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NATIONAL REPORT CARD SHOWS NOT ALL AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN HAVE THE SAME OPPORTUNITIES

The most comprehensive picture of the health and wellbeing of Australian children and young people has revealed persistent gaps in wellbeing and opportunities for education that should be of concern to all Australians, said Elaine Henry, CEO of The Smith Family.

“Our children are Australia’s future and also our country’s most precious and vulnerable resource. It is simply unacceptable that almost 700,000 of them are living in jobless households. The impact of this financial disadvantage on their future can no longer be ignored.”

Ms Henry noted that the Report Card confirms findings from earlier research undertaken by The Smith Family on financially disadvantaged families.

“The gaps in opportunities become even more pronounced when we compare indigenous with non-indigenous children,” said Ms Henry.

“The Report Card shows that in 2006, 19% of indigenous children reported having less than 11 books in their home, compared with only 7% of non-indigenous children. This lack of literacy resources places the development of their literacy skills in jeopardy.”

“We are now entering a period of tough financial times which will affect all Australians but none more so than Australia’s disadvantaged. It is our collective responsibility to do something about the wellbeing of these children. At the centre of our work, and the heart of our organisation, is our belief in the power and possibilities of relationships. For disadvantaged children to thrive, many of whom are growing up in single-parent and jobless families, they need to be connected with, and supported by, an extended family. That’s why we will continue to work in partnership with other caring Australians to unlock opportunities for Australia’s disadvantaged through the provision of personal opportunities, education and learning support.

“As we strive to meet the critical new challenges that face us as a nation we can’t lose sight of our social responsibility for each other’s wellbeing. Ultimately this is about Australia’s future. The problems of our disadvantaged children and youth can no longer be ignored. We must collectively agree to act.”

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