

Real People, Real Stories Autumn 2023



Dylan, Learning Club participant

Thank you
for being
a Champion.



**The Smith
Family**

Learn today, change tomorrow.

Changing today to give students a brighter tomorrow

Here at The Smith Family, we believe every child deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It's something we all hold dear – and that I personally believe in very strongly.

2023 marked the beginning of our new ambitious five-year strategy. With Australians facing many challenges, including the rising cost-of-living crisis, this strategy aspires to make a bigger difference by sharpening our focus on education as the most powerful agent for change. Over the next 5 years, we aim to boost the number of students participating in our out-of-school educational programs to 250,000 (an increase of 70,000). With a clear vision to expand our evidence-based programs, our goal is to help more children make the most of their learning today so they can change their tomorrow.

Children like Dylan, who you will meet in this edition. Dylan's learning has come along in leaps and bounds, thanks to Champions just like you. It's wonderful to see him thriving with personalised *Learning Club* support.

You'll also be introduced to Yashoda on page 4. Through our *SmArts* program, this talented teen is discovering what it takes to turn her passion for creative arts into a future career.

But, together, there's so much more we can do. We have heard from our families that they are experiencing further financial hardship as the cost-of-living crisis deepens. Your continuing support helps provide their children with what they need to achieve their best at school. Something we all want for young people living in Australia.

I'm eternally grateful to caring people like you, who have made such a profound impact on the lives of so many children and their families. Thank you.

Best wishes,



Doug Taylor
Chief Executive Officer



Highlights from 2021–2022

We're delighted to share the achievements of our students:

- **159,753** children and young people participating in our programs.
- **95%** of *student2student* participants improved their reading.
- **79%** of participants agreed that *iTrack* improved their knowledge of post-school options and career pathways.

Dylan's persistence is paying off

Ten-year-old Dylan loves being part of *Learning Club*.

He's been participating in our crucial after-school learning and mentoring program at his primary school since 2020.

At *Learning Club*, volunteer tutors help Dylan correct his spelling and writing mistakes, and further develop his maths skills. By helping build the literacy and numeracy skills he needs to keep up in class, Dylan's confidence and love of school has soared.

"He's worked so hard, so it's wonderful to see his persistence finally pay off," says Amy.

The most exciting thing Amy has noticed is the great love of maths Dylan has developed at *Learning Club*. Dylan is now talking about turning his passion for maths into a career as a banker one day.

Dylan's dream of building a career based on his favourite subject is one many young people share. But when we face financial difficulties, it makes it harder for us to support our children's education. And when disadvantage puts barriers in Dylan's way of achieving success at school – pursuing his goals and reaching his full potential becomes harder.

This is why we're so grateful that Champions like you can help Dylan's mum, Amy, give him the extra learning support he needs to catch up and keep up at school.

As well as receiving homework help and one-on-one support, students can also take part in play-based learning. Through these games students can build new friendships and uncover new passions. Like Dylan, who also discovered a love of chess at *Learning Club*.

"I like to play chess with Bobby," says Dylan. "Most people think chess is boring but it's fun when you know how to play it. And I'm really good at it!"

When Amy told us, "*Learning Club* has been a great help to Dylan and me", it reminded us of just how vital your ongoing support is. Thank you for helping children discover that anything is possible if they are given the chance to explore their potential.



Dylan, *Learning Club* participant

It's lights, camera, action for Yashoda!



Yashoda, *iTrack* and *SmArts* participant

Photo credit: © Karen Watson

For 16-year-old Yashoda, the creative arts are her passion.

“I love exploring new things. Poetry and singing and everything related to music and creative arts is really what I like!”

In Year 9, pursuing her passion became a little harder for Yashoda. Unfortunately, her school was no longer able to offer creative arts as a subject. Paying for out-of-school creative arts workshops has not been possible for Yashoda's father, who is the sole carer for Yashoda and her two siblings.

This is where Champions like you can play a critical role for students living in disadvantage. With your ongoing generosity, Yashoda has been able to explore her creative abilities by participating in our out-of-school *SmArts* program.

***SmArts* is designed to provide students in Years 8 to 12 who are interested in creative arts with links to art organisations and relevant career information. In the past two years, Yashoda's enjoyed participating in *SmArts* poetry, vocal and music classes and has really seen her creativity flourish.**

Yashoda had an opportunity to be part of a four-day production workshop recently. She took part in acting, set design, costume design, lighting and stage management workshops with other teens participating in *SmArts*. At the end of the course, they presented a live theatre production for friends and family.

Participating in the *SmArts* workshops has had a positive impact on Yashoda. “I did a theatre workshop during the last school holidays. It was all about behind-the-scenes work: How to choose a play and how everything comes together. It was really cool. *SmArts* teaches me about the different career options,” says Yashoda.

This is something Champions like you help create for students like Yashoda. Through our out-of-school learning and mentoring programs, students get to see what is possible. And what they are truly capable of achieving.

Thanks to you, Yashoda has been able to explore so much more than her creative side. Yashoda is also taking part in The Smith Family *iTrack* program. *iTrack* links students with a trained volunteer mentor, who can give them advice and encourage them with their post-school plans. This gives students a space to ask questions they may not feel comfortable asking their family, teachers or friends about their career options.

Yashoda is grateful to have the help of volunteer mentor Natalie to plan her time better and do the best she can in school. Natalie is there to provide guidance to Yashoda on how she can turn her creative passions into a career in the future.

“*iTrack* is helping me learn how to balance school life, home life and think about what I’m actually going to do in the future. I want to know how to take my passions and turn it into a career.”

Thank you to our Champions for helping give Yashoda the opportunity to explore her career options. We can’t wait to see her name up in lights!

“*SmArts* teaches me about different types of creative arts. When I did a theatre workshop, I learnt how everything comes together behind the scenes for a theatre production. It was so cool.” – Yashoda



Yashoda, *iTrack* and *SmArts* participant

Photo credit: © Karen Watson

Supporters like you help bring books to life

All children deserve the opportunity to develop a passion for reading. And for 12-year-old Jamal, supporters like you have helped give him the support he needs to unlock the wonderful world of books.



Jamal lives in a busy household with his parents and five siblings. Sam was a single mum to Jamal and his two brothers before meeting Matt. Now with their combined family, they have a vibrant and bustling household of six young children.

Partners Matt and Sam both work hard to provide for their family. Sam works full-time as a disability worker, often working early mornings and late nights. When Matt isn't working part-time as an upholsterer, he is playing dad's taxi – taking the kids to school and afternoon sports.

Like all parents Matt and Sam are very passionate about supporting their children's interests and education. But for some, financial disadvantage means that they have limited access to the essential school supplies all children need, like books.

Matt and Sam were relieved when their school offered Jamal and his two brothers a place in our out-of-school peer reading program *student2student*. The boys have been part of the *student2student* program for the past year. Here, they receive one-to-one reading assistance from a student volunteer reading buddy.

This is a wonderful example of how generous Champions like you give students like Jamal the crucial extra learning help they need to catch up with their schoolwork and realise their potential.

“The Smith Family’s support has helped take the pressure off”, says Matt. “Through *student2student* the boys have more freedom, confidence and responsibility to take charge of their own learning.”

The boys’ reading has improved in leaps and bounds since joining *student2student*.

“The *student2student* reading program is so good for the boys,” says Sam. “Each week, I see their reading and writing improve. They learn new words. And this helps their overall confidence and learning at school.”

Jamal has noticed a difference in his reading too, “I can pronounce words better and I get better at reading every time I read with my buddies. I like reading in front of the class much better now too!”

It’s wonderful to see how caring people like you are continuing to empower children living in disadvantage so they can unlock their full potential. We can’t wait to see how Jamal’s learning progresses now that he has the extra support he needs to thrive.



Jamal and his family

Robert raises \$20,000 for children living in disadvantage

Have you ever dreamed of hitting the road and exploring new places? Few of us take time out of our busy lives to live out our dreams. Robert has. Last year, Robert rode his motorcycle 15,000 kilometres around Australia in 50 days. Pretty impressive, right?

What's more impressive is that Robert did it all in the name of charity.

Giving back has been a big part of Robert's life. With his 50th birthday looming, Robert thought he'd celebrate the milestone in a big way. He turned it into a truly inspirational gift for children living in disadvantage.

In April 2022, Robert set off on a two-month trip of a lifetime, riding his motorbike around Australia. His goal for the journey was to raise \$15,000 for The Smith Family.

People he met along the way were fascinated by what he was doing and eager to help him reach his goal. So much so, that he raised an amazing \$20,000. He even had truckies donating online to his cause in the middle of the Nullarbor!

Robert was compelled to undertake this trip of a lifetime as a fundraising adventure because he knows the difference it makes to Australian children experiencing poverty.

"I was lucky to grow up with all the things I needed for my education, and I'm fully aware of this privilege," says Robert. "I'm equally aware that not everyone has the tools to participate in school fully. So I'm passionate about bridging that gap."

Robert's generosity doesn't end there. He first learned about The Smith Family through a corporate partnership between The Smith Family and a previous employer six years ago.

"I learnt so much about the impact of education on young people and how it's a foundation for everything that happens after school. And it lit a bit of a spark in me."

This spark led Robert to become an *iTrack* mentor. As an *iTrack* mentor Robert provides career guidance and encouragement to students in Years 9 to 11. They help students consider and plan for their work, study and career options after school. Thanks to Champions like you, we've been able to recruit and train volunteers like Robert.

Robert's constantly amazed by his impact as a mentor on a child through simple conversation and a listening ear.



Robert, *iTrack* mentor and fundraiser

Photo credit: Joseph Ryan - Freeway Project

Robert, *iTrack* mentor and fundraiser



Photo credit: Joseph Ryan – Freeway Project

“One boy I mentored went from saying ‘I might do this’, to ‘I’m looking forward to doing this’. It was a real wow moment for me. It made me realise that sharing your experiences as a mentor can change a young person’s perspective of what’s possible, and what opportunities are within their grasp.”

We’re so pleased that volunteers like Robert are helping young students living in Australia create a brighter future for themselves. Thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

“I was fortunate and never missed out on things like excursions. To think that some parents have to decide between putting food on the table or opportunities for their kids is heartbreaking to me.” – Robert

Education opens the world to Mc Clay and her students

Mc Clay joined The Smith Family as a Programs Coordinator because she knows first-hand how education can change a life.

In the small South Australian regional community where she was born, Mc Clay was a star learner looking for her chance to shine. She soaked in the short trips away from home for sports carnivals and camps. These were rare but important times to see what was beyond the town and explore her potential.

In Year 8, Mc Clay used her leadership and academic skills to apply for, and was awarded a scholarship through The Smith Family's *Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP)*. The *IYLP* supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in rural and remote areas, like Mc Clay, to attend a high-achieving academic school.

The possibilities opened up for Mc Clay when she moved to her new boarding school. Here she had access to the abundant library and met new friends from different places.

“We had books I would’ve never had the opportunity to read, and languages I would’ve never had the chance to learn, which expanded my vocabulary,” Mc Clay says.

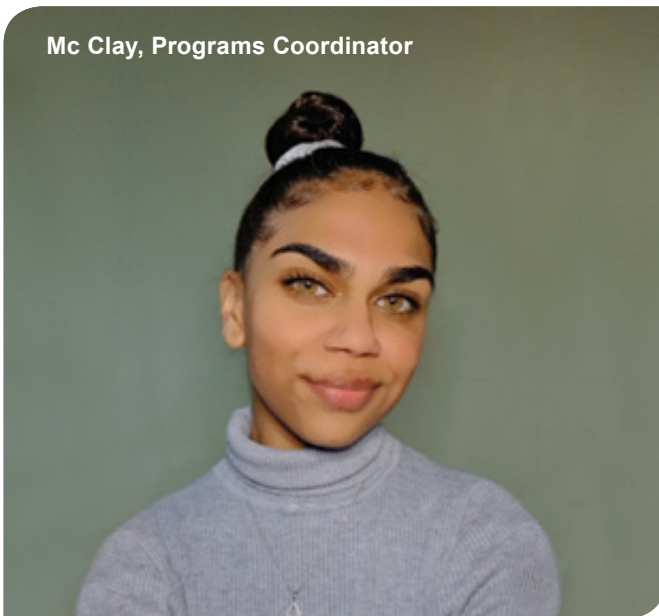
After finishing her studies and exploring different careers, Mc Clay realised she wanted to give back and help other students have more options with their education. She came to work for The Smith Family.

As a Programs Coordinator, Mc Clay sees first-hand the positive effects of the programs you help to make happen in her role.

Programs like these help children to reach their potential and have more choices throughout life.

“I see now, from my experience with *IYLP* and as a Programs Coordinator, the effects educational programs have on the students. If we start as young as primary school or even younger with teaching students to read and understand signs and shapes, it makes all the difference in the world,” Mc Clay explains.

Mc Clay, Programs Coordinator



Indigenous Youth Leadership Program

The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program (IYLP) supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students living in remote or very remote areas of Australia to attend a high performing secondary school to complete Year 12 and/or university to complete an undergraduate degree.

The program contributes to the development of skills in leadership in a range of ways. Students are supported in their leadership journeys on personal, academic and professional levels. In 2021 The Smith Family supported 250 students to participate in the program.

The Commonwealth Government-funded program aims to close the gaps in Indigenous educational disadvantage by creating greater access to additional education choice for Indigenous students, particularly those from remote and very remote areas of the country.

In addition to helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their educational aspirations, the *IYLP* contributes to the development of a pool of positive role models and future leaders from Indigenous communities, to inspire other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and illustrate the successes that can be achieved through education.

Scan the QR code to find out more.



One such program getting high praise from families is The Smith Family's *student2student*, an out-of-school reading program where students are paired with a buddy to improve their reading.

"I'm getting such wonderful feedback from one of the mothers saying that, even though the program's only a few weeks in, she can already see the effects it's having on the student's reading abilities and how enthusiastic the student is to just be able to sit down and read a book," Mc Clay says.

"And it's something that students would never have had the confidence to pick up, or wouldn't be challenged enough to pick up. It's amazing just knowing that even the parents are seeing it and are happy with us and the program."

You're helping to create possibilities for students. And if they're anything like Mc Clay, a possibility is just the spark needed for students to make their own path and reach their potential.

What our **students say**

It's a special thing to hear directly from the children and young people who are on our programs. Below some of the students who participate in our out-of-school education and mentoring programs share their experiences.

We hope you enjoy reading them as much as we did!

"I absolutely LOVED the entire SmArts program!! It was such a joy! The Smith Family members and the art organisation were all so kind, fun, and engaging. It was an absolutely amazing experience, and I would highly recommend it to others."

– Siobhan, Year 11

"Through iTrack I got to receive really helpful points and suggestions of career pathways and programs that I could attend or sign up for to help me towards my career. My mentor also helped me improve with my study methods and my overall confidence in school and work."

– Cooper, Year 11

"What I really liked about student2student is having the set routine of reading each week, even if the time changes, I have to do it still and look forward to it. I get to enjoy reading to my younger siblings now."

– Fatima, Year 4

"I enjoy the relationships I have made with the volunteers at the Learning Club and admire their consistency. They really do care about my learning."

– Jessica, Year 7

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Join us on



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