

# Overview

## Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Programs



everyone's family

### Our context

The Smith Family acknowledges the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Within the context of developing and designing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians it is important for us to note the key principles, articles and guiding statements contained in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child; the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Working together

At the heart of our policy approach is the principle of working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve education outcomes for children and young people. We are driven by the vision that our nation can become a place where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children fully benefit from the education and learning opportunities that this nation has to offer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are truly respected and valued as the First People of Australia.

### Our current programs

We work across 94 communities and in 2013-2014 supported more than 5,569 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students as part of our *Learning for Life* suite of programs. This represents a participation rate of about 16 per cent of the students we support. Also, in 2013-2014 we supported 4,569 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people participating in *Communities for Children*

We run a number of programs specifically to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. These are:



- *Girls at the Centre*, offered in Alice Springs, Northern Territory;
- *Keeping Indigenous Kids At Secondary School*, offered in Bairnsdale, Victoria;
- *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program*, funded by DEEWR for students attending boarding schools in Adelaide, Sydney, Darwin and Victoria;
- *Reading to Children*, offered nationally;
- *Parent and Community Engagement (PaCE)*, funded by DEEWR for programs we offered in Victoria and the Northern Territory.

### Our priorities

We continue to work to ensure our programs and program management tools are effective, holistic, culturally responsive and pitched to support our growing younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. This work includes:

Helping young Australians in need to build better futures through education.

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

- Working to increase the number of children, young people and families we support;
- Incubating and evaluating new ways of working;
- Partnering with other organisations and governments in communities;
- Reviewing progress against our Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) targets; and,
- Providing information about what we do and why.

## Our principles

The Smith Family uses guiding principles for how we work. The seven principles can be summarised as:

- Working towards effective, sustainable practice in agreement with communities;
- Appreciating it takes time to build trusting relationships and taking a whole of community generational approach, promoting respect and understanding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems;
- Adopting a strengths-based approach;
- Working together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, teachers and community leaders to seek involvement, advice and guidance is crucial;
- Connecting people, resources and ideas and, wherever possible, build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed organisations and promote employment opportunities;
- Being transparent and accountable in managing complex community-based systems of collaboration and action; and,
- Incorporating appropriate evaluation processes as part of our commitment to being an evidence-based organisation.

## Our good practice elements

We are committed to ensuring our policies, programs and services are culturally responsive and informed by good practice approaches. Our good practice elements are:

- Respectfully engaging
- Integration and governance
- Inclusion and awareness building
- Place based approaches and local needs
- Bridging the gap
- Accountability and sustainability

Our Advisory Group provides valuable advice and guidance on issues concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Its members include those with expertise and cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

## Our RAP

Our commitments to our reconciliation journey are articulated in our Reconciliation Action Plan. These commitments are grouped under the three themes of relationships, respect and opportunities. A full copy of the RAP is available on our website.

For further information, please contact the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy Manager.