



BUILDING THE EVIDENCE BASE TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

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Learning for Life scholarship program

- **Long-term** educational support (1st yr of school to potentially end of tertiary)
- Aims to improve the **educational and post-school** outcomes of **financially disadvantaged young Australians**
- **3 components:**
 - Financial support
 - Relationship with LfL Coordinator
 - Access to range of short programs
- Underpinned by strong **parent engagement**
- Strong **partnerships**
- **Outcomes** focus



Learning for Life families

- Around **43,000** students nationally in **90+** communities across all states/territories
- All **low income** families – Health Care Card or pension
- 1 in 5 **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander** background nationally
- 40% of students and 50% of parents have a **health** or **disability** issue
- 70% of parents **not in the labour force** or unemployed
- 56% of parents have not completed Year 12 or equivalent
- Over half are **single parent**; 6% in grandparent, kin or foster families
- 20% of students have been at **4 or more schools** and 1 in 20 at 6 or more schools
- 30% do not have a home computer and/or internet connection at home
- **More disadvantaged** than their peers in disadvantaged schools
- Over half of our secondary and tertiary students have been on *LfL* for **6 or more years**

OUR RESEARCH AND EVALUATION APPROACH



Our evaluation approach

1. A 'theory of change'
2. An **Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA)** framework:
 - How much did we do?
 - How well did we do it?
 - Is anyone better off?
3. Small number of **long-term outcomes and Key Performance Indicators** and the means of collecting and analysing this data for *Learning for Life* scholarship students.



Nationally unique dataset for *Learning for Life*

- Longitudinal
- All financially disadvantaged students
- Admin, demographic and outcomes data for each student.

Unique IDs

- Student
- Family
- School
- Community
- Program Coordinator

Administrative records

- Referrals / support
- Participation in key programs
- Years on scholarship

Demographics - family

- Family type
- Family size
- Digital access
- Non-scholarship 'sibling' age and gender

Demographics - students

- Age, gender, Indigenous background
- Year level
- School
- 'Partner school' status
- Community
- Program Coordinator
- *Health and disability*

Demographics - primary carer

- Age, gender, Indigenous background
- Main language spoken
- Highest education level
- Labour market status
- Studying status
- Role relative to scholarship child

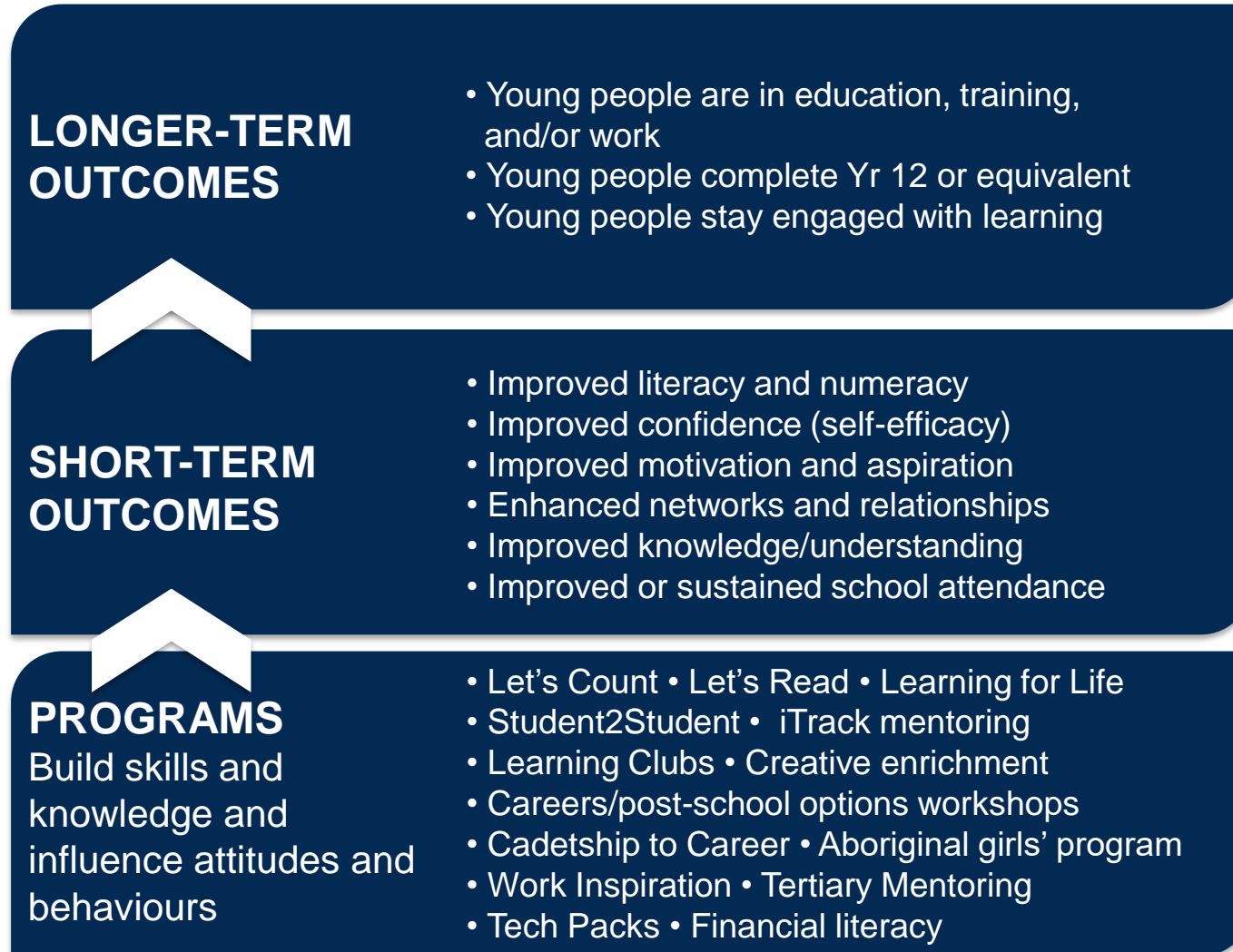
Student outcomes

- School attendance
- English & maths achievement
- Yr 12 completion
- Post-school engagement
- Highest year level completed
- *Tertiary qualification completed*

Peer (school level) and national comparisons

- Demographics
- Average attendance rates
- Yr 12 completion
- Post-school engagement

Measures of effectiveness



**ENGAGEMENT
ADVANCEMENT
ATTENDANCE**



New research report

- Uses *LfL* educational outcomes data collected over 7 years from 30,000 students ⇒ new knowledge in an Australian-first study
- Range of practice and policy implications
⇒ improve program and as basis for public policy advocacy
- Relevant for parents, schools, Depts of Ed, NGOs, philanthropic organisations etc



Attendance lifts achievement:
Building the evidence base to improve student outcomes

The Smith Family Research Report
March 2018



everyone's family

Executive summary

Australian children from low socioeconomic backgrounds are at risk of poor educational outcomes from their first year of school. This risk increases as they move through school, with lower proportions of these young Australians completing Year 12 and moving into employment or further study post-school, compared to their more advantaged peers.

Poor educational outcomes have costly lifelong impacts on young people and the wider community, given the relationship between education and employment, health, social connectedness and reliance on income support.

Although gaps in educational outcomes are evident early in a child's life, research shows young people who start school behind can subsequently meet key educational outcomes. Students who start school developmentally on track can also fall behind over time.

Improving the life outcomes of disadvantaged young Australians relies on providing targeted and timely support to those most at risk of not achieving educationally. Critical to a more efficient allocation of educational resources is a sophisticated understanding of the early flags for poor educational outcomes that go beyond financial disadvantage alone. This includes indicators of educational vulnerability that emerge as young people move through school.

Analysis of a large nationally unique dataset of disadvantaged students participating on The Smith Family's Learning for Life scholarship program shows that:

- School attendance and school achievement in English or Maths are closely related.
- Changes in student attendance and achievement are relatively common as students move through school.
- Attendance and achievement are early indicators of students who are likely to have poor longer-term outcomes, as they help predict school completion and engagement post-school in work or further study.
- Targeted and timely support to improve students' low school attendance and below satisfactory achievement in English and Maths as they move through school is essential.
- Improvements in attendance and achievement are possible and increase the likelihood of students completing school and being in work or study post-school.

There is a significant opportunity to improve the educational performance of Australian school students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Key to improving their educational outcomes are:

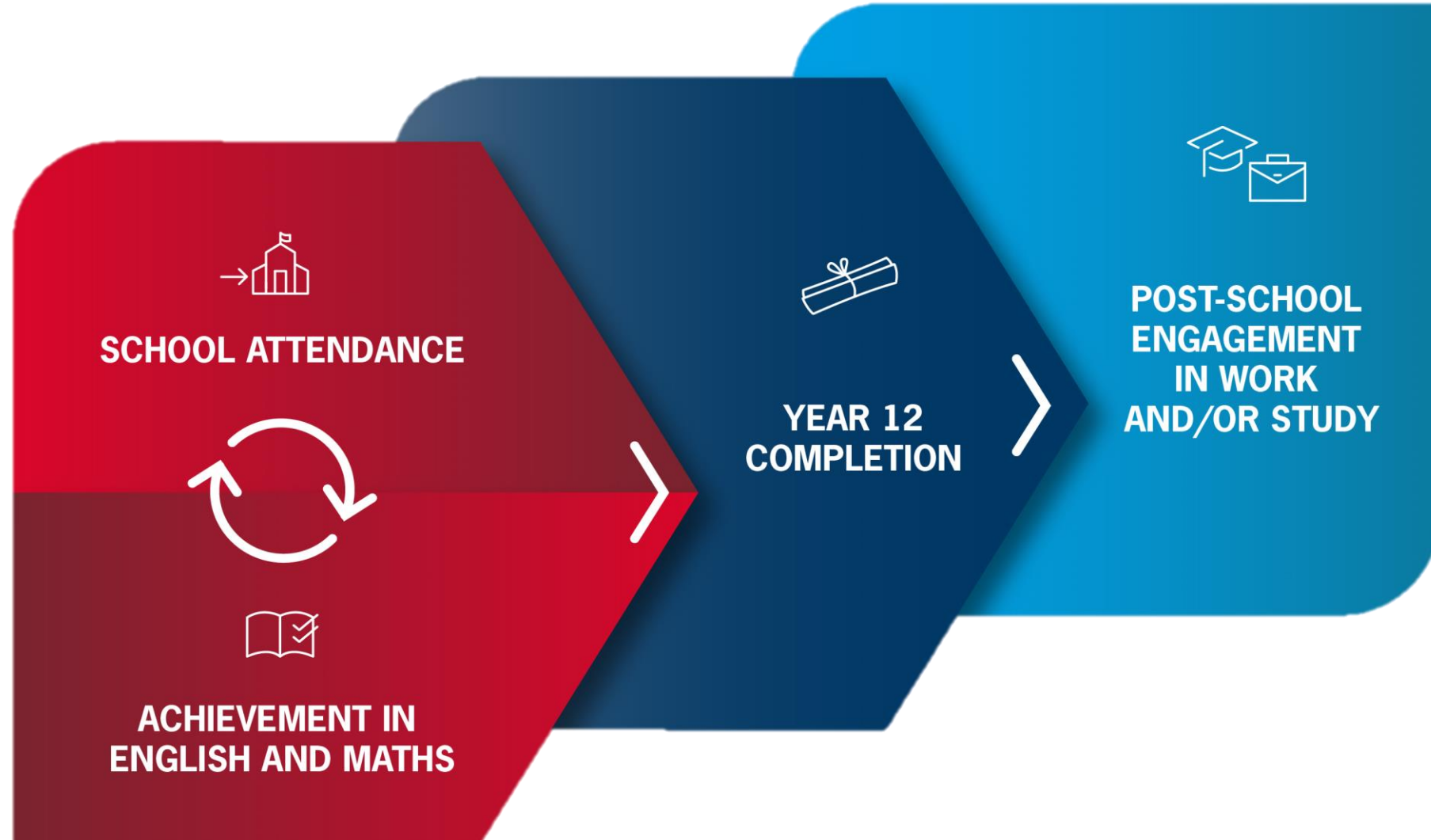
- Tracking students' individual progress.



thesmithfamily.com.au

The Smith Family Attendance lifts achievement 1

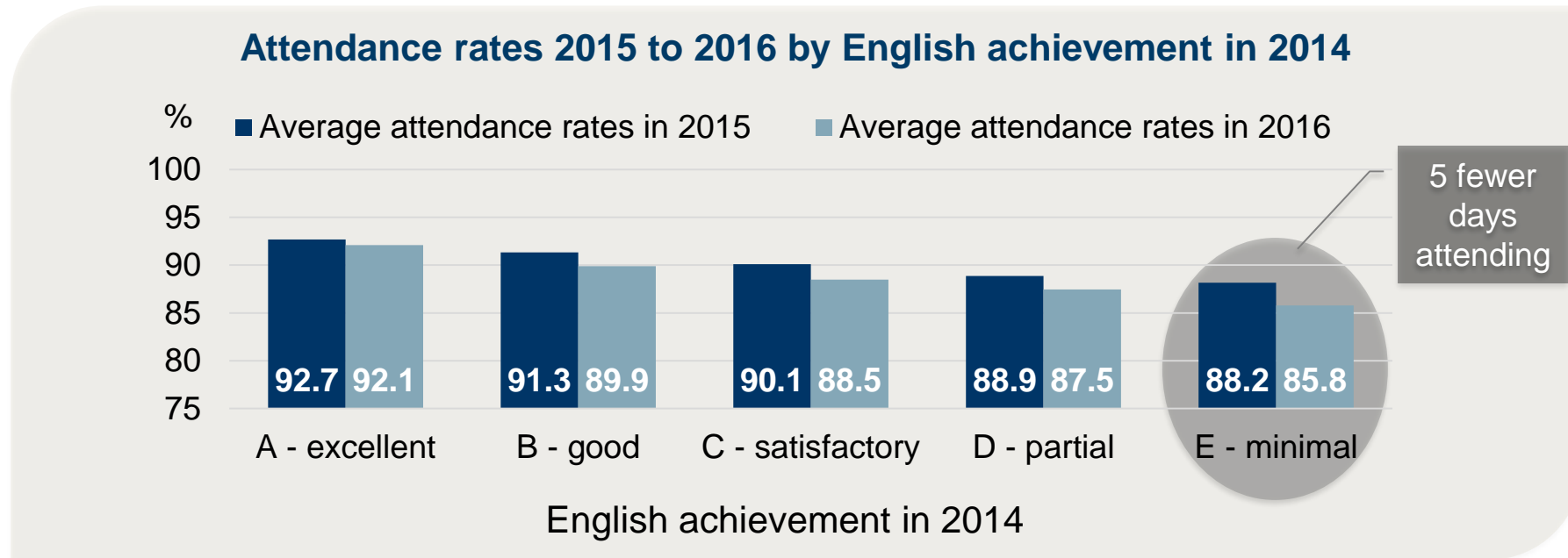
Learning for Life longitudinal data shows relationships between key educational outcomes



1. SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT & SCHOOL ATTENDANCE



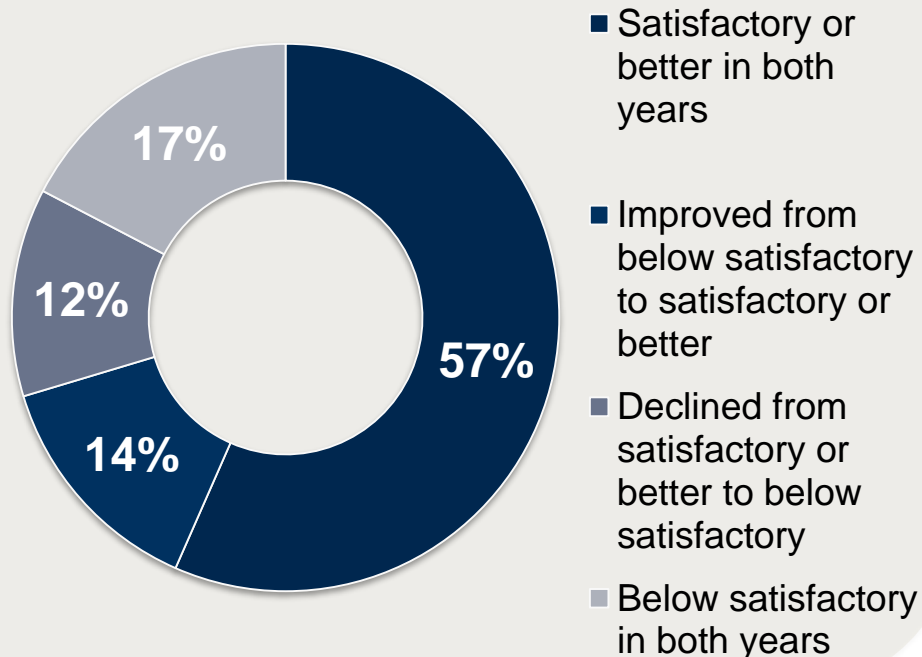
There is a relationship between English achievement and future school attendance



- Lower English achievement grades in 2014 are a **predictor** of lower attendance in subsequent years
- ↓ in attendance greatest for students with 'E' grade
- Converse applies - attendance **predicts** future achievement
- Same relationships apply for maths

English achievement over time is satisfactory for majority but change is common

Changes in English achievement 2014 – 2016 (%)

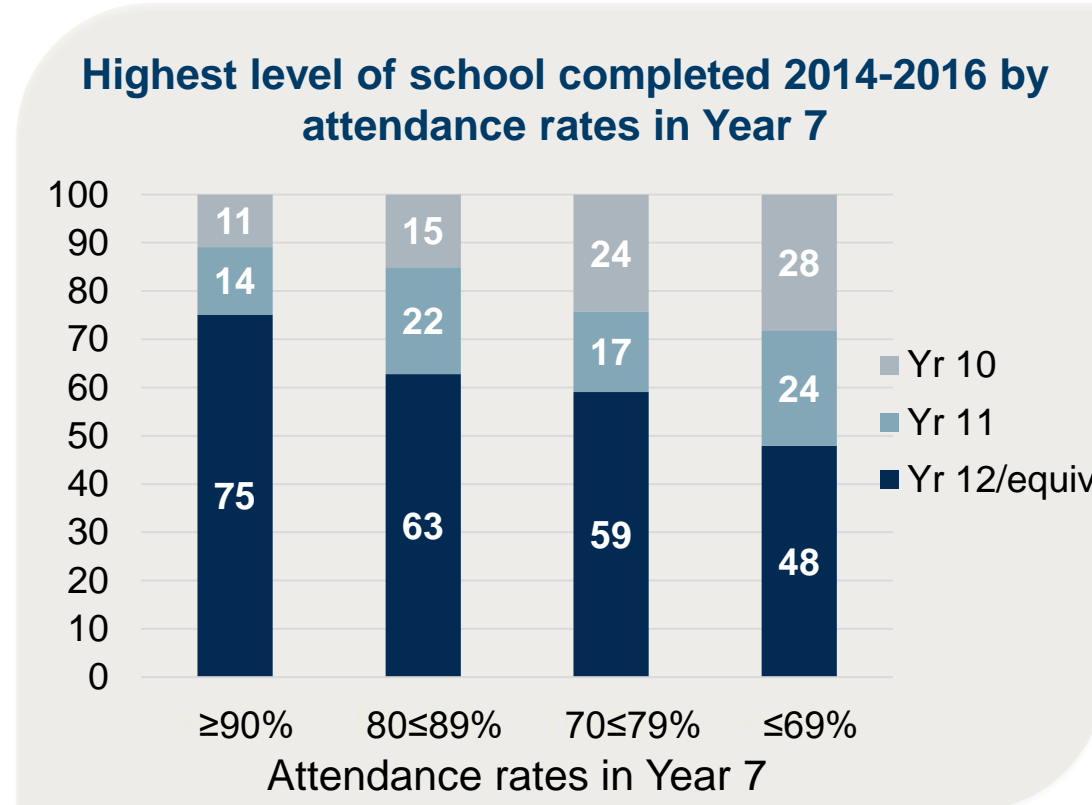


- Majority had satisfactory or better achievement in 2014 and 2016
- 1 in 4 students experienced movement ↑ or ↓
- Improvements are possible
- Timely support to arrest ↓
- Need ongoing monitoring through school

2. SCHOOL COMPLETION & ATTENDANCE (& ACHIEVEMENT)



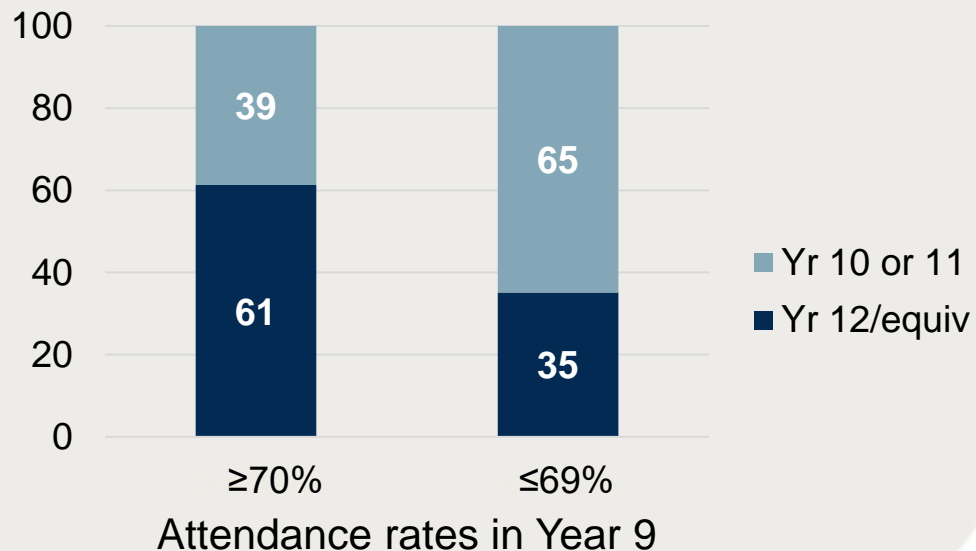
Attendance rates in Year 7 are related to whether or not a student completes school



- Students with high attendance in Year 7 were much more likely to complete Year 12, cf students with low attendance (75% cf 48%)

Improving attendance rates as students move through high school increases likelihood they'll complete school

Highest level of school completed 2014-2016 by attendance in Year 9 for students with $\leq 69\%$ attendance in Year 7

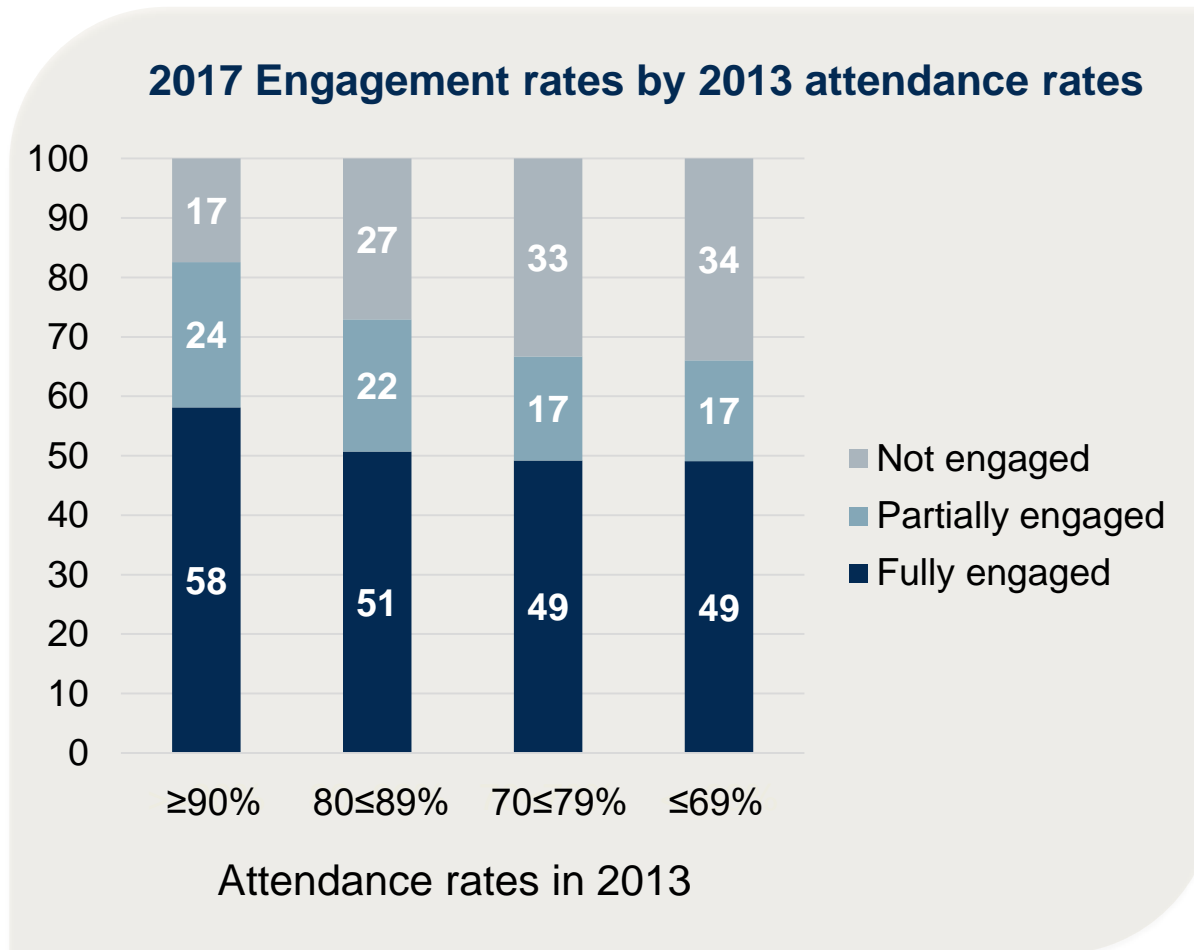


- 6 in 10 students who had very low attendance in Year 7 but improved their attendance Year 9, completed Year 12 cf 35% of students who had very low attendance in both Years 7 and 9

3. POST-SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT IN WORK AND/OR STUDY



Post-school engagement in work and/or study is related to school attendance



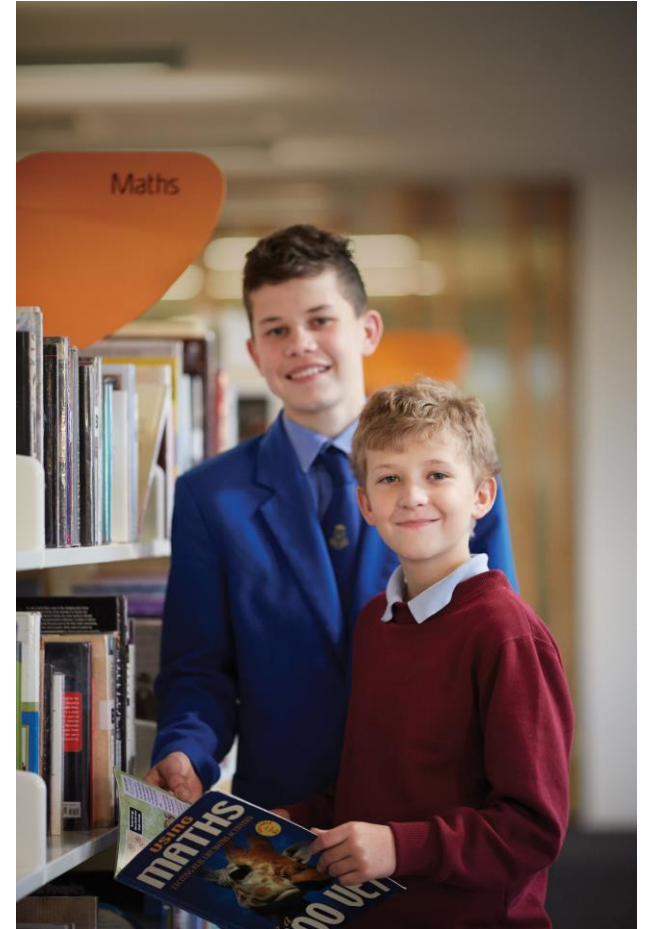
- 82% of students who had high attendance rates during high school were in work and/or study post-school of 66% of those with very low attendance rates
- High attenders were also more likely to be fully engaged

Policy and practice implications

- Achievement and attendance are **indicators of risk** and can be used to **identify students** needing additional support as they move through school
- **Targeted** and **timely** support to improve students' **low school attendance** and below satisfactory **achievement** in English and Maths as they move through school is essential
- **Improvements** in attendance and achievement **are possible** and increase the **likelihood** of students **completing school** and being in **work and/or study** post-school
- Support for high attenders and achievers should focus **on widening learning experiences**, sense of possibilities and expanding networks
- **Support students at risk** of early school leaving eg through new Early School Leavers pilot initiative. Includes career coaching, setting goals, skills development including with employers
- **Unique Student Identifier** needed for all Australian students

Conclusion

- There is significant opportunity to improve Australia's educational performance, especially for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Highly disadvantaged students can achieve educationally and be involved in work or study post-school
- This research contributes to the evidence base to ensure more students succeed
 - Provides more sophisticated and nuanced understanding
 - Contributes to evolution of *LfL* but goes well beyond this by strengthening the educational evidence base
- Wherever possible work in the outcomes space should benefit program participants and help inform the work of others.





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