

MAKING A MEASURABLE DIFFERENCE

IMPROVING THE
EDUCATIONAL
OUTCOMES OF
DISADVANTAGED
CHILDREN



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As Australia's largest children's education charity, The Smith Family provides targeted educational support which starts by working with families before children are at school. At school we focus on supporting children's attendance levels and their motivations to learn so they can complete school at Year 12. When they leave school our aim is to ensure they're going on to further study, training or employment. Because families are such a strong influence on a child's educational outcomes, we work closely with parents and carers, helping them to positively support their children's education. At every stage we track and measure the outcomes of our work, making sure children and young people are receiving the support they need to break the cycle of disadvantage.

Our early intervention and long-term, balanced approach is making a measurable difference to the lives of disadvantaged young Australians. We are improving their educational outcomes and helping them build better futures for themselves.

OUR VISION

A better future for young Australians in need.

OUR MISSION

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

OUR BELIEF

Every child deserves a chance.

VALUES

Respect: We are caring
Integrity: We are ethical
Collaboration: We work together
Innovation: We are dynamic
Excellence: We strive for quality



Jarryd

Cover and inside cover:
Jarryd (front) and his
brother Nathan are
both sponsored through
Learning for Life.

Message from the Chairman
and the Chief Executive Officer
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WE ARE MAKING A POSITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE DIFFERENCE

It is widely known that educational attainment is an important predictor of a person's future employment, income, health and life outcomes. But for children living in disadvantaged families, there are many barriers to overcome. Too often the family struggles that affect a child's home life can flow on to affect their school life, too.

Take Alexandria, mum of Brandon and Raymond. When the family came to our attention, they were in crisis accommodation and the boys were very unsettled. It was difficult for Alexandria to afford their school uniforms and shoes, or their extracurricular activities. Because of their situation, Brandon and Raymond knew they couldn't access the same opportunities as their classmates.

Alexandria saw support from The Smith Family as the chance to get some stability back into their lives. As she told us, it was important that school could become the thing that wasn't changing all the time. Now, thanks to the sponsorships, the boys have everything they need for school. Plus their *Learning for Life* Coordinator provides opportunities for them to take part in activities that help build their confidence. The disadvantage the family is experiencing no longer has to limit the boys' school life.

For Alexandria's children and others like them, there is a very real risk the educational gap will grow if issues relating to their disadvantage are not addressed.

Disadvantage is complex and has multiple effects. That's why we start our work with families in need when their children are very young.

Our targeted educational support mitigates the risk of disadvantaged children being locked in to a path of low achievement. It helps close the gap between them and their more advantaged peers.

Throughout their school years we provide the extra support and resources that children need to help them achieve. Our work is long term and aimed at helping young people complete school and go on to further training, higher education or a job. Everything we do is tracked and measured to ensure our support is having a positive result.

“Everything we do is tracked and measured to ensure our support is having a positive result.”

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

We have just completed the fourth year of our current five-year strategy. The theme for 2015–16 was 'scaling up' and we certainly achieved that and more. With strong foundations in place from previous strategic activities, our organisation began the year well positioned to make further progress in growing the reach of our programs and building our effectiveness.

As ever, measuring our impact remained a key aspect of our work. We have to know that we are making an appreciable, positive and sustainable difference to people's lives.

Our data confirms that we are. The publication of our landmark report on our *Learning for Life* program communicated the positive outcomes being achieved by the students we support. The report noted continued improvements in their educational

outcomes, including increases in their school attendance rates and Year 12 school completion rates. Seven out of ten young people supported by the program are going on to Year 12. This compares to six out of ten for similar young people not on our program.

Our results show that our targeted support, underpinned by parental engagement in their child's learning, is helping to break the cycle of long-term disadvantage.

This year we received important external recognition of our effectiveness when we were presented with the *Excellence in Social Impact Measurement Award* by the Social Impact Measurement Network Australia.

The effectiveness of our work also helped pave the way for additional stakeholder support. For example, we were delighted

to receive significant funding commitments from the Australian Government's Department of Education and Training and the Victorian Government's Department of Education and Training. This will enable us to expand our proven maths program for young children, *Let's Count*. These commitments are the culmination of all the good work we've been doing over the past four years with the help of our academic and funding partners, in particular Professor Bob Perry (Charles Sturt University) and Professor Ann Gervasoni (Monash University), and the Origin Foundation. From identifying the need, to developing and implementing *Let's Count* and then evaluating its effectiveness, we were able to make a strong case for taking it to scale. This is our innovation in action and the result will bring significant benefit to many more children in need.

Chairman Christine Bartlett and Chief Executive Officer Dr Lisa O'Brien.



OUR FINANCES AND FUNDRAISING

Turning to our finances, we are pleased to report a result within budget, one which reflects Board-approved investment in a range of initiatives. These initiatives supported growth in the reach of our programs and ensured our organisation's sustainability.

The underlying operating result for the year was a deficit of \$1.5 million. This result excludes an extraordinary bequest of \$5.8 million. With the addition of this bequest, our final result was a surplus of \$4.3 million – an outcome that will enable further investment in programs and other initiatives that will ultimately benefit more disadvantaged children and their families.

Throughout the year a tremendous effort was made to manage our costs. While containing these, we also successfully delivered our program growth strategy, exceeding our target of an additional 6,500 program participants by a further 1,156. This is a great achievement.

Pleasingly, over the last five years, an average of 82 cents in every dollar of funds raised was spent on our community programs.

We are grateful to all who supported The Smith Family this year. Total fundraising income for the year of \$64.7 million was especially welcome given the year's economic and political uncertainty. Our team worked hard to engage our stakeholders and we were delighted to see stronger levels of support from organisations (corporates, trusts and foundations, and universities) and from our major donors.

In addition, the net contribution from VIEW Clubs of Australia was greater than budget, reflecting the members' ongoing positive engagement with The Smith Family. VIEW continues to be the single largest community sponsor of *Learning for Life* students.

THE FUTURE

Rapid technological advances continue to influence and change how we live our lives. They are evolving our cultural and societal norms, and our economy. To meet this new world head on, our organisation must continue to adapt and evolve while keeping in mind that technological progress offers significant opportunity, but also presents risks.

This year we developed an innovation framework, adopting as our definition of innovation: *change that adds value*. Innovation also underpins a number of our initiatives. For example, our partners, including Microsoft, Optus and SAP, helped us explore the support that our students and families will need to enable them to engage in the digital world – now and in the future. This support of these partners allowed new directions to be examined in a progressive and strategic manner.

A further future-focused piece of work that commenced was the development of our next five-year strategy. Our new plan begins in July 2017 and will continue until 2022, our centenary year. This year we consulted with a range of stakeholders to capture key inputs to the plan.

CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS ON OUR LEARNING FOR LIFE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

- All are living in low-income families
- Over half live in a single parent family, with 6% living with other relatives or in foster care
- 40% of students and 50% of their parents/carers have a health or disability issue
- 60% have a parent or carer who has not finished Year 12
- Over 70% have a parent or carer who is not in paid employment
- One in five students in Years 5 to 12 has attended four or more schools

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND THANKS

This has been a momentous year for The Smith Family. We are now firmly on a path which will help realise positive results for many more disadvantaged young people.

For this we thank all our supporters, including the members of our Board and our Advisory Groups for their service.

We acknowledge and thank the former Chairman, James M. Millar, who stepped down after five years of service. James was a great champion of our work and often remarked how inspired he was by the children and families we support. In his time as Chairman there was significant, and positive, change at The Smith Family,

and throughout his term he brought extensive leadership capability to the Board, the Executive team and to the broader organisation. We have appreciated James' guidance and wise counsel.

We also thank former Deputy Chairman Christine McLoughlin for her contributions over a seven-year term, including leading a successful fundraising event in her final year as Director.

We thank our sponsors, donors, those who've left The Smith Family a gift in their wills, VIEW Club members and our volunteers. To our corporate partners and the universities, trusts and foundations, and schools and governments with which we work, thank you.

Lastly, we pay tribute to our Smith Family team members. You put the children, young people and families we help at the centre of your work. Your commitment to them has meant that we had an extraordinary year.

As ever, a measure of our success is the way we work together, to drive the progress we want for these children.

Together we can change their lives; together we can help them achieve the futures they deserve.

Thank you!

Christine Bartlett and Dr Lisa O'Brien

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AWARDS AND RECOGNITION



Excellence in Social Impact Measurement Award, Social Impact Measurement Network of Australia (SIMNA) Awards 2016, for the Learning for Life program.



Energy and Water Star, Actsmart Business Sustainability Awards 2016, for efficient use of energy and outstanding contribution to sustainability by The Smith Family's Woden, ACT office.



Silver Award, Australasian Reporting Awards 2016, recognising the high standard of reporting in The Smith Family's 2014-15 Annual Report.