

Transcript of presentation given by Greg Ryan-Gadsden (The Smith Family) at Curtin Corner, 8 Aug 2014

>> Professor John Phillimore: Okay, well, we'll get started to reward the people for being here on time, so, it's a great crowd. Thanks very much for attending today. I'm John Phillimore. I run the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy and every Friday afternoon we run Curtin Corner. Some of you are familiar faces. Some of you are newcomers. So, welcome if it's the first time you've been here and we hold Curtin Corners pretty much every Friday during the semester time with speakers both from outside as well as inside the university and sometimes we also partner with other organisations. And today, of course, is one of those days. We work very closely with the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. And so rather than me introducing our speaker, come on in, I'll get Sue Trinidad, Professor Sue Trinidad, who's the director of the National Centre to say a few words and also say a few words about Greg. So, Sue, over to you.

>> Professor Sue Trinidad: Thank you, John. Welcome, everyone. It's great to see so many people here, and we have all of our cards out here because what we will be doing is recording the presentation that Greg's giving and his PowerPoint slides and recording and transcript will go up to the web page for our centre. So, as John said, I'm Director of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. We had the great pleasure of meeting Greg earlier on, so we were so pleased that he said yes to coming and talking about his wonderful initiatives that he's doing with The Smith Family. And as some of you know but others may not, Greg has many years of experience working in the education sector. He's been a school principal and I think it shows [laughter], a teacher, and-

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: In a good way, right?

>> Professor Sue Trinidad: HR roles with the Department of Education. And he's worked many years with aboriginal communities in the Kimberleys, Pilbara and the Goldfields. And he has been the chair of the number of, a number of groups such as the Anti-Poverty Week in 2012 and 2013 and held, has held a number of positions on advisory councils for the Government Employee Housing Association, The WA Air Force Advisory Council and the, and an international school board. He holds a Master's of Education - that shows, too - a Bachelor of Education and Diploma of Learning, and he represents the WA Australian, um, Western Australia in master's hockey and I believe that you play here, is that right? Yes? And he also enjoys his motorcycle and spending time with his family and 3 children. So, we are very pleased that you, you're here to today to be able to take us through your concept and I was thrilled to hear that you'll be promoting this work Australia-wide. And as our centre is a national centre, we will also be promoting your work nationally as well. So, I hand over to you now, Greg. And it's about 30 minutes and then we'll have a chance for questions from people. Thank you.

[Applause]

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>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: I hope it's okay if I sit. I might stand a bit in a moment. Thank you very much for the introduction and just want to acknowledge the Wadjak people of the Noongar nation on whose grounds that we currently are having this meeting and pay my respects to those elders, both past, present and future. I actually got my Aboriginal skin name through my wife who was born in the Kimberley, and had been working in a remote Aboriginal community for 2 years before I knew that I had a skin name. And it was the women who had known my wife from so long before in Kununurra, and so your [my] skin name is determined by, by my wife. So, that's how I got mine. So, the women were sitting one day in the circle and called my wife in and, and said, "This is, this is what it is." So, that's, that was lovely.

Okay, look, today I'm going to through really talking about an alternative approach, something that we're really excited about in The Smith Family across Australia. Nothing new in some parts of the world but relatively new here in, in WA and certainly in, in the rest of Australia. We've actually got nine pilot sites of loosely called hubs around the country at all different stages of their lifecycle. So, I just wanted to share a little bit of on-the-ground stuff that's happening with the ones here in WA. So, first of all I wanted to run through some, some statistics which I think sort of set the scene for where we are in terms of disadvantage in Australia. It's often a hidden thing and I know there's minds around this room that will be very familiar. But nevertheless, I did want to share some of the statistics because you know, we're supposedly this rich country of high-quality health, high-quality law and justice, high-quality education, but we're not a country of high equity at all and certainly the statistics show that in an educational sense.

So, while we're right up there in terms of performance, education as a nation, if we drill down then to particular post codes and see how young people are doing from those post codes, it's a very different picture. If you were born in, in a low SES community in some like countries, you will do better than you will in Australia. So, that's really unfortunate and why it's so important that we all do the work that we do. So, just a few things. So, from the ABS, there are 638,000 kids, approximately, who would have woken up this morning in a house where nobody works. So, whether it's in a dual mother-father, single parent, but there's 638,000 kids who were born into - are living, sorry - in a house where nobody works, which is quite large. It's a tick over 50,000 here in WA. So, why are families jobless? There's a number of reasons. Health, disability, education, literacy, all the things that would resonate. Language skills, discrimination, substance abuse. Children with health and behavioural problems, domestic violence, housing instability. And housing's a real one for Perth. The cost in the last few years around housing, if you see the WACOSS reports and so forth are consistently saying the issues are around the essentials, if you're going to make a choice about buying a school uniform or textbooks and paying the power bill, well, it's the power bill and the power bill's gone up so much in recent years. Housing, a crucial one. We provide support. We're place-based, and lo and behold, we start supporting kids with great wrap-around programmes, and they have to move because the rent's gone up. The lease is expiring. Because our families rent, they don't own a house. And so then suddenly they're moving further and further out. So, we don't abandon them in terms of financial support, but it's really quite challenging to provide programmes when people are in different communities. And look at our state, really geographically challenged.

There's some structural things as well in terms of disadvantage and so forth. Much fewer lower skilled jobs in our community now and really, the starting level is quite different than it

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used to be. You know, despite WA trailing behind every state bar Tasmania in terms of transition from school into higher education, even here there are fewer lowest, low-skilled jobs and it's certainly changed over the last 20 years.

Things like cost of childcare, really topical at the moment around that, and shortage of childcare as well. Transport issues, and we take these things for granted but you know, a lot of our families report, even if they know where the particular service is, how do you get there? If it's not on a train line or bus line or something, it can be really quite challenging to, to be, to be able to get there and be engaged.

A big technological divide. We released some research earlier this year around people living in low socio-economic communities, having access to, or lack of access to three key things. One was sport, the other was cultural activities and the third was the internet. So, 1 in 3 families that we support don't have a computer at home, certainly are not attached, connected to the internet and so suddenly, you know, I find it, can you imagine your world not to, you know, being able to connect. There's not too many homes. I actually drilled down and had a look at the suburbs that we, that we had and it was in line into what this report said, absolutely. 33 per cent to 35 per cent in the communities, families we support, sorry, of all people in their communities, not just the ones The Smith Family support, were not connected to the internet. So, particular suburbs, I don't need to name them. That was the kind of statistics.

And so really hard to just engage with day to day things, so, in terms of the students and being able to engage in research and do assignments and all the rest of it, really, really challenging. Lots of things around policy as well: removal of concessions around all sorts of things that have made things difficult - we won't go into detail around that but I just wanted to make that point. There's some things that are identified that are essential for kids to have and in 2010, there were around 206,000 families representing 370,000 children that were deprived of at least two of these essential things that kids need. These things are: children can participate in school activities and outings; yearly dental check-up; a hobby or a leisure activity; up-to-date school books, books and new clothes for school-aged children; a separate bed for each child. So, you know, 370,000 kids don't get two of those things. So, really quite a different playing field if you're born in an affluent suburb and how your life might turn out. So, it's certainly not a level playing field. That's certainly what The Smith Family aims to do, is to try and level that playing field out.

Attendance, an interesting one and a great piece of research from WA around attendance essentially saying for school-age children, there's no level of absence that is safe. There's no level of absence that is safe. Across the board, regardless of your socioeconomic status, it will impact on your outcomes, which made me feel very guilty sometimes about my own children when they don't go to school. But for kids who are in low socioeconomic communities, as you'd expect, the impact is more. So, particularly important around that. That was a really good piece of research here in, in WA that's had resonated right across the country.

And of course that gap, you know, widens as school goes on in terms of outcomes. So, we were just talking earlier about the early years and the importance around the early years. And, you know, typically kids we're supporting are 2 and 3 years behind their pre-literacy and early literacy skills by the time they get into that kindergarten teacher and pre-primary

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teacher. On average, say, 25 books. Not a lot of literature in the household. Maybe not as much oral language and so forth being spoken. Comments like, "Well, why would you speak to a 4-month old or a 6-month old?" So, you know, enormous challenges and the kindergarten teachers, of course, of which my wife is one, love it when there's some good work done from [age] 0.

In terms of Aboriginal outcomes, oh, I could go on all day! I prefer to focus on the really positive things that are happening for Aboriginal people but one statistic, again around attendance. It's not moved for 5 years. It has not improved in 5 years, and that's unbelievable, particularly given the investment that's been in the space. Some of our families are reporting, you know, in terms of this cost and so on, the secondary kids who are choosing particular subjects based on the cost of that particular subject. So, you know, gifted children or, with a passion or an interest in a particular place are making decisions because it costs too much and of course big debate at the moment around cost in, particularly in higher education and so forth and, and as an organisation, we're very, very concerned about that.

All right, I think that's enough of that. You've got the picture.

[Referring to PowerPoint presentation now] So, I've moved through a little bit about well, what do we do about it and what, what's our approach to it? So, just, the, The Smith Family. Let's say a little bit. You may have seen the adverts earlier in the year about this. You know, all this little hero needs is a chance, great little 30 second ad, you can YouTube this one. You know, where he, he's got a disabled mum and he takes care of mum in the morning. You can see his bag, he doesn't have a bag like the other kids. He's late because he's looking after mum. He's, you know, the bag bursts and he misses the bus and then he finally makes it to school by running there and, you know, his start to the day is a little different to others. So, we reckon there should be the same opportunities as everyone else.

So, that was the stats I was talking about, over 638,000 children living in financial disadvantage, meaning jobless household. That's 1 in 10, 1 in 10. And so that's certainly our mission. We believe that education is the, the key to all of that. And The Smith Family wasn't always education. The charity's 92 years old but it's only been about the last 15 years we moved out of the emergency relief area and said, "Who is in the education space in terms of disadvantage? What a fantastic investment. Let's fill capacity and capability, so they don't end up in, you know, a homeless shelter or, or soup kitchens or, or whatever, unemployed." So, a great move and quite a gutsy thing by the board at the time to do that. You know these people who come onto the boards of charities. High-flying people, very capable people, not risk takers when it comes to the charity, which kind of holds things back sometimes. With their own organisations, they take risks left, right and centre and invest, but the charities, they're really quite reticent to do so. So, well done to the board at the time. It was the late '90s.

All right, so just talking a little about why the village. The whole concept around this I'll talk through and it, it, it probably will be familiar to, to many. Certainly, international evidence is talking about you know, strong school-community business partnerships lead to a lot of benefits, academic performance, attendance, you can see behavioural problems, parental confidence, and of course you're bringing in a lot more resources into the school, and I'll talk a little more about that and, and why and how that happens. You know, really interesting.

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We've got a second hub who's just started this year and there's a corporate there who has fully funded for four years, a hub in a government school. You know, but why, why are they getting involved in this? So, I want to talk through that a little bit. Which is quite confronting. Some people may say, "Well, hang on. Isn't this government's responsibility?" And that's a fair argument. But what we say is we don't expect to scale up this approach across the country as an organisation. What we want to do is go to government and say here's an approach, this is what we've done, here's what the evaluation says, and hopefully inform policy.

So, again, why, why the village or the community? Why did we go this way? It's a bit about those of you who worked in schools and so on, the change in schools and the expectation around schools is just absolutely enormous. You know, should the schools be doing it all? You talk to any teacher and they'll tell you, "My goodness, my expectations of what I'm supposed to do is unrealistic. I don't have the time. I can't even, you know." Country towns used to rely on the teachers to run the football training and whatever in the afternoons. It's not so common these days, in country areas, to see teachers doing that. They are too busy. Lots of accountability and, and, and work to be done.

Benefits also. Pooled resources. So, here you've got school resources and what is it you can bring in from outside, all in the surrounding community? Amazing what's out there and what's possible and I'll, I'll share some of the, the little wins that we've had, which have really come from left field and was unexpected. It is a shared responsibility and the schools that we're working with are loving it because it's releasing them. You know, they're told by their district director and so forth, "Get out there and be entrepreneurial and create partnerships and, and manage it all" and they're going, whew, you know? A little bit like homework as well. I'd also argue that the skills set is not necessarily there in your principal or your teachers to do this sort of work, and I would argue there are many out there who do have the skills set, and generally in the community sector. And they really know how to connect with the community. They're trusted by the community. A lot of our families have had poor experiences with government agencies, whether it's child protection, police, education. I know as a principal I would have, you know, parents come to see me. They'd be sitting waiting to come in and must've been terrible memories from when they were kids and they've come to see me. And these are the parents, they're breaking out in a cold sweat. But it told me something about their experiences through school.

Also, then going on in terms of the changing role of the principal and there's been a lot of literature around this the last couple of years about that changed role. And it really is quite taxing on, on what they need to do. You know, here in WA the independent public schools, the one-line budgeting, your own staff selection and so forth. And, and now create external partnerships and, and do all of that work, too. So, there's huge expectation by all of those groups out there. And of course the little thing at the bottom there, just sort of slipped it in. There's been a little bit around the curriculum reform, hasn't there? I worked in developing countries in the south pacific implementing and developing curriculum. And really interesting from that perspective and knowing what curriculum developers have to put up with. Everyone wants a piece of the curriculum and tailor it in this way and that way, but fascinating to be working in a third-world environment where different things are important. So, there, you know, sort of on the front page of, of the curriculum is, is, is more about the place of religion. Where, of course, we wouldn't, we wouldn't have that in our curriculum. So, it is interesting.

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So, what we're talking about, there's lots of different names for this approach and we're still battling with what the titles should be and so on, and we're taking a piece of national work at the moment to, to talk through that, about what it might be, might be called. But hopefully you'll have a sense of what it means when we finish.

So, what is a hub? Look, it's going beyond co-location. There's been some attempts where, "Okay, all we need to do is have a building, we'll have a school, and we'll bring in, bring in people. We'll get child protection to come in once a week and, you know, Centrelink will come and sit at the front office and meet with parents and they'll be able to sign up and so on. There's a lot, we've got a police, we've got a school police officer and whatever." So, you know, there's that. That's the very first stage of all of this. But that's certainly not what we're talking about or the end game where we want to be. And the examples have been very much about nothing changing. They, they do this service and, and that's it. There's not that cohesive, coherent, integrated planning together. Having one goal. Having, you know, where, where are we going with this? A bit like the, I think it's the Camden Experience in New York where they talk about the whole community has an expectation of where kids are going to be going. You know, any child born in this community will be going to college. So, it doesn't matter if you're the child health nurse, the police officer, the teacher, the parent, the whatever, what's my role in getting that child to college? I'm not just fixing up the hurt leg or the whatever. It's actually about "What's my role?" What can I value add. So, is the child healthy? There's working with the teachers to implement and integrate strategies across the curriculum in the school day. That's that more sophisticated level.

Certainly about working together and surely it's simple. Anyone who's worked in a country town – I don't know, in my experience in country towns, it seemed to work better in a really small and, you know, you met each other and you socialised and, and you kind of do it naturally. But it's certainly very, very difficult in, in urban areas.

And coordinating the services. I used to work in a place in, it's called Kupungarri Community. It's in the middle of the Gibb River Road between Derby and Kununurra, the Mount Finance station. It's a little Aboriginal community, about 150 people, a dozen houses, a water tank, a, you know, generator, that's about it. A little shop or something. And coordinator services would see agencies would come through and it used to drive the community mad. Every day there was one or more of, you know, some service coming in. No strategic vision about what the priorities are for that community. What is the most important thing in this community that's going to make a difference? And I can just imagine sitting there as a family, just seeing these 50 services coming in and out and in and out, not connected, not clearly noted, not, certainly not making a difference.

It's also about local decision making. Really solid. It's not the school making the decisions but it's actually key people in the community and about pooling the funds.

It's just slightly warm in here! [Audience laugh]

>> Greg Ryan Gadsden: So, here. So, the school sits sort of here, we call it a structural programme. You can focus on that and so forth. This part of the model is about removing barriers and that's certainly what the hub is about. Through the process it's really identifying what are the barriers to people in low socioeconomic communities engaging in education?

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What are those barriers? There's some key things and it, and it's very important to, to understand them, to learn from them and, and then do something about it.

This bit over here is the enrichment and cultural stuff. So, you know, so crucial. What does the child do from the time school finishes to the time they go to bed? You know, and all that research about how important that period is. Home has not necessarily got the resources to, to do something productive. It's not necessarily a safe place to do something. So, you know, we know about kids running around Northbridge and all over, that whole issue about, well, actually, you could go drop them home but it's actually not safe until 1 o'clock in the morning when, you know, uncle and auntie have, you know, rolled down, paralytic drunk and they're, now they're safe. So this bit is about what can be done in those hours, both before school and after school and be productive and really engaged and stuff. And there's a really interesting thing we're involved in at the moment around learning clubs. So, these are things that, and Curtin's actually partnering in that particular project.

So, some of the outcomes in particular are really these three, and these three are three natural ones for The Smith Family, for everything we do. If you get kids to come to school, stay in school, and engage in further education and work, great. We've done our job, they're likely to be successful in life. And so we align, same as the COAG outcomes.

So, in terms of visually, this is a bit like what it looks like. So, you can imagine. Pick a community. One of our hubs is in the Swan area, so around Midland there and Stratton and Swan View, and so forth. There's a cluster of schools we work with there and in there we've done an audit of the different services and, I don't know the number but it's close to 100 services that were in that community. And so they're all out there. The principal's sitting at the school and has people coming through saying, "You should do our programme." 100 of them. The brochure comes across. So, you know, what is the evidence saying of which, you know, which ones are bad, which ones are going to make the biggest impact? Do I understand what the needs are of my school very clearly from a really holistic view, not just the, the NAPLAN data? So, a community sector can, can sit here. So, the hub approach is really about a dedicated resource here. It means a couple of people who do that leg work. So, they are doing 9 to 12 months of consultation. Heaps of, you know, stuff out there already in terms of statistics. Filling in gaps and finding out really what are the things that are important. What's out there, first, and then what's really important in terms of the priorities. So, you've talked to, so we do the research through the parents, disaggregate with, say, Aboriginal parents, CaLD community, we look at the students, ask them. That's novel, isn't it? And also the teachers and small business association, Chamber of Commerce and Industry. We ask them, "What are the issues for youth?" They've got on board. They all had lots to say. This is our labour pipeline from this community. The kids are causing us a heap of trouble in terms of crime, you know, so they're very interested in, in all of this. So, they got very engaged in that consultation process. So, this is the conduit. Any service wanting to work in the school comes to the people in the hub. Does their service align to the priority? You can do some filtering there. There's a number of options for a particular service and take it to an executive group here that can make some decisions on what they want to do once they understand what the priorities are.

So, the role internally in terms of what we do are some of those things. You can see the consultation planning, brokering in of services, coordination, financial management. Communication's really important. We do the, sort of, you know, looping back. We say, "You

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know, you ever get sick of being asked to fill in surveys and you never hear of what the, you know, the outcome is." So, we try really hard to loop back to stakeholders, going back to that small business association and saying here's the plan, and you informed it, and this is what it looks like now. And I, and I really like some very recent things about how to engage people in innovative ways so, you know, your pop-up café. We just had one this morning, car park of the school. Free coffee. Mums and dads dropping the kids off, free coffee, and we have a talk. And they write down what they think on post-its and it goes on the side of the coffee van and collected it all. You know, the iPad at the school gate as they're going past in a nice, interactive way. We've got a lovely app now for each of the, because we don't have computers at home. Guess what? Got a smart phone! So, each of the schools has got an app on their phone and there's a whole lot of communication in terms of parental engagement happening. It has been FANTASTIC. The uptake's been phenomenal. And it's one of those things. I know, I know my mother uses it very effectively. She wants to communicate with me, she will not ring, she won't email me, she'll text me because she knows I can't resist it. It pings, I've got to look at it, and she knows that she'll get a response.

So, we've just, the, looked at how do we communicate with parents and there's been a fantastic uptake from that. That app is really, we now are looking at rolling that out nationally. It's been terrific.

Not reading the school newsletter. Uh, parents... There was just a meeting yesterday, a bloke was there talking to them and said, the principal was saying, "Our parents aren't reading the school newsletter. Oh, well, yes they are, but they, they're not reading the paper one that goes in the school bag. They're going onto the app and they're reading it online from there." So, it's great.

So, phases, typically. So, the Swan hub has been going just over 2 years. So, you spend sort of 9 to 12 months here in the consultation. Don't worry about the detail but basically in consultation, finding out what are the priorities. Then you plan. Put together a strategic plan about what are the, the key things that we're going to make the biggest difference to the kids? And then goes to implementation. And implementation, what does it look like? It should look like something different. The child in that classroom, has anything changed for them? And that's what, you know, you can measure. What, and I just think of the Aboriginal community as well. The child and their family are sitting in their house. What's changed for them? And, and that's, and that's the real measure. So, there's been all sorts of really nice things occurring in terms of additional resources coming to the school through this work.

That's... a bit of the timing.

The one in Swan, by the way, was funded by partnership funding, federal partnership funding, so the three schools, primary schools, put some of their partnership funding aside. I really like the concept. They're a really tight-knit group of principals. So, the leadership's on side. They're cohesive and, you know, all the right conditions were there and, and set all right, go for it. And then we got a, Fogarty Foundation involved as well. Andi Fogarty's really, really keen on this approach and has actually personally gone to visit community schools and so forth in the States. And she writes about it a little bit and so she's really personally involved and comes along to our, our meeting. She's on the executive. So, you've got philanthropy, government, community sector. The one in Kwinana, as I've said, a corporate has funded the whole lot.

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So, this particular example, that's the, the partnership. It's the three primary schools and, and secondary, the local secondary school. So, this is an area where the community lost faith in the local secondary school. You could tell by the enrolments and, and everything else. And, and it's not healthy in a community to have a secondary school where the parents in the primary school are saying, "Well, you know, I've talked to such-and-such in the car park and no way am I sending my kid to THAT school." Doesn't matter what the evidence says, that's the perception and that's what's out there. So, one of the really nice things that happened was we brought the four councils together and so the secondary school were able to talk to the counsellors at the primary schools about the reality of what's happening and acknowledging there were some issues, but this is what we're doing now, this is where we are now and this is where we're going. Fabulous. Really good. Because normally they don't talk.

So, the plan. A normal sort of structure to the, the plan that emerged and these were the things for the Swan hub that emerged. Probably no surprises. And really interesting, of the seven, there's high expectations of what could happen, "Oh, the hub's going to fix everything. You know, it's going to just..." So in the second year, they honed it down to some priorities that are achievable with the resources that we have and what's going to make the biggest impact. So, that's where we are at the moment.

So, the benefits to date, you can read through some of those.

[Silence as audience reads presentation slide]

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: There's some of the local businesses who have started to donate money. You know how the, the local shops, they, they give \$250 to the local netball club or the local football club or whatever? Well, we've said, "Well, hang on, there's a hub here. How about collectively, you know, you think about pooling some of those funds at least to go into something that's going to impact on, on this community?" So, we are talking with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Small Business Association and some of them have jumped on board already. Some of the businesses have just started to provide some money. A few small businesses! These aren't big, fancy but it's just fantastic.

And inevitably, this is a nice, new shiny thing that's working really quite well. Out of the four principals, three have been promoted and gone. So, that's the challenge as well. Is, you know, there's always risk of a change in leadership and so on. So, you've got to work with a broader leadership group and make sure it's embedded through the school and, and all of that, so...

Partnership Private School. Guildford Grammar opened up the pool and said - government schools up the road - no one's ever come and talked to them, so this dedicated resource can go and do those things the principal never has time for. Guilford Grammar said, "It's free so much of the time. They don't have to pay a thing. Kids can come have swimming lessons there." So, you know, it's thinking community and that school takes it very seriously and they want to put back in the community. They want their young men in, at Guilford Grammar to be well-rounded citizens, you know, and this is a demonstration of that. We've got resources that we can share, and, uh, so yeah.

There are some keys to success factors. So, in terms of the learnings so far. This has by far been the most important thing, has been about stable, committed school leadership. And

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when I say school leadership, I do mean that extended. So, you know, we lose the principal, it doesn't matter. Nothing stops the kids going.

[Silence]

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: So, I'm just about at the end, for questions, but this is the Kwinana hub, so that's a little bit of a different model. So, you've got in this case it's actually Chevron who have invested for a 4-year period to establish a hub down in Kwinana and it's across the federation of schools in the Kwinana area. And interestingly, they've decided the focus of that particular hub is going to be across all the schools in the early years, which is great. It's fantastic working together, the principal of the secondary school was the first one to put up her hand and said, "Invest in the early years, and they'll come through to Year 7 and 8 at our school and they'll actually, might be able to read."

Very quick brush stroke through it, but happy to take any questions. Or just, just discussion.

>> Professor John Phillimore: Okay, who wants to be first?

>> Audience member: Just, with the small business. You know what you were saying about small businesses joined in? I mean, that's a win-win for them because if they're a small business in the community, well, then, the community, you know, are going to give them business back. So, did you find that-

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: So, so, guess where their little logo for their business goes? On that app.

>> Audience member: Yes. Yeah, and it's there all the time.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: And that makes the app and, and the hub sustainable because that's the big issue. You know, this one's funded under partnership funding. What's to say the sustainability strategy moving forward? And that's just one little part of it, you know?

>> Audience member: Very effective.

>> Greg Ryan Gadsden: It's just that they love being involved. Small businesses are just phenomenal, you know, what they're putting in. And not only money, but they're actually sending their employees. So, one of them does a sort of real estate agent, which is just phenomenal. There's a camp for a week. He fully funds it for the kids who would never go on camp. We have just partnered with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rottneest Island.

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We've got a camp now coming up. They're doing it all for free, taking the kids across and a full, solid, robust programme about transition from primary school to secondary school. That's the theme around it. It's not just a camp and go a look at some quokkas. Accommodation and everything. They have the down period, July to September. All these things just jump out, and.

>> Audience Member: It's wonderful.

>> Audience Member: I have a question, too. Sorry. You had mentioned that children from other countries in low socio-economic areas that they'll do much better than children in Australia.

>>Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yes.

>> Audience Member: Why is that? Do you think, have you done any research of, any research of why? What's the reason?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, look, it's starting to emerge and, and this is part of it. Our belief and what we are proposing is that it's actually the, the how. It's not so much the what, but you know, HOW you go about supporting. So, in, in terms of equity and so on and you know the big debate at the moment in WA around the equity of funding across primary and secondary. I used to work in HR in the central office at the department and equity was a big issue. Secondary schools were resourced very, very well and inequitably because they would run some particular programme. That school would get an additional couple of teachers and some money. Another one wouldn't because they weren't such well-connected. There was no system. So, I think it's a real system issue around that. And I also think we're way behind in terms of engagement with the broader community. The schools, there's a, like an institutionalisation, and I've been one of them, where your school is like this cocoon and, and all you care about is what's happening within that rather than, you know. And I find some of the other countries are much more on the front foot in terms of where they are in engaging the community, parental engagement, making the school a comfortable place to come.

>> Audience member: Do they do cultural things, though?

>> Oh I'm sure, I'm sure. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's interesting to look at the stats on attendance HERE. People, new arrivals and emerging communities are the highest

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attending at schools, the children of those families are the highest attending at school, even above white university parent-trained kids. That, that's how high.

>> Audience Member: But this tends to something with resilience as well. I've found, as you say, they grow up and they do better. A little bit of resilience that they're not, because of those providers is the strategy how, it's the same period that it was, maybe resources, financial, other resources, I guess probably Australian families and children [inaudible].

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, I mean-

>> Audience member: From the beginning.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, I-

>> Audience member: And structures the performance community of the system.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: There's some great work being done. Some may have gone along to the thing this year with Dr Stuart Shanker, you know, or around all of that stuff and what he's, you know, what they're doing rolling out in Canada and so on about that resilience. It's, it's so true, and that's another thing in WA. My feeling is there hasn't been a strong enough focus around the early years and there has, and, and one of the key things is there hasn't been a lead agency for the early years. So, different agencies have done different things and the same players are sitting around but there hasn't been that, you know, that lead agency to really drive change.

>> Audience member: Okay.

>> Audience member: Yeah, in the Swan hub, which I guess is your most mature, have you seen any improvements in literacy and numeracy as a result?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Not yet. So, it's just over 2 years, so the first year was pretty much the consultation and planning and so forth, so it's only been just over a year that anything's actually changed in terms of that child in that school, so we still definitely keep that as the, as the end game. Otherwise what, you know, what are we doing? My interest, though, around the evaluation, is if we accept that those conditions are right and we leverage different

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services from the community and we, we hit those priority areas and all, you know, you would expect there to be change. My interest in the evaluation is, is evaluating how people are working differently. So, it's a foreign thing. I can tell you the principals in some of the hubs, not the Swan, just say hub, in general are on different places along the continuum of understanding that it is the village and the whole community that has a role. Fascinating, really fascinating. Being very insular and siloed, you know, the whole thing about the primaries and secondaries and, and all of that. So, one of the transition programmes from the primary to secondary is not the half-day, go take a trip out to the secondary school and see what it's like. There's a, quite a robust and comprehensive programme from, from primary to secondary. So, in terms of those longer outcomes, those things we're interested in were, are those, attendance, staying on in school, finishing Year 12 and, and going on to further education or training. So, we're talking those measures will be awhile away yet. So, yeah a bit early. And, but it's a good question because Department of Education are partners in this as well and funding some of the evaluation. Guess what they're interested in?

>> Audience member: This.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: And we're kind of saying, "Whoa, hang on," you know.

>> Professor John Phillimore: So you've taken baseline data for all those-

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Sorry, not yet, but we have the goals. You know, [multiple voices]. No, no, no.

>> Professor John Phillimore: So, did you take sort of that baseline data on each of those so that in a few years' time you can sort of tell whether or not you've improved or not?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: We have the person in this room who's putting together our evaluation framework who just started this week. So, no. So it's now, so it's right now implementation. That's what we need to be, be looking at. What is it that we're going to evaluate. And as I said, not just, you know, the literacy and so on but actually how, how are we working differently? What, what, what's, how did this come about? Department have wanted hubs for some time. They haven't been able to get them up. Why? I know. When I used to go out from central office to schools, they don't want to listen to you. There's a cultural thing around it. Community group or university and so on seem to have a more comfortable relationship and can actually make, and the schools had power over the money. That devolved responsibility. They invested.

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>> Audience member: You mentioned earlier in the implementation that students in the schools, that something should be different. What's happening to them? What's different again, what, what do the kids in the schools in the Swan hub see differently?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: I think the, the early indications would be around the parental engagement. So, we're, we're, we're, you know, stating to collect that now but that's what is being reported to us, is around the parental engagement. So, in one way, the, the principals and the admin staff are talking about the app. So, the two-line messaging. There's going to be an assembly on Thursday and so forth. Well, the child is sick. They're doing it through the app and the response rate has gone up. That's parental engagement, you know, in the process. And then actually coming into the school as well, the parents, there's definitely an increase in the number of parents that are coming and it's all about for a reason. You know, why, why would you come. The same as we might, why are you guys here today? There must've been something of interest to, to, or maybe you were made to come, I don't know. [Laughter] There must be something there. It's the same for the parents. Remembering the school is not necessarily a nice place for them to go.

>> Audience Member: Do, you know, do the parents get any financial incentives from the government to send their kids to school? The reason I ask is in Brazil, that's, they started doing that. They wanted to increase the attendance so they started to tie in the support financially incentives, you know. We'll give you money for food and this and health and all of that as long as you put your kid through school, and-

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, there, there is a bit of that happening. You'd be aware, of course, schools do all sorts of things to try and, you know, have incentives for kids to come and do something on a Friday afternoon if they come for the first 4 days and all that. In terms of financial, The Smith Family does. So, in these school, we directly sponsor around about 700 kids. That's like a WorldVision model where mums and dads across Australia sponsor a child. A primary kid gets it in, in the family hand. It's around about \$350 for a primary school student, secondary about \$750, tertiary student up to \$3,000. And there's some reciprocal responsibility that comes. You need to attend. We used to have this, "You've got to attend 90 percent." And then we realised at Roebourne when the, you know, attendance rate is, you know, 20 percent in secondary or 56 percent in the primary, what we'd like to see is improvement in attendance. So, that's where we are at the moment. So, you get a first payment if your attendance shows improvement, or above that 90 percent you get your second payment. If you don't, and this is family responsibility, working very closely with the, the parents, we've got people on the ground, there's a grace period and we work through and so forth. At the end of the grace period if it's still not happening, we actually drop that family because there's 10 more ready to sign up. So, so The Smith Family tends to work with those families not at the pointy end of complete dysfunction in the family. That needs to be stabilised by other services in the community and when the family home is stabilised but they're financially disadvantaged, then they're ready for this sort of approach. That, that's how, that's what we do, anyway.

>> Andrea Duncan: Yeah, we, we've spoken in the past about social capital and, and the importance of social capital and the effects on education attainment. Would there be any, would there be any scope within your evaluation framework to measure changes in the social capital, or?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, yeah. You know, I think it's really, you know, really crucial. I mean, it's been interesting. We did a little bit of work out in one of the northern suburbs around a school council for instance. And this was people on a particular decision-making group around the school, and we actually worked with them around their capacity in terms of governance. And so, built, you know, capacity in them. Now they've gone on quite independently to do some pretty amazing things, that particular group. But, yeah, social capital, definitely.

>> Andrea Duncan: Okay.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: I'm not sure if I answered your question.

>> Andrea Duncan: Well, it's the networks, the networks that a student builds and the stronger the networks across the various areas of their life, whether it's their family or peers has this impact on their education attainment, as we've seen through the research. I just thought there are so many, you're connecting students so much broadly through a hub and that would have an, increase their social capital levels.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: It is-

>> Professor John Phillimore: If you could measure how you, how many are in support of hubs or in scouts or whatever-

>> Andrea Duncan: The internet and the sport, you know, all [multiple voices].

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: And bound to happen. Even, like, there's businesses and so on coming in and, you know, we had, we've had corporate groups come into the school. You know, that whole thing about, you know bridging out of your social context and having opportunities to. And, and as you say, now these schools are working together. So, they're in the same community. This is the same people and yet working in silos. And now they invest

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a lot of time, the leadership in the schools, meeting together which in itself has been a great thing, to get that vision of sort of, you know, 0 to work. And we're one community and, and what, you know, what are the opportunities we're providing. Because I said, in that research document, those three key things, the kids' social capital is really compromised and not getting access to a lot of things that we may take for granted. You know that kids' sport thing that the local government do? The takeups been huge. Not in the first year, but after that, I believe.

>> Audience Member: Are the Smith family involved with the child centre in Kwinana?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah.

>> Audience member: You guys have some [inaudible]?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah. We run the Roseworth and the Westminster one. And we're actually showcasing them next month in Melbourne at the Early Childhood Association Conference. So, someone from the Department and myself are going over to, to talk about that. And it's the same approach as the hubs, really. The concept is much the same. It's just in the early years. Yeah. Yeah. Some, some differences that may not want to go on the transcript. But I think sometimes government have significant experience in contracting out work and trusting outcomes and that the, you're accountable for the outcomes and you report that way. Other times, you find the government quite nervous about letting go and trusting the community sector and so forth. So what I'm really enthused about is the government is saying "We're on a journey." This is new to them. You know, having to let go and contract people to do, for some governments that's a new thing. And so certainly with child and parent centres there's been some, you know, great discussions around, around that. Who makes decisions? You know, for instance, the, the local committee is chaired by the principal, which seems an extraordinary thing. Why would a principal..? This is supposed to be a community thing. It may be the principal but it may be someone else.

>> Audience member: Wouldn't the principals want their schools as a community hub or a beacon for families? I know in South Hedland, the principal there is really keen to have [inaudible]

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, South Hedland.

>> Audience member: To be a, a beacon for community. So, yeah, it's very important that principals chair those [inaudible] meetings.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: I, I learnt a lot of lessons sitting in a village, you know, in the middle of nowhere in, in Fiji and the highlands. And, you know, the school there in Fiji, I don't know if you know but 98 percent of the schools are private. The government actually pay the salaries of the teachers but the land and the school infrastructure and everything that happens, the resources there, is ALL the village, you know? So the school is absolutely the hub of the community and very much, you know, look, you know, whether it's cultural pursuits, whether it's, you know, after hours training or whatever. It's, you know, naturally it would because, you know, it's a good building. It's also the evacuation centre when the tsunami comes and whatever. [Laughter] But that, we seem to struggle with that in urban areas, that, that sense of community. It's very difficult and yet there's some, you know, fantastic shining lights. I mean, I'm enthused about in Kwinana where we're working at the moment, the community groups and, and government, local government and the local member and so on have done such a fabulous job of getting groups together and, and working together. It, it really is, I've been really impressed by it.

>> Audience member: I'm a Koori woman, so my investment, and I worked with Aboriginal in my early years, my previous employer in the Best Start programme. And I was just noticed there's just a lot of cuts, as you know, the government has had to cutback the budget and everything. And I'm just worried that the cutbacks in the Aboriginal, I don't know if this is a question or what, but in the Aboriginal and Islander educational officers and the EAs and the cutbacks in staff in those areas, and the needs of the children and the, and the families. I think the, the role of these hubs is going to increase and I was just wondering the quality of education and, and support. I know teachers try so hard, but they're losing their support workers around them. I just don't know what, I know it's a part of budget cutbacks and everything but it's just, I just wonder where our children will be in a few years' time if, if it's no change has been made in 5 years with attendance and all that.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah, yeah. And that's with the resources and now there's, there's fewer resources. Look, I would always, there's always arguments around resourcing and budgets come and go, whatever and we're, we're in particularly difficult times. I'm a great believer in how money is spent. And, and I do think there's actually lots that schools can do around how they, how they manage the resource and it's a, it's quite a challenge because, you know, 15, 20 years ago, there wasn't that discretion at the local level in terms of decision making. Now, with one-line budgeting it's a huge responsibility. Principals are not principals. They're CEOs of big organisations, secondary school or something, man. You know, multimillion dollar budgets and, and, so something we're suggesting around here is in terms of sustainability, maybe schools will decide to use some of that resource to fund this sort of model. Same as 10 years ago when schools were faced with, "Right, we'll, we'll cash in a little bit of FTE because we actually don't want to have a such-and-such person, we want a IT technician" because now the school's got 200 computers. You know, the world changes. The needs change so that, that flexibility, I think it's great that it's there. Now the challenge is what do schools want to invest in and what's going to make the biggest difference.

>> Professor John Phillimore: How long did you have to, if you like, does The Smith Family compete for? Because it's a bit of a commitment on behalf of the schools, of course, and they don't necessarily want to go into that. In fact, they may be only be a partner for 2 years and then national partnership money runs out and the whole thing falls apart. So I see you might have problems with organisations is that, you know, the well-meaning and, you know, very dedicated community organisations come in but then, you know, you have to turn over or, you know, funding that gets poured from under, underneath you. So, did you have to commit for a certain period of time as well?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: We, we didn't and we made it very clear from the start that this was a demonstration. These are, these 9 across the country are demonstration sites. We make it very clear and the intent is, is as I said, to, to take that then to the government and say what do you want to do here?

>> Professor John Phillimore: So, how long is the is the partner going to last for?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Well, we, we, we've just signed this morning for another 2 years, which is fantastic, for the Swan hub, and the Kwinana one's got 4 years there. So, there's, we've, we've got some time. But yes, that's the question. What happens at the end of that? The Smith Family's going to be in that community regardless through that time. We've, we take the hubs as a, one of the priorities for our organisation and our CEO has said there's been a hub in one of the other states that may not be re-funded. It's also through government and our CEO said is we will underwrite it. So, that, that's how serious we are. We just think this is a really powerful model that, that we need to continue to pursue for, for some time and start to see some of the outcomes you spoke about. Because it's way too early. You know, I would think 5 years.

>> Audience member: Well, what I'm interested in is the, some of, like, the things on the board behind you there. The top 3 are like en locums, I guess. And the bottom 3 are like means to the ends. It's, then there are a list of other means to the end. I'd like to see an item there, evaluation framework and see that. Will the evaluation framework be made public on the web or something?

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah. Yes.

>> Audience member: And it's critical about your evaluation is successful if you're going to the government to demonstrate that this whole model is successful.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Yeah. Yeah. And, and the thing is, the, the things that go wrong as well will be really valuable as well, so we're not expecting, this is not a rosy picture of, you know, everything. It's, it's actually well, what's happened here. What are the implications? What do we want to do with this?

>> Professor Sue Trinidad: Greg, there's 1 more question and then I think it's time to wrap up.

>> Audience member: Me?

>> Professor Sue Trinidad: Oh, did you have a question?

>> Audience member: Just quick to get some of the, the comments that people have made and I think you, we do have other precedents across Australia for trying to do this so it'll work and communities of children is one, a lead one in which sort of recurrent funding from government, either now, or 9, 10 years. It's still struggling with hard and soft data and hard and soft outcomes. And, and, you know, this is the whole issue about it. So, if, you know, if you want to separate out the, the process-related stuff, which is largely what you've spoken about today, and, and sort of common sense tells us that improving the process should lead to better outcomes but the evidence for that is still remarkably slender. So, it's about trying to take this really difficult stuff and, you know, tracing individual kids and individual families and getting permission so early so that you can actually do that, so you've got that sort of data. You know, in the Communities for Children stuff, we've, I mean, I've been really involved in some stuff over, you know, nearly 10 years now, and we still don't see hard data outcomes. You know, in, in part because many of the families are highly mobile. So, you know, you don't get the opportunity to, to trace them in the way that you might. That was a consensus.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Something of interest along those lines in terms of that. We're in the unique position of having 34,000 kids that we support in our database that we actually follow now, 5, 10, 15 years. That's really exciting.

>> Audience member: Very unusual.

>> Greg Ryan-Gadsden: Very unusual. So, it's certainly, lots of people are salivating over that, but, but that's, be fantastic because we're very interested in those young people who become successful working and whatever. We can then say, find out, and look at the trends

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and patterns of what were the, what happened to them along the way and is there a common thread there about the types of activities and strategies and interventions that, that have made a difference? That's really quite a-

>> Audience member: Have you thought about the developmental [inaudible]?

>> Professor Sue Trinidad: Okay, well, we have drinks outside, but I'd just like you to join in thanking Greg for his, his talk. Thank you very much.

[Applause]