



Dylan, *Learning for Life* student

# Real People, Real Stories

Thank you for changing lives through sponsorship.

Autumn 2023



# 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 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 reach more children in need by almost doubling the number of students on sponsorship from 58,000 students to 100,000 students nationally. 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 sponsors just like you. It's wonderful to see him thriving with personalised *Learning Club* support.

You'll also be introduced to Yashoda on page 8. 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 across the nation. Your continuing support helps provide your students 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 life of your student and their family. Thank you.

Best wishes,



Doug Taylor  
Chief Executive Officer



## Highlights from 2021–2022

Please join us to celebrate the achievements of our *Learning for Life* students:

- **88%** of *Learning for Life* tertiary students continued from first-year to second-year study in university.

- **68.4%** of *Learning for Life* students in Year 10 in 2019 advanced to Year 12 in 2021.
- **84.2%** of *Learning for Life* students engaged in post school education, training or employment.

# Dylan's new pencils mean so much!

Like so many young people in Australia, ten-year-old Dylan has a keen interest in protecting the environment. He belongs to the school's Green Club and proudly wears the club's cap in the playground alongside the other waste warriors.

By receiving help from his sponsor with the little extras – like being able to afford to buy the Green Club cap – Dylan feels more engaged with his school community. Dylan and his mum Amy have also noticed the difference sponsorship makes to his schooling.

"Sponsorship is really helpful because we can use the money to buy the things we need, like school supplies," says Dylan. "My pencils have been getting smaller because I sharpen them so much, so that's why I need more pencils."

Sponsorship also provides Dylan with additional educational support and encouragement through his *Learning for Life* Coordinator Debra.

Debra helped connect Dylan to our out-of-school educational programs *student2student* and *Learning Club*.

Since Dylan started participating in our *student2student* reading program, Debra has noticed a big change. "Dylan's reading has improved significantly. His confidence has increased and he enjoys reading out loud," says Debra.

At *Learning Club*, volunteer tutors help Dylan keep up in class. His time here has also helped foster a great love of maths – so much so that he dreams of becoming a banker one day.

Dylan's hope of building a career based on his favourite subject is one many young people share. But when living in disadvantage means he sometimes can't afford school essentials like pencils, pursuing his goal becomes much harder.

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

**"*Learning Club* is great because the volunteers help me out a lot. They help me correct my mistakes." – Dylan**



Dylan, *Learning for Life* student

# Education opens the world to Mc Clay and her students

Mc Clay works as a *Learning for Life* Coordinator. She is accompanying a group of Smith Family students to a town in South Australia's Flinders Ranges, where they'll learn about possible careers in the area.

Leading this journey is one of the ways Mc Clay supports students in need with their education as a *Learning for Life* Coordinator. Your sponsorship provides your student with access to a Coordinator like Mc Clay. Coordinators provide a sponsored student with targeted support, understand the specific needs of the child, and work with the family to link the student to our range of out-of-school educational programs.

**Mc Clay is a strong advocate for education. But this passion, and her bond with The Smith Family, started well before she became a *Learning for Life* Coordinator.**

Mc Clay, *Learning for Life* Coordinator



Born in a regional South Australian community, Mc Clay was a star learner. She soaked in the short trips away from home for sports carnivals and camps. These were rare times to see 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.

Her family was excited – her mum always said that education was the best thing for any student. Mc Clay notes, “My mum was smart and achieved a lot in her career. Education was important. My mum always said, ‘Don’t leave the house until you finish your homework’.”

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 that I would’ve never had the opportunity to read, and languages I would’ve never had the chance to learn. This 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.

# *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.**



She came to work for The Smith Family.

As a *Learning for Life* Coordinator, Mc Clay sees first-hand the positive impact sponsorship has on students. She helps to organise our out-of-school reading program *student2student*, where sponsored students have access to a reading buddy to help improve their literacy. “I’m getting such wonderful feedback from one of the mothers. Even though the program’s only a few weeks in, she can already see the effects it’s having on her child’s reading abilities,” Mc Clay says.

Mc Clay has shown us that supporting a young person isn’t just for the moment. It can set that person up to be a changemaker well into the future, for themselves and for others. As a sponsor, this is an opportunity you help give to your student.

As for Mc Clay, she wants to keep helping children experience the power of education.

**“I see now, being a part of these programs, the effects it has on the students that if we just start as young as primary school or even younger, it makes all the difference in the world.”**

# Sponsors like you help bring books to life

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



Jamal, *Learning for Life* student

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 Jamal & his siblings. 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 connected them with The Smith Family. Through our *Learning for Life* program, financial support means Jamal and his siblings get the same chance as other children to participate fully in their education.

**“Sponsorship has taken the pressure off”, says Matt. “It’s helped us buy school uniforms, shoes and pay for after-school sports. It’s even helped us buy the little things like a lunchbox or drink bottle. These things aren’t important to you and me, but they are hugely important to a child.”**

Experiencing serious hardship can compound the day-to-day struggles for families like Matt and Sam's. This can make it harder to find time to help with their children's homework or give them the learning support they need at home so they can thrive at school.

As a sponsor, this is how your support is giving a student like Jamal the crucial extra learning help they need to catch up with their schoolwork and realise their potential. Jamal and his two brothers have been part of the *student2student* reading program for the past year. Through this program they receive one-to-one reading assistance from a volunteer reading buddy.

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. 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 like Jamal to get the most out of their education. 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**

# It's lights, camera, action for Yashoda!



Yashoda, *Learning for Life* student

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. Covering the cost of school essentials can be tricky enough when faced with financial hardship.

This is where your support can play a critical role for a student like Yashoda. The financial support sponsorship provides has given her access to basic school supplies. These are things that every student needs to succeed at school.

"School shoes cost a lot of money. Especially leather ones", says Yashoda. "I don't care about fitting in with the most stylish shoes. But being able to buy school shoes when I need them is amazing."

Sponsorship is also helping to pair Yashoda with a *Learning for Life* Coordinator. Our Coordinators connect students with tailored out-of-school learning and mentoring programs. Yashoda's Coordinator encouraged her to explore her creative abilities by participating in *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 career information. In the past two years, Yashoda's sponsor has given her a chance to join *SmArts* poetry, vocal and music classes.

Yashoda participated in a four-day production workshop recently. She took part in acting, set design, costume design, lighting and stage management workshops with other teens who are part of our *Learning for Life* program. At the end of the course, they presented a live theatre production for friends and family.

Participating in *SmArts* has had an impact on Yashoda, “I did a theatre workshop during the last school holidays. It was all about behind-the-scenes work, like how to choose a play. It was really cool. *SmArts* teaches me about my career options.”

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

Yashoda is also part of The Smith Family *iTrack* program. *iTrack* links students with someone to talk to outside of their networks who can give them advice and encourage them with their post-school plans. This gives them 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 advice and 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,” says Yashoda.

Thank you to Yashoda’s sponsor for helping give her 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, *Learning for Life* student**

Photo credit: ©Karen Watson

# 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.



Robert, *iTrack* mentor and fundraiser

Photo credit: Joseph Ryan – Freeway Project

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 knew 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* volunteer mentor. As an *iTrack* mentor, Robert provides career guidance and encouragement to students in Years 9 and 11. He helps students consider and plan for their work, study and career options after school.

Robert is 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

"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 Australians create a brighter future for themselves. Thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

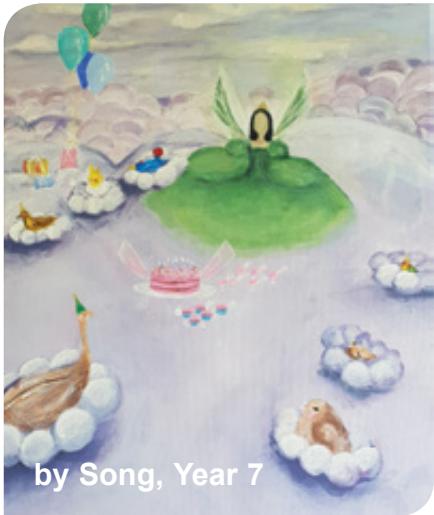
**"I was fortunate and never missed out on things like excursions. To think that some parents have to decide between putting food on the table or opportunities for their kids is heartbreaking to me."**

**– Robert**

# CREATIVE SHOWCASE

Creative Showcase gives students the opportunity to express their creativity.

Last year we received many entries from our students and we'd love to share some with you.



by Song, Year 7



by Hannah, Year 1



by Muhamed, Year 9



by Angelina, Year 12

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

Email: [sponsorship@thesmithfamily.com.au](mailto:sponsorship@thesmithfamily.com.au)

Phone: 1800 633 622

Mail: The Smith Family  
GPO Box 10500, Sydney NSW 2001

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