



everyone's family

MAKING AN IMPACTFUL DIFFERENCE

Supporting young Australians
through education

At The Smith Family, we believe that every child deserves a chance – no matter what their circumstances. We help children and young people to reach their full potential by providing long term and holistic support for their education.

The Smith Family
Snapshot 2020–21

The cycle of disadvantage

The contributors to disadvantage are complex. Without the right support at the right time, the impacts can be long term and intergenerational.

1 Family challenges

These include sickness, disability, unemployment, difficulty affording basic living costs, inability to provide resources for their child's education, limited access to digital technology and skills, and a lack of knowledge or confidence about how best to support their child's educational development.

4 Overall life outcomes impacted

Inability to get ahead in life, health and wellbeing affected, passing disadvantage on to the next generation.



2 Reduced educational outcomes for children

Behind in essential skills when they start school, not having the items they need to fit in, having limited access to resources for learning development, falling behind at school and facing difficulty in catching up, and having limited access to the support needed for guiding study and/or career paths.

3 Difficulty getting a job

A lack of engagement and motivation with their education, lower educational performance, leaving school early with few or no qualifications, fewer job opportunities, and having limited connections to community networks and services.

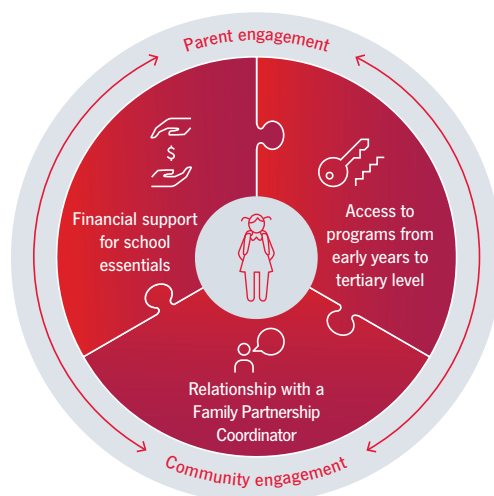
How we help

We provide long-term educational support to children and young people who are experiencing disadvantage, so they can achieve their full potential.

Learning for Life provides:

- financial assistance to help families pay for school uniforms, books, digital tools and excursions
- access to a Family Partnership Coordinator, who supports the student's education journey and connects them and their family to relevant local services and supports
- practical support, such as access to our learning and mentoring programs.

HOW LEARNING FOR LIFE WORKS



Our Five-Year Strategy

Our Five-Year Strategy provides a framework so we can better assist children and families in a rapidly changing world.

OUR AMBITION

Over five years to 2022 we will increase by 30% the number of young Australians reached with our effective, evidence-based programs, enabling them to break the cycle of disadvantage and thrive in the 21st century.

SCALE EFFECTIVELY

Grow our reach by 30% over five years while maintaining the effectiveness of our programs.

INNOVATE

Innovate to enable the children and young people we serve to thrive in a rapidly changing and increasingly challenging environment.

ADVOCATE

Be an authoritative and influential advocate with those who shape public policy on behalf of disadvantaged children and young people.



FUND

Develop a sustainable funding base to fund our scaling up and strategic initiatives.

DATA ENABLE AND DIGITISE

Amplify and accelerate our mission through digital and data.

ENABLE HIGH PERFORMANCE

Be a destination employer in our sector. Ensure systems are scalable and fit for purpose.

WE TRACK OUR RESULTS

We track the progress of students receiving *Learning for Life* support against four longer-term outcomes: school attendance; completion of Year 12 or its equivalent; continuation through and completion of tertiary studies;

1 ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance at school is essential for students to achieve positive educational outcomes.

2 ADVANCEMENT

Each year of schooling a child completes leads to better overall life outcomes and improves their ability to contribute economically and socially to the community.

3a TERTIARY CONTINUATION RATE

Our Tertiary Continuation Rate measures the proportion of first-year *Learning for Life* tertiary students who continue into their second year at university, while still on a scholarship.

LONGER-TERM RESULTS

LEARNING FOR LIFE STUDENTS' AVERAGE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IN 2020:

We are unable to report on this figure due to the data being inconsistent and unavailable in some states because of COVID-19 disruptions.

LEARNING FOR LIFE STUDENTS WHO ADVANCED THROUGH SCHOOL FROM YEAR 10 TO YEAR 12 OR ITS EQUIVALENT BY 2020:

67.9%

of *Learning for Life* students in Year 10 in 2018 advanced to Year 12 in 2020.

Over the past eight years, 16,255 *Learning for Life* students across Australia have been supported to complete Year 12.

LEARNING FOR LIFE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS CONTINUING FROM FIRST-YEAR TO SECOND-YEAR STUDY AT UNIVERSITY IN 2020–21:

93.7%

(94.5% in 2019–20)

SHORT-TERM RESULTS

Improved numeracy

Improved literacy

Increased academic engagement and achievement

Increased self-management and confidence

PROGRAM RESULTS

LET'S COUNT

89%

of early-years professionals felt that they had increased confidence in engaging with parents/carers about their children's mathematical development.

LET'S READ

89%

of parents agreed that they now have more ideas about how to read, talk and sing with their child to enhance early literacy.

STUDENT2STUDENT

94%

of students improved their reading.

PASSPORT

83%

of students stated *Passport* helped them learn skills that would assist them in high school. 82% of students increased their knowledge and understanding of high school.

and post-school engagement in education, training or work. We also assess the short-term outcomes of our programs, as these help to put children on the path to reaching the four longer-term goals.

3/0 TERTIARY COMPLETION RATE

Our Tertiary Completion Rate measures the proportion of students who complete a qualification in four years.

In 2020–21, the evolving COVID-19 situation disrupted our ability to deliver some programs and report on several of our measures. In particular, school attendance was impacted by a lack of available data from schools due to COVID-19.

4 ENGAGEMENT RATE

A key indicator of the success of our approach is the proportion of *Learning for Life* students who transition successfully from school to further education, training or employment.

LEARNING FOR LIFE TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS WHO COMPLETED A QUALIFICATION BY 2020:

47%

of students who commenced a *Learning for Life* Tertiary Scholarship in 2017 completed a qualification by the end of 2020.

A further 22% of the 2017 cohort are still studying.

FORMER LEARNING FOR LIFE STUDENTS ENGAGED IN POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION, TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT:

79.2%

Four in five students who left in Years 10 to 12 were working and/or studying 12 months after leaving the program.

Only 4.5% of former *Learning for Life* students were not in work or study, and/or looking for work and/or volunteering.

Enhanced networks and relationships

Improved knowledge and understanding of study options and career paths

Improved knowledge and understanding of financial management

iTRACK

84%

of student respondents stated that their mentor gave them more ideas about possible plans after leaving school. 81% reported that they know more about what career opportunities are available to them after leaving school.

CERTIFICATE 1 FINANCIAL SERVICES

88%

of participants attained the Certificate 1 qualification.

SAVER PLUS

87%

of participants were saving the same amount or more three to seven years after completing the program.

Early years

On starting school, one in three children in Australia's most disadvantaged communities are developmentally vulnerable in at least one key area. In the least disadvantaged communities, this figure is just 15%.¹

HOW WE HELP

To make the transition to 'big school' as successful as possible, our early numeracy and literacy programs help educators and community professionals build the skills and confidence they need to provide effective support for parents and children in the pre-school years.

In 2020–21, our early years numeracy program, *Let's Count*, received funding from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment to continue expanding its reach to early years professionals until 2024.

As with many of our programs, we needed to adapt *Let's Count* to online delivery due to COVID-19. We continue to build on and improve the program and make

it appropriate for all cultural backgrounds. This work is being done in partnership with the Stronger Smarter Institute and Professor Bob Perry and Professor Sue Dockett of Peridot Education, with funding from The Ian Potter Foundation and Equity Trustees' James Raymond Hartley Charitable Trust. We also continue to explore flexible options for delivery.

In 2020–21, we continued to deliver our early years reading program, *Let's Read*, in many communities across Australia. We also completed our Early Years Attendance Project. This project has enabled us to add to the evidence base on what communities can do to increase pre-school participation levels, especially for children experiencing disadvantage.



¹ Australian Government (2019), Australian Early Development Census National Report 2018: *A Snapshot of Early Childhood Development in Australia*, Canberra: Department of Education and Training.

87,226

children aged under five participating in early-years programs

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Child and Parent Centres*
- *Communities for Children*
- Early Years Attendance Project
- *Let's Count*
- *Let's Read*

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Children start school ready to learn
- Parents and community workers have skills and resources to support children's early language, literacy and numeracy development

Primary years

Even when students from disadvantaged backgrounds achieve strong Year 3 NAPLAN results, they can be nearly two years behind their advantaged peers by Year 9 in terms of reaching educational milestones.¹

HOW WE HELP

For children experiencing disadvantage, it's particularly important to establish strong patterns of attendance and learning engagement right from the start of school. Through the *Learning for Life* program, students receive guidance and support from a *Learning*



for Life coordinator who works with the family to understand the specific needs of each child. Where needed, children are connected to our out-of-school learning and mentoring programs, which help them to build the key skills they need to thrive at school and beyond. Sponsorships also help families pay for school essentials so that children can participate at school just like their peers.

In 2020–21, the impacts of COVID-19 meant we adapted programs for online delivery, where possible. The lack of digital resources was a significant barrier to education for many families during COVID-19 lockdowns. So, in 2021, we provided 2,149 Digital Inclusion Packs to families, containing a laptop, internet access and technical support.

Our major corporate partner Optus helped thousands of students to stay connected during the pandemic. Optus also extended its campaign Donate Your

Data™ to encourage its customers to donate their excess mobile data to *Learning for Life* students who might otherwise struggle to have reliable internet access at home. So far, the initiative has provided data to around 22,000 *Learning for Life* primary, secondary and tertiary students.

We developed our *Catch-Up Learning* program to address concerns raised during the pandemic that children experiencing disadvantage were at risk of falling even further behind their peers because of remote learning.

In 2020–21, with the support of the Paul Ramsay Foundation, we extended the *On PAR* pilot to an additional community – Onkaparinga in South Australia. *On PAR* is an intensive, primary years program that aims to improve the educational outcomes of students through case management support and provision of tailored resources.

1 Goss, P, Sonnemann, J, Chisholm, C, and Nelson, L (2016), *Widening Gaps: What NAPLAN tells us about student progress*, Grattan Institute, Melbourne.

52,717

students participating
in programs

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Catch-Up Learning*
- *Communities for Children*
- *Future Seekers*
- *Kidpreneur*
- Learning Clubs
- *On PAR*
- *Passport*
- *student2student*

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Children enhance their literacy and numeracy skills
- Primary school students start to think positively about the future world of work
- More children get access to online resources

Secondary years

Around 67% of young people from the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds complete Year 12, compared to around 92% for those from the highest socioeconomic backgrounds.¹

HOW WE HELP

Young people experience a lot of change during their secondary school years – physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually. It is when they start to define themselves as young adults.



It can also be a time of great uncertainty, especially for students already facing financial hardships, complex relationships and family health issues at home. In 2020–21, this was compounded for many young people by sudden COVID-19-related lockdowns, with remote learning and isolation from peers, teachers and other support networks.

To ensure we could support our students, we continued to demonstrate innovation and flexibility in adapting our programs for delivery despite the constraints imposed by a pandemic.

We continued to deliver our *Work Inspiration* program online in 2020–21. *Work Inspiration* helps students to learn more about the world of work by introducing them to a variety of roles and workplaces. The program is usually delivered over two to three days, with worksite visits. We were able to continue

to give *Learning for Life* students firsthand, meaningful exposure to the world of work by running the program virtually. In 2020, we delivered more than 35 sessions to 349 students across 31 communities in collaboration with our corporate partners.

In 2021, we commenced implementation of our *Growing Careers Project*, which will provide more than 76,000 opportunities for secondary students to participate in careers programs and activities over four years. This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government and is based on evidence that young people who have multiple opportunities for meaningful exposure to the world of work while at school, are far more likely to be in work, training or further study in their 20s. By exposing young people to these positive experiences, the aim over time is to help increase their job and career prospects.

¹ Lamb, S, Huo, S, Walstab, A, Maire, Q, Doecke, E, Jackson, J and Endekov, Z (2020), *Educational opportunity in Australia 2020: Who succeeds and who misses out*, Melbourne: Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University for the Mitchell Institute.

38,104

students participating
in programs

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Catch-Up Learning*
- *Career Coaching*
- *Certificate 1 Financial Services*
- *Girls at the Centre*
- *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program*
- *iTrack*
- Learning Clubs
- *SmArts*
- *Work Inspiration*

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Secondary students improve their literacy and numeracy skills
- Students learn about available career options and pathways to further study
- Students improve their knowledge and understanding of financial management

Post-school years

Around 49% of 24-year-olds from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not fully engaged in work or study, compared to 18% of those from the most advantaged backgrounds.¹



1 Op. cit. Lamb et al. (2020).

HOW WE HELP

For some of the students we support, the transition from secondary school to tertiary education can entail additional difficulties. The *Learning for Life* Tertiary Scholarship program helps school leavers continue their studies at university or TAFE. The program gives students financial support as well as specialised help tackling other obstacles that get in the way of their tertiary education.

Our national team of Tertiary Coordinators plays an important role in assisting our students to remain engaged with their studies, and provides them with additional resources and programs to help them take their first steps into the workforce.

This year, we developed the Job Read-e app, a set of online modules designed to support young people to develop skills and capabilities in searching, applying and interviewing for jobs. In support of the *Cadetship to Career* program, *Job Read-e* is being used as a learning tool to prepare

Tertiary Scholarship students with resumé writing and to learn other skills to support their cadetship applications.

In our *Cadetship to Career* program we worked with employers to support a new intake of Tertiary Scholarship students, who each received paid work placements over the summer. New participating employers AECOM and Position Partners joined existing supporters Accenture, ANZ, ASX, Australian Unity, BCG, Cochlear, Jemena, Macquarie Group, MinterEllison, Pearson, Programmed, Rio Tinto, Woodside and WSP.

This year, we continued to develop our student-centred higher education strategy, which we are trialling in Queensland and Victoria. The strategy aims to develop deep, responsive and collaborative relationships between The Smith Family and universities and vocational training organisations.

1,709

tertiary students sponsored through *Learning for Life*

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Cadetship to Career*
- *Care2Achieve*
- *Career Mentoring*
- *Job Read-e*
- *Learning for Life* Tertiary Scholarship

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Students stay engaged with their studies and attain a qualification
- Students benefit from supportive networks and relationships in their post-school years
- Students develop the skills they need to achieve success in the job market

Parents and carers

Parental engagement in a child's learning is a bigger predictor of academic performance than a family's socioeconomic status. Regardless of background, students with engaged parents are more likely to do well at school, graduate from Year 12 and go on to higher education.¹



HOW WE HELP

Parents and carers play a central role in a child's education. However, some families face multiple, compounding and interconnected challenges that mean they need extra support to help them achieve the best educational outcomes for their children.

Parents and carers of our *Learning for Life* students enter into a Partnership Agreement with us. This agreement acknowledges our shared goal of supporting their children's long-term education and the importance of parental engagement in this endeavour.

To give children every chance of success, our Family Partnership Coordinators work closely with parents and carers to help them develop skills to support their children's learning.

Our Family Practice Framework takes a relationship-based partnership approach with strategies that help

families to respond effectively to the complexity in their lives. We work in partnership with families to support and enhance their role as their children's first and most significant educator.

This year, we started the early design stages of a peer-to-peer network for our *Learning for Life* families.

Consistent with existing research on peer support programs, parents and carers told us that they would value support for social connections with their peers. Such a network could offer parents beneficial emotional support and peer-to-peer knowledge sharing to overcome practical challenges. We will continue to build on this work in 2021–22.

We also continued to expand the features and capabilities of our portal for families – *My Smith Family* – focusing on helping *Learning for Life* families to participate in our programs and connect with us during the pandemic.

1 Fox, S and Olsen, A (2014), *Defining parental engagement*. Canberra: ACT Department of Education and Training.

35,524

parents/carers/other adults
participating in programs

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Child and Family Centres*
- *Engaging Parents and Community*
- *Let's Count*
- *MoneyMinded*
- *Saver Plus**

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Families feel more confident to support their children's learning
- Parents and carers benefit from helpful networks and relationships
- Families receive practical financial management skills and knowledge

**Saver Plus* is an initiative of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and ANZ, and is funded by ANZ and the Australian Government Department of Social Services.

Working with community

School–community engagement helps students broaden their knowledge and develop new skills. It provides access to new networks – broadening students’ outlook and understanding of future employment opportunities – and encourages a positive attitude to life. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds particularly gain from community engagement.¹

HOW WE HELP

In communities with limited access to services and fewer job opportunities, disadvantage can impact many generations. Young people from these communities often need extra support to overcome the obstacles they face as a

result of their disadvantage. Supporting these young people requires whole-of-community responses.

To help parents and carers access the support and services they need, we work to build meaningful relationships between families and other community organisations. By training educators and other community workers to deliver our early-years programs, such as *Let’s Count* and *Let’s Read*, we reach parents and carers through trusted networks and providers to develop their children’s early numeracy and literacy.

Factors like the availability of support networks and services play a major role in determining educational outcomes for children and young people. That’s why we help families navigate service systems more easily and build closer community ties through the *Communities for*

Children Facilitating Partner initiative.

This year, we were delighted to be informed by the Department of Social Services that *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner* contracts will be renewed to June 2024, providing an opportunity for deeper strategic work with community partners and families in funded communities.

In nine *Communities for Children Facilitating Partner* sites, we take a community-based approach to program development that involves listening to families, establishing strengths-based partnerships with local service providers, and collaborating with local schools, businesses and government agencies. This helps ensure that the voices of children and families inform every aspect of planning, designing and implementing programs.

1 Gonski, D et. al. (2018), *Through growth to achievement: Report of the Review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools*, Canberra: Department of Education and Training.

27,411

participants supported through community programs funded by governments.

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

- *Child and Parent Centres*
- *Communities for Children*
- *Engaging Parents and Community*
- *Let’s Count*
- *Let’s Read*

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- Improved collaboration and integration between community service providers
- Families can access community resources with confidence
- Communities across sectors partner to produce better outcomes for local children

Our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people

While the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students at or above national minimum standards in reading has improved over the past decade, about one in four of these children in years 5, 7 and 9, and one in five in Year 3, remain below the national minimum standards.¹

HOW WE HELP

We are committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families to help close the gap in educational outcomes.

Our *Engaging Parents and Community* program in Morwell and Darwin continues to focus on collaborating with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

students and their parents, leveraging broader school and community networks to support positive engagement with learning. *Girls at the Centre* takes a student-centred approach to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls in their learning and supporting retention to Year 12.

In 2020–21, we continued to work on ensuring Indigenous knowledge is woven into our programs. With funding from The Ian Potter Foundation and Equity Trustees' James Raymond Hartley Charitable Trust, we partnered with the Stronger Smarter Institute to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learning systems in our *Let's Count* program.

This year, we developed our third Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), which sets out a framework for the actions

we will take to help build strong and trusting relationships, champion ongoing respect and understanding between cultures, and create opportunities through our corporate action.

The development of this RAP involved extensive consultation with many key internal and external stakeholders. These included our Advisory Group on Issues Concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Their valuable insights helped us design and develop the targets set out in the new plan.

With funding from the National Indigenous Australians Agency, we continued to run our *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program* in 2020–21. The program supports 205 secondary students from remote communities to attend high-performing schools in several states.

¹ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2018), *Report on Government services, 2018, Volume B: Child care, education and training*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

21,859

participants in programs who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS

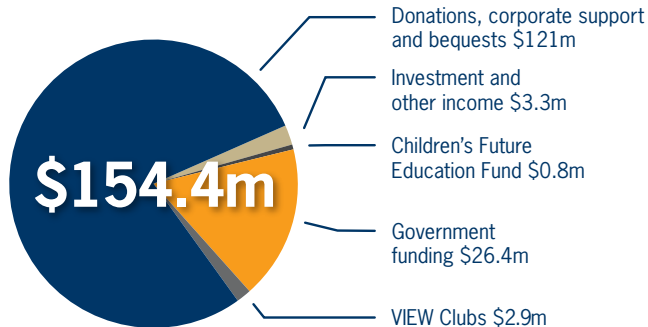
- *Engaging Parents and Community*
- *Girls at the Centre*
- *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program*

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

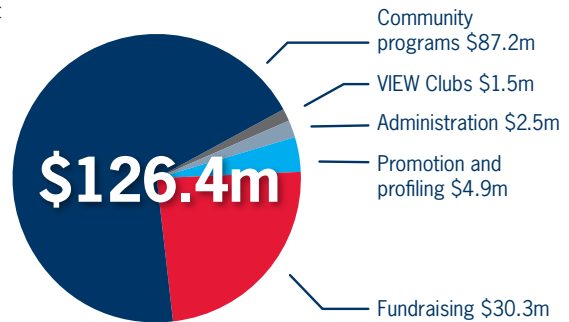
- Students of all ages improve their confidence, skills, knowledge and understanding
- Students stay motivated to attend school and complete Year 12
- School leavers engage in further study, training or work

Financial summary 2020–21

WHERE WE OBTAINED OUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES



HOW WE APPLIED OUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES



FUNDRAISING PERFORMANCE

\$123.1m

in funds raised from individuals, major donors, organisations, bequestors and VIEW Clubs of Australia in 2020–21.

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS RAISED

In the five years to June 2021, 71% of donations and funding from individual supporters and partner organisations has been spent on our community programs. This excludes revenue and expenses related to a short-term funding agreement with the Australian Government that enabled us to invest in the growth of our flagship program, *Learning for Life*, to support our long-term sustainability.

Our expenditure on administration averaged 1.6% of total income throughout the year.

220,508 PARTICIPANTS

The Smith Family reached 220,508 children, young people, parents, carers and community professionals in 2020–21, up 5.4% on the previous year.

87,226

Children aged under five participating in early-years programs



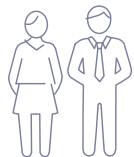
52,717

Primary school students



5,224

Community professionals*



35,524

Parents, carers and adults



1,713

Tertiary students



38,104

Secondary school students



179,760

children and young people participating in our programs in 2020–21, up 5.2% on the prior year.

58,016

Learning for Life sponsorship recipients.

* Community professionals (not Smith Family team members) include early-years educators and program facilitators in communities.

90 COMMUNITIES

in which *Learning for Life* programs are delivered.



Learning for Life participation

21.7%

of students on sponsorship (12,578) in 2020–21 identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Partnerships with

736

partner schools attended by *Learning for Life* students.

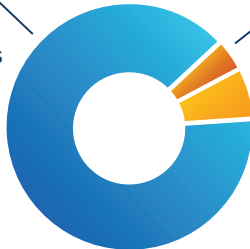
231,587 SUPPORTERS

Up from 216,078 last year – a 7% increase

209,610
Sponsors and donors

- **66,469**
Sponsors of *Learning for Life* students

- **143,141**
Donors funding *Learning for Life* programs



7,683
Individual volunteers

14,294
Members in 305 VIEW Clubs of Australia

228

Partner organisations

83 Corporate partners
134 Trusts and Foundations
11 Universities or other tertiary institutions

STUDENT2STUDENT

READING SUPPORT TO GROW CONFIDENCE

“I’m grateful for the opportunities our Smith Family sponsors have given my family and children.”

“We connected with The Smith Family about five years ago. Neither me or my partner were employed at the time.

It was a really big sigh of relief. Being on a Centrelink payment, the cost of living, plus everything for two kids at school and a new baby, was a lot of stress.

If we didn’t have [the sponsorship], the kids may not have had as many supplies for school. They wouldn’t have had that confidence to be who they wanted to be or to interact with other children as much as they did.

Two of my kids have done the *student2student* reading program because they were falling behind

in their reading level. I would get frustrated reading with them, and it was hard for me to help them. *Student2student* really boosted the kids’ confidence in reading out loud and in front of people. Because it was another child that was reading with them, I think they didn’t feel as pressured into having to get it right. They ended up doing a lot better than when they felt pressured by an adult.

The whole *Learning for Life* program, with the funding and having the ability to buy my kids a new uniform that’s the right size and has logos, makes them feel included – that’s a big boost for their confidence as well.

Krystal, *Learning for Life* parent

Krystal



Learning for Life parent Krystal and daughter Stormii-Lee. Photo: Paul Jeffers, *The Age*

GIVING CHILDREN EVERY OPPORTUNITY



Vanessa with her grandchildren, from left Chevrolet, Shelby and Mercedes.

“As a grandparent bringing up four young children, The Smith Family has given me the strength. They’ve given the children the opportunity to do everything they can with their education.

It’s quite a burden to try and do the best that you can for your grandkids on next to nothing. Without the help of The Smith Family, there is no way that I could give the children the things they need for their education and future aspirations.

It was a constant struggle all the time just to make ends meet. I could never, ever pay the school fees. If you didn’t pay the fees, the kids couldn’t go on camp or swimming, for instance. Those things impacted really badly on the children.

It was really sad for me when I would see the kids going off to school and they would hang their heads.

Going to meet Louisa* from The Smith Family was like a heavy burden had been lifted off my shoulders. I didn’t have to worry about school fees and didn’t have to worry about getting new uniforms.

I use the money for anything to do with their schooling. Now the children go to school in new uniforms and they have a bounce in their step.

If it hadn’t been for The Smith Family, I don’t know what I would have done.”

Vanessa, *Learning for Life* grandparent

“Without the help of The Smith Family, there is no way that I could give the children the things they need for their education and future aspirations.”

* As a Family Partnership Coordinator, Louisa works in communities with families whose children are receiving support through The Smith Family’s *Learning for Life* program.

LEARNING FOR LIFE

HELPING KIDS THRIVE AT SCHOOL



“My kids have so many more opportunities thanks to being sponsored through The Smith Family.

When we first started on the *Learning for Life* program, I was a full-time single mum and we’d just returned to Sydney to live with my dad. It was hard times, and the support was a life saver.

My son Jason, who has behavioural issues, started Learning for Life in Kindy, and my daughter Imogen started in Year 1. They’re 10 and 11 now, and The Smith Family has supported them that whole time. My youngest daughter Cassidy is only three and will start the program when she starts school. But she never gets left out. She still gets books at Christmas from The Smith Family and all that, just like the other kids.

That’s the great thing about The Smith Family. They don’t forget anyone in the family.

Learning for Life has saved me so much stress. It’s such a relief to know my kids needs can be met. I can now afford textbooks and uniforms for them. My kids can get involved in sports and have more opportunities at school. And I’d never have been able to afford to send my kids on excursions without that extra support.

Learning for Life has given my kids courage and confidence, and it’s helped me fund them to go further with their education. To the wonderful people who make this program possible, I’d like to say thank you for the opportunities you’ve given my children.”

Courtney and Stephen, *Learning for Life* parents with their children Imogen, Cassidy and Jason.
Photo: Edwina Pickles, *Sydney Morning Herald*

“That’s the great thing about The Smith Family. They don’t forget anyone in the family.”

SUPPORTING MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

Balga Senior High School is a Smith Family partner school in Mirrabooka, Western Australia where The Smith Family is the Facilitating Partner for the Australian Government's *Communities for Children* initiative. Since 2004, The Smith Family has facilitated the delivery of a range of services and programs designed to improve outcomes for local children aged from birth to 12 years and their families.

One key activity for The Smith Family team each year is involvement in the Organising Committee for Mirrabooka's Harmony Day celebrations held in March. This event celebrates the area's rich multicultural community and Aboriginal culture.

This year, The Smith Family supported music students from the school to manage the event's sound and lighting production. As part of their *Certificate II in Music Industry* course, the students assisted with the setup, operation and disassembling of the event's PA systems. In addition, the school's choir sang three songs and The Smith Family team sang along too.

Students from Waddington Primary School, another Smith Family partner school, also performed a song in Auslan.

Adrian, Principal of Waddington Primary School says the school enjoys partnering with The Smith Family at community events like Harmony Day.

"Harmony Day is a wonderful opportunity for our music students to connect and give back to our local community. We hope the partnership continues to grow for many more years to come," says Nik, music teacher at Balga Senior High School.



"Our Auslan teacher is keen to do it all again next year. It was wonderful."

Harmony Day celebrations,
Western Australia.

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY

Our Australian government-funded project supporting Aboriginal children in the Victorian community of Morwell, has helped increase school attendance rates. It has also improved engagement at school for the students and families involved. Families report feeling more confident in supporting their children with their education.

The Smith Family team supports parents and carers to connect with teachers about their child's learning and gain skills to meaningfully engage in their child's education and better understand the curriculum and learning programs.

The program, funded through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) project works with parents, carers, local partner schools and organisations to support students through key schooling transition stages, including moving on to further education or employment.

Smith Family team members work closely with 11 partner schools to provide individual support for students.

Since 2018, the team has also worked closely with the local community to establish a cultural space in Lake Hyland/Mathison Park in Churchill.

With a Contemplation Seat and 11 totem poles hand-painted by students telling the local Gunaikurnai Dreamtime story, the park has become a culturally significant place.

In March, the community and IAS partners came together for a Cultural Day in a commemoration of Apology Day. The many partners included local Elders, the Mathison Park Committee and local Landcare Group. The park is a visible demonstration of the strong and collaborative relationships formed by the IAS team in their support of local Aboriginal children and their families.



Tyson and Tyrell enjoy NAIDOC activities in Morwell, Victoria.

MOTIVATION TO SUCCEED

Tareeqe



“When I had a Smith Family sponsor, they were part of the reason why I was able to go to school and then to uni. They were the reason I was the first uni graduate in my family. They are the reason I am now [studying postgraduate] medicine.

I grew up in a massive household, I have 10 siblings. I am the middle child and my Mum, as a single parent did a great job bringing us up. I didn't really understand at the time how hard that must have been.

I first heard of The Smith Family in primary school from mum. I wasn't sure what it was, but I knew it was helping her out.

The financial support really helped my mum, but the most powerful thing for me, were the letters from my sponsor.

When you have someone in your corner who believes in you, it makes a big difference and not just in your academic life. There is much more to life than academics.

The Smith Family didn't only give me the motivation to pursue my goals. It was also the fact someone looked past my background and believed in me enough to help me out. For me, knowing someone believed in me, made me realise that [achieving my goals] can actually happen.

Tareeqe, *Learning for Life graduate*

“I think I am doing pretty good and I owe a lot of that to my sponsors and The Smith Family.”

GIRLS AT THE CENTRE SUCCESS

“Helping these girls achieve their goals and to be that role model and mentor for their families and for the community is really special.”

Maxine, Senior Girls Coach,
Girls at the Centre



Girls Aboriginal dance group, performing during NAIDOC week for the school, community and local Elders.

Girls at the Centre is a support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls who may be struggling with school attendance and engagement. The program is run at Mt Austin High School in Wagga Wagga, NSW, where participants have access to mentors and daily activities to keep them engaged with school.

This year, there were 61 participants from years 7 to 12, including 22 who identify as Aboriginal and 36 who are on the *Learning for Life* program. Senior Girls Coach, Maxine, supports students

in years 11 and 12, and for one year after they leave school to pursue further education or employment.

The program aims to encourage a positive attitude to learning and build confidence in the girls through activities, bonding sessions and excursions, and by engagement with local Aboriginal Elders on country through women's business dance and women's sacred sites. A sense of community is also promoted through participating in events such as NAIDOC Week, Sorry Day, Refugee Week and R U OK Day.

“I watch our girls develop in many ways, from enhancing their attendance at school, building relationships with other peers and other year groups, to growing in self-confidence, finding their voice and speaking up and stepping out of their comfort zones and challenging themselves,” says Maxine. “This year, we had six girls graduate from Year 12. All these girls also got their driver's licence through *Girls at the Centre*, in partnership with the Red Cross. Five girls have got part-time or full-time jobs and three have been given early entry into university.”

OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE

"I wouldn't be the first person in my family to go to university, let alone do a postgraduate degree, if not for The Smith Family.

I was on the *Learning for Life* program from Year 3. Last year I graduated from university with First-Class Honours, as well as being on the Dean's List.

My mum was a single mum and we were in quite dire financial straits.

Mum struggled quite a lot with chronic illnesses and wasn't able to work for a long time.

I definitely remember [missing out]. I didn't quite understand what poverty meant or looked like, but I just knew other kids had things that I didn't. Then suddenly we had the money to buy a new school jumper, and to go on a school excursion rather than missing out. I could see the stress gone from my

mum when it came to being able to afford school supplies.

Without The Smith Family, I wouldn't have been able to afford textbooks or to properly engage with my education. Doing The Smith Family's *iTrack* mentor program was a really fantastic part of my high school experience. I didn't know anyone in my life who had been to university or had a professional career, like my mentor. It was a really pivotal moment in me deciding that I wanted to go to university.

I feel like my life is completely transformed by the opportunities The Smith Family has given me."

Jade, *Learning for Life* graduate

Jade



"Last year I graduated from university with First-Class Honours, as well as being on the Dean's List."

“The Smith Family didn’t only give me the motivation to pursue my goals. It was also the fact someone looked past my background and believed in me enough to help me out. For me, knowing someone believed in me, made me realise that [achieving my goals] can actually happen.”

Tareeqe

Learning for Life graduate

“As a grandparent bringing up four young children, The Smith Family has given me the strength. They’ve given the children the opportunity to do everything they can with their education.”

Vanessa

Learning for Life participants’ grandmother

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