarship is now able to open up and strengthen the relationships disadvantaged students have with their families, their peers, their communities, their schools and even their future workplaces. It does this by:

- Helping disadvantaged students participate more fully in school activities by providing financial support;
- Linking students to mentors, *Learning for Life* Workers and sponsors who can provide personal support;
- Building the capacity and involvement of parents in their children's education;
- Facilitating access to the *Learning for Life* suite of programs;
- Acting as an entrée for The Smith Family to become embedded in disadvantaged communities;
- Providing caring Australians with an important opportunity to sponsor and make a difference in the life of disadvantaged children; and
- Diversifying the range and types of opportunities for corporations and community organisations to provide support.

In this way, it remains the foundation of our *Learning for Life* suite of programs, fulfilling The Smith Family's mission that together with caring Australians, we will unlock opportunities for disadvantaged families to participate more fully in society.

Unlocking Opportunities through the Learning for Life Scholarships

Primary school years support

Students in the Western Australian mining town of Collie began receiving The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* scholarships in 2006. At least 235 students from Collie families will be supported by the program thanks to BHP Billiton and its local operation, Worsley Alumina. The official launch drew a strong turnout of local civic leaders and business and community partners. *Learning for Life* Worker Linden shared how one student came to show her his new school bag at the start of the school year:

"He was very proud of his new bag and wanted to say thank you to his sponsor. He had drawn a 'thank you' picture of his new bag for me to forward on to his sponsor. The student and I spent the next five minutes sitting down together while he demonstrated how each of the zips worked, the special pocket for his lunch box etc. and even how he wears his school bag."

Secondary school years support

Neysha lives with her mother and a younger brother and has been a recipient of a *Learning for Life* scholarship for three years. Interested in dancing, drawing and photography, Neysha was given the opportunity to attend a MCA BELLA Art Workshop in 2007 – a program involving the Museum of Contemporary Art, Mallesons Stephen Jaques and Sydney University. Neysha feels the workshop assisted her greatly with her year 11 major art work. Her mother is very supportive of Neysha's achievement and is very committed to education; she herself has gone back to study at university this year.

"The support from Learning for Life has helped me in purchasing school uniforms, bags, stationery and school books in particular. Personally I think the sponsorship program is a very good program. It's helping a lot of students, particularly in the Learning for Life program to achieve their goals. I think with a good education you can do anything. Whether you want to be a politician or an artist or anything like that you need education to know exactly what you want to do and where you want to go."

Tertiary years support

Richard, a tertiary student, sent an email to his *Learning for Life* Worker telling her about his graduation from university. He had completed his Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) and attended his graduation ceremony, and wrote to The Smith Family to say:

"I thought I'd let you guys know, I had my graduation last week. The really good news is that not only did I get first class honours, I also received a university medal, which surprised me a bit, because I never thought I could have achieved that."

One of Australia's most respected journalists (and now a Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister), ABC television presenter Maxine McKew, presented the 2006 *Learning for Life* Tertiary Awards at a celebration in Sydney. Hosted by Accenture for the third year, the event drew more than 100 new and graduating *Learning for Life* students, their families, mentors, sponsors and business supporters. Maxine, a warm and engaging host, congratulated students in their hard work and perseverance, emphasising the value of an education in securing their future. She told guests *'No matter what happens, no-one can take away your education. You've made the best investment you'll ever make in your life.'*

Further evaluation of the merit, worth and significance of the scholarship

In 2006, The Smith Family took the decision to evaluate the scholarship component of the suite of *Learning for Life* programs. Findings from the evaluation will provide The Smith Family with evidence about the most effective ways to apply the scholarship in conjunction with the other components of the *Learning for Life* suite across the life course.

We have been greatly assisted in the development of the evaluation framework by working in conjunction with the renowned Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. While their framework has been designed primarily with public health organisations and programs in mind, the CDC is actively encouraging other community organisations to adapt and apply it to their situations. In light of The Smith Family's emphasis on the importance of education / lifelong learning for primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of intergenerational disadvantage along the life course, we recognised the opportunity to adapt the framework for our purposes.

The evaluation of the scholarship component of *Learning for Life* involves engaging three categories of stakeholders:

1. Those involved in program operations (for example, sponsors, collaborators, partners, administrators, managers and staff);
2. Those served or affected by the program (for example, *Learning for Life* scholarship holders – present, and if possible, past), family members, neighbourhood organisations, and staff of related organisations; and
3. Primary users of the evaluation (for example, persons who are in a position to do, or decide, something major regarding the implementation of *Learning for Life*.)

Data from stakeholder engagement will enable The Smith Family to make judgements in relation to the scholarships strength in enabling and building relationships, with a particular focus on its:

- **Merit** (its quality as a *facilitation instrument for improved access* to and participation in education and learning);
- **Worth** (its cost-effectiveness as an *instrument to increase* the number of financially disadvantaged children and young people participating in education); and
- **Significance** (its relative importance as a *form of support* in comparison with other forms of support provided by the *Learning for Life* suite of programs).

Data collected about each of the above will enhance the evidence either for the development of new or the adaptation of existing policies that are useful, appropriate, feasible and ethical in the continuing application of the scholarship within the *Learning for Life* suite of programs.

Tracking post-scholarship impacts

Alongside the evaluation of the scholarship component of *Learning for Life*, The Smith Family has commenced a three year Post-Program Outcomes Study (2007-10) to collect more evidence about the effects of participation in the suite of programs on students and their families after they have exited the program. The study will focus on *Learning for Life* exit students who have either completed Years 11 or 12 or who have left school before completing Years 11 or 12.

Surveying approximately 1,000 young people at six monthly intervals over the three-year period, the study aims to generate a wealth of evidence and understanding of:

- 1) the impacts of participation in *Learning for Life* on students and their families for the first three years after they have exited the program;
- 2) what is relevant to the improvement of the roll out of *Learning for Life*; and
- 3) where investment in program development is best placed for greatest impact.

The study will also supply useful information at six monthly intervals for The Smith Family's internal and external stakeholders. Aside from its key purpose in informing the ongoing improvement and

development of *Learning for Life*, the study will also add to the wider evidence base around the post-school transitions of Australian young people from backgrounds of financial disadvantage.

Finally, another channel through which The Smith Family will be able to track post-scholarship impacts is our *Learning for Life* Alumni, a network of past students from the program who have come together to share their experiences and ideas for the continuing support of *Learning for Life*. The self-directed intention of this highly motivated group of students is to act as a bridge between The Smith Family's participation and engagement agendas, connecting in various innovative ways the experiences of those on the scholarship with their sponsors and our wider supporters. Some of the early aims and objectives include:

- Raising education agenda and awareness about existing programs within the *Learning for Life* suite;
- Providing personal support and development opportunities to support existing *Learning for Life* students;
- Promoting the *Learning for Life* Alumni network among past and present students;
- Attracting sponsorship and partnerships among the wider community, including corporates;
- Demonstrating the post-school pathways and choices of students;
- Profiling and proactively fundraising for The Smith Family; and
- Providing regular news and updates about the achievements of *Learning for Life* students.

The *Learning for Life* Alumni hold considerable promise as ambassadors for our organisation, and have the potential to inform our strategy from the ground up. Some members may even go on to ultimately direct the organisation, and continue to provide others with the support that changed their own life.

More information on the *Learning for Life* Alumni can be found in the 85th Birthday Special Report '*Innovation Relationships*'.

Sponsorships for Engagement

"Because of your sponsorship I get everything I need for school. Thanks again for thinking of me and being proud of me. It means a lot."

- Year 8 Learning for Life student

The sponsor experience

The relationship a student has with their sponsor is the foundation or platform from which all of the opportunities within the *Learning for Life* suite of programs spring. While this report has so far concentrated on the benefits for the student arising from this connection, it is important to also explore the many and varied benefits that participation in this relationship brings to the sponsor.

The relationship is unique in Australia in that it offers sponsors the only opportunity to support an Australian child's education and learning *all the way through school*. This means that sponsors enjoy a level of continuity and depth in their relationship that allows them to follow the progress of their student during their formative years of primary, secondary and tertiary education. During this time, they have the chance through regular correspondence with their student to watch them grow both academically and as individuals, while providing them with a consistency of support and motivation from a 'significant other' that children from more advantaged backgrounds often take for granted.

Our research has shown the unequivocal importance of this relationship for both the student and their sponsor, heightening their sense of purpose and personal significance in their often very different lives. As one student put it,

"Mum and I are so happy to hear that you are going to stay my sponsor for next year as I love hearing from you and the help you have given over the past years is huge... I don't see you just as my sponsor – to me you are my Nanna in the mail."

The nature of the relationship between a sponsor and their student is designed to be as direct as possible, taking into account compliance with Privacy and Child Protection legislation. In 2005/06, The Smith Family's ability to facilitate and sustain one-on-one relationships of this nature was given a significant boost through a *pro bono* commitment worth \$1 million from **Accenture**, who leveraged their core consulting capabilities and provided technological expertise to design and develop a new supporter tracking and relationship system called STARS.¹³

Today, when a sponsor enrolls in the program, we have the capacity through STARS to match the preferences of sponsors as to whether, for example, they would like to support girls or boys, or if they would like to sponsor within their state. Importantly, STARS also allows us to keep the status of each student available in real-time, which means sponsors can trust that the information they receive from or about their student is both accurate and up-to-date. The long-term value of Accenture's work on STARS to The Smith Family is therefore inestimable as it has enhanced our ability to grow well into the future.

Having chosen the level of their sponsorship (which is tax-deductible and can be as little as \$27 per month, or less than \$1 a day for a primary school student), the sponsor then receives a *Welcome Pack* containing all the information they need regarding their sponsorship, including a profile which introduces their student and their school subjects and hobbies. Every year from then on for the life of the scholarship, the sponsor receives a *Progress Update* completed by their student detailing their personal news and achievements, and a copy of The Smith Family's newsletter *The Enterprising Family*, offering insights into the success of the *Learning for Life* program nationwide.

In addition to this regular correspondence, sponsors and their students are able to send via The Smith Family gifts, cards and letters to each other. Most who do this find it to be the most rewarding part of the relationship. For our disadvantaged students, the majority of whom are from lone-parent families and have few role-models to access in their social networks, it is this sense of being important in the eyes of someone they have never met that can be profoundly moving. Recognising this, The Smith Family carefully nurtures and supports these relationships, and sponsors trust in us as experienced and well-respected organisation within the community to manage this important connection.

Sponsors can also be confident in knowing that 100% of their support goes directly to supporting the students. With the support from volunteers and the contribution from our Commercial Enterprise (a nonwoven textile manufacturing and clothing recycling business), The Smith Family is uniquely

placed to avoid using any sponsor donations to cover our infrastructure costs. Rather, the sponsorship provides direct financial assistance to the student's family to cover school-related expenses such as uniforms, shoes and books, as well as contributing to the cost of delivering the personal support and development programs that are part of *Learning for Life*.

"I just wish that every child whose family was struggling had a sponsor. No one should be embarrassed because they don't have the same books, shoes and uniforms as other children."

- Karen, *Learning for Life* sponsor, NSW

All of these factors combine to afford our sponsors an enormous sense of satisfaction at being able to contribute to a worthwhile cause in a personal and profound way (see case study below).

A Sponsor's Perspective

"The reason I have been a sponsor for The Smith Family for several years now is summed up by the answer my new sponsored child Nicole gave to the question, "Something I am proud of is..."

Her answer was, "My self-esteem, because without my sponsor I wouldn't be able to do all the things that my friends who are better off can do."

I had three children and at times I never had much spare cash, in fact, quite a few times, not a lot of cash. However, when my eldest daughter (who is now 31) was 9 or 10, she went to a school camp and so did everyone else, except for a boy whose family obviously could not afford it.

I wasn't really in a position to help that child at the time and I made a promise that when my children finished school I would help other children get a good education and get out of the poverty cycle (my choice of words).

Even if the children I sponsor don't go to university I am still happy to sponsor them and at least offer them the opportunity not to feel 'different' because they come from families that don't have spare cash.

It is always lovely to read how much the children appreciate what sponsoring means to them and to know what a difference it makes – not only to them I am sure but also to their parents."

- Elaine Cox, *Learning for Life* sponsor since 1998

In line with our understanding of the student/sponsor relationship as constituting the first step on the journey towards facilitating fuller participation and engagement, sponsorship has in many instances been a springboard for individuals to build deeper relationships as volunteers in other Smith Family initiatives. For example, in addition to sponsoring over 50 *Learning for Life* students nationally and contributing to program support costs, the legal firm **Mallesons Stephens Jacques** also provides work experience opportunities for *Learning for Life* tertiary law students, mentors for tertiary students, volunteers for our Christmas toy and hamper packing and delivery, and assists in the supervision of buddies for the *student2student* reading program.

VIEW Clubs of Australia, a valued part of The Smith Family since their inception in 1960, have built upon the sponsor/student relationship in a similar way.¹⁴ As of November 2007, more than 280 clubs were collectively sponsoring over 500 *Learning for Life* students to realise their potential through education, which represented an increase of over 30 per cent from the previous year. This shared experience as sponsors has then encouraged many VIEW members to take their individual involvement to new levels, including helping primary students with their reading at The Smith Family's *Learning Clubs*, volunteering in local schools or donating stationery packs for students.

Corporate sponsorship and support

With The Smith Family now operating in 85 communities across Australia, there has been significant growth in the number of scholarships that are being provided, and therefore a similar increase in the need for sponsorships. Our corporate partners have proven extremely generous in contributing to meeting this need in two distinct ways.

First, it is becoming increasingly common for our corporate partners to collectively sponsor a number of students at once, often in alignment with their own community investment agenda. For example, in light of the *Learning for Life* scholarship's focus on ensuring children are able to participate fully in school by having the required materials, in 2007 **Officeworks** recognised the synergy with their own annual '*Back to School*' promotional event and chose to sponsor approximately 130 primary *Learning for Life* students – one for every Officeworks store or site across Australia. Similarly, the **Accenture Australia Foundation** provided financial support for 35 *Learning for Life* tertiary students studying IT and commerce – subjects aligned with their own corporate agenda and operations.

Corporates who choose to engage in this 'pooled scholarships' approach now have the option to have that pool named after them, thereby increasing their profile regardless of whether they are individuals, companies, foundations or trusts. The first corporate partner to take up the 'named' scholarships opportunity was **BASF Australia** through the 'BASF Science for Life' program, providing financial support for 15 *Learning for Life* tertiary students enrolled in a science, chemistry or related degree program at university. Their focus is aligned with BASF's business and brand aspirations, and a longer term aim is to see a graduate employed at BASF.¹⁵

In these instances, The Smith Family works closely with the corporate to tailor the nature of the relationship so that suitable information on the progress of the students can be fed back to the partner and then disseminated among their staff as appropriate. This allows a corporate to spread the experience of sponsorship across others in their organisation, maintains the 'personal' aspect of the sponsorship, and avoids the relationship becoming purely 'transactional'.

The second way in which our corporate partners have helped us expand the number of student/sponsor relationships is by providing *growth capital* – financial support directed at broadening our capacity and reach within the community. In many cases, this growth capital has allowed The Smith Family to address the time lag which typically exists between the development and commencement of a program and the attraction of sustainable donor funding for its ongoing operation.¹⁶

Since our sponsorships commenced in 1991, a range of organisations have provided much needed growth capital to expand the number of those participating in what was then EDU-CATE and now *Learning for Life*. For example, in 1993 we received \$3 million from the **Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Training** which, over three years, allowed us to expand the program from beyond New South Wales and into South Australia, Queensland and regional Victoria. In the process, we were able to secure a further 1,770 sponsorships that allowed us to support the larger number of students this expansion brought into the program.

Similarly, in 1995 we entered into a five year partnership with **Colgate-Palmolive**. This provided growth capital to meet program support costs of the EDU-CATE program, funding up to five Education Support Workers and allowing us to recruit sponsors for an additional 360 students, effectively expanding the program by another 15 per cent. The partnership has since continued as one of the oldest within The Smith Family's portfolio, and now includes Apprentice Days, where older students get the benefit of experiences in different workplaces, meeting people with different occupations who act as potential role models.

Perhaps our most significant growth in sponsors came between 2000 and 2002 with a major contribution from the **Westpac Foundation** (see case study).

The Westpac Foundation: Connecting sponsors and students in rural and regional Australia

By 1999, The Smith Family knew from research that to create the population-based impact we were seeking, we needed to move away from treating the symptoms of disadvantage through a welfare-oriented model to an approach which would tackle the root causes by focusing on children and education. This would involve the considered development and expansion of our flagship *Learning for Life* scholarship program model to reflect this preventive focus, requiring a substantial inflow of funds (growth capital). In 2000, we received an unprecedented contribution of \$1 million from the Westpac Foundation to facilitate the further expansion of *Learning for Life* – a collaboration recognised by the Prime Minister to be an excellent example of corporate/community partnerships.

This growth capital then became the cornerstone for the rural access component of the *Learning for Life* program. It enabled The Smith Family to dramatically expand *Learning for Life* with thousands of new sponsorships, and extended the availability of the program in rural areas in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and Queensland. In 2001, a further \$650,000 from the Westpac Foundation also provided for the introduction of *Learning for Life* into Western Australia, which brought The Smith Family significantly closer to becoming a national organisation in presence as well as spirit.

To support our the expansion of *Learning for Life* into these new states and communities, Westpac then made a final contribution of what in effect amounted to \$3 million of co-branded media profiling – a vital component in helping us embed The Smith Family as a social enterprise focused on children and education rather than welfare. In fact, the resulting advertising campaign actually proved so successful that it led to a situation in 2002/03 where we had an excess of sponsors and it took some time to recruit and allocate additional students to match against the demand.

The Smith Family is extremely proud of the results that we have been able to achieve with the Westpac Foundation, and the partnership remains a strong example of the power of corporate community investment in Australia.

In 2003, our relationship with **BHP Billiton**, a supporter of The Smith Family since the early 1980s, led to the further expansion of the *Learning for Life* program to areas such as Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton in Queensland, and Midland and Port Hedland in Western Australia. The goal of this partnership, which contributed \$1 million in financial support over three years, has been to improve the access to and participation in the education process for at least 1,200 disadvantaged Australian children living in communities where BHP Billiton operates.

Between 2005 and 2008, our corporate community partnership with **The AMP Foundation** developed to a stage where they were also keen to invest growth capital and expand our impact, with an injection of \$3 million over three years. In its first year alone, this investment led to an increase of 27% in the number of students accessing the *Learning for Life* program, and has enabled The Smith Family, among other things, to increase the number of scholarships supporting TAFE level students. As the AMP Foundation Manager reflects, “Our funding provides important growth capital for the *Learning for Life* program, and we recognise that if we can help make the organisation more efficient and effective it will ultimately benefit the end user”.¹⁷

Through this growth capital, we have been able to connect with a range of corporate partners at a local level to build to invest in the education and prospects of local students. For example, **Centennial Coal** and the **Caledonia Foundation** provide students with access to the *Learning for Life* suite of programs in communities in the Lower Hunter and Lithgow (NSW). In Orange, **Newcrest Mining’s** Cadia Valley Operations supports students from local families. Likewise in WA, community collaboration between **Wesfarmers Premier Coal**, **Coal Miners Welfare Fund** and **Worsley Alumina**, a subsidiary of **BHP Billiton**, has also supported access to the *Learning for Life* suite of programs for families in disadvantaged suburbs, and extended opportunities to include homework clubs and mentoring.

Development of the sponsorship model

As the *Learning for Life* suite of programs has expanded around Australia, the sponsorship model has evolved in order to continue to function as effectively as possible. In 2004, we were challenged by both the rising level of education-related expenses for our families, and the costs of providing the vital support elements of the program to students. To address this, we undertook research with our sponsor group, the findings of which resulted in a number of changes to our sponsorship model. Up until this point, the structure of the sponsorship arrangement was that 100% of every dollar raised through a sponsorship went directly to the student. While this was a compelling proposition for the sponsor, the continued growth in the number of scholarships and the recruitment of more *Learning for Life* Workers negatively impacted the cost base to the tune of \$2 million per year.

The feedback from the focus group research highlighted that we could be very open with our sponsors about the true cost of providing the scholarships. Our sponsors recognised the value of the role of the *Learning for Life* Workers and not only did they agree to contribute to a higher scholarship amount being paid to the student, they were willing to make a donation to support the cost of offering personal development opportunities.

As a result, a new set of sponsorship arrangements was introduced between 2004/05. For example, the annual sponsorship for a primary school student rose from \$216 to \$324. Of this, \$250 is paid directly to the student as a scholarship, and the balance of \$74 is a contribution towards providing personal development opportunities within *Learning for Life*. These changes were overwhelmingly supported by the sponsors, with an acceptance rate of over 98%.

The demand for more sponsors

As at January 2008, The Smith Family had a total of 15,602 sponsors funding a total of 23,680 student scholarships, as shown in the table below:

Number of Active Sponsors, Sponsorships and Students, January 2008

State	Active Sponsors	Active Sponsorships	Active Students	Student to Sponsorship Variance
ACT	931	1,308	764	544
NSW	6,386	9,372	8,992	380
NT	56	80	0	80
QLD	2,135	3,092	5,653	-2,561
SA	826	1,602	2,649	-1,047
TAS	88	110	0	110
VIC	4,428	7,057	6,975	82
WA	640	865	2,161	-1,296
Other*	112	194	-	194
Grand Total	15,602	23,680	27,194	-3,514

* Other includes overseas sponsors not resident in Australia

However, as the Table above illustrates, we currently have more active students on the *Learning for Life* program than active sponsorships. This shortfall is particularly pronounced in Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia, where we are still working to build our profile within the community.

While The Smith Family is able to support these extra students using the money raised from our regular Appeals, it is far more desirable given the benefits of the relationship that each student be matched with their own personal sponsor. To this end, the ongoing acquisition of sponsors is a continuing priority for The Smith Family. In fact, it has been a recent focus within the partnership we have enjoyed with the **AMP Foundation** since 2004, in addition to building the capacity of The Smith Family with the development of resources needed to expand the reach and accessibility of *Learning for Life*.

Alongside financial support for education and training programs for our *Learning for Life* Workers; research and evaluation around the *Learning for Life* program (especially in the area of school to work transition); and expanding The Smith Family's pilot programs to provide scholarships for TAFE level students from South Australia nationally, the support from the **AMP Foundation** has been invaluable in terms of building broader awareness of The Smith Family's sponsorship opportunities and the value of the *Learning for Life* scholarship and suite of programs in changing the lives of disadvantaged students and their families across Australia.

During the past 12 months, **ANZ Group's** partnership with The Smith Family has also grown to encompass sponsorship for *Learning for Life* students. In February 2007, ANZ branches in the NSW/ACT Southern Region, launched '*Kids in Our Community*'; a regional based fundraising initiative as part of ANZ's Blue Week. The local initiative challenged each of the 80+ branches to raise \$1,000 – enough to sponsor a *Learning for Life* primary school student in the local community for 3 years. Together with corporate matching, this event raised \$87,000 from auctions, donations and merchandise sales from staff, family, and local customers. A monthly league ladder was used to track individual branch and market fundraising efforts, and special prizes were awarded to branches that exceeded their targets with all participating branches celebrating their achievement with a piece of framed artwork, created by students on the *Learning for Life* program.

If you are interested in becoming a *Learning for Life* sponsor, or want to learn more about how this unique relationship works, please visit our website:

www.thesmithfamily.com.au

or call

1800 633 622

Endnotes

- ¹ ABS (2002) *Measuring a Knowledge-based Economy and Society: An Australian Framework*. Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002.
- ² Zappala, G. Smyth, C. & G. Considine (2002) *Reducing the barriers to educational participation: An initial assessment of students' views of Learning for Life*. The Smith Family, Internal Report.
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- ⁴ La Trobe University (2004) *The Smith Family's Learning for Life and Mallee Family Care's Chances for Children Pilot Partnership Project Evaluation*. Centre for Professional Development, La Trobe University.
- ⁵ More information on The Smith Family's community partnerships can be found in the 85th Birthday Special Report, 'Community Partnerships'.
- ⁶ More information on The Smith Family's preventive focus can be found in another 85th Birthday Special Report on the early years.
- ⁷ The Smith Family / Orfeus Research (2003) *Barriers to Participation: Financial, Educational and Technological. A Report into the barriers to societal participation among low-income Australians*. Edited by Gianni Zappala, The Smith Family: Sydney.
- ⁸ ABS (2007) *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results Australia*. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Cat.4228.0, Canberra.
- ⁹ Source: ANZ (2005) *ANZ Survey of Adult Financial Literacy in Australia 2005*. ANZ Banking and AC Nielsen, November 2005.
- ¹⁰ The Australian Early Development Index is a community measure of young children's development, based on the scores from a teacher-completed checklist consisting of over 100 questions. Conducted in all seven of The Smith Family's C4C sites in addition to many other communities around Australia, the AEDI checklist measures five areas of child development: (1) Physical health and wellbeing; (2) Social competence; (3) Emotional maturity; (4) Language and cognitive skills; and (5) Communication skills and general knowledge. Teachers of children in their first year of formal schooling complete the checklist on each child after they have had a chance to observe their development. For more information on the AEDI and The Smith Family's *Communities for Children* sites, see our 85th Birthday Special Report on the early years.
- ¹¹ For more information on *Families Learning Together*, see the *Innovation Relationships* 85th Birthday Special Report.
- ¹² James, R. (2002) *Socioeconomic Background and Higher Education Participation*. University of Melbourne, Centre for the Study of Higher Education: Melbourne.
- ¹³ For more on The Smith Family's partnership with Accenture, see the 85th Birthday Special Report 'Corporate Partnerships'.
- ¹⁴ For more on VIEW Clubs of Australia, see the 85th Birthday Special Report 'Our History'.
- ¹⁵ For more on The Smith Family's partnership with BASF Australia, see the 85th Birthday Special Report 'Corporate Partnerships'.
- ¹⁶ More information on how The Smith Family has benefited from growth capital can be found in the 85th Birthday Special Report 'Innovation Relationships'.
- ¹⁷ For more on The Smith Family's partnership with AMP Foundation, see the 85th Birthday Special Report 'Corporate Partnerships'.