**We’re failing our kids: polling reveals Australians want to help the next generation succeed at school – but don’t know how.**

Research released today reveals that the overwhelming majority of Australians – seven in ten people - believe that the responsibility to keep our young people in education rests on the shoulders of everyone, not just teachers and parents.

And nearly 60 per cent of Australian adults would volunteer to encourage a young person through mentoring or helping out at a local school if given the opportunity.

Yet more needs to be done to highlight practical ways Australians can help young people in their community, as 35 per cent of people say they have no relationship with school-aged students at all, and each year in Australia around 86,000 teenagers leave school without completing Year 12 – a statistic that can lead to significantly worse social, health and economic outcomes.

The findings come as the Community Council for Australia launches the ‘It Takes a Village: Education is everyone’s business’ campaign (www.ittakesavillage.org.au) – a community-led campaign aimed at mobilising Australians to take a greater role in the education and future success of our young people.

**David Crosbie, CEO, Community Council for Australia**:

“We’re failing our kids at the moment – not due to a lack of will, but a lack of understanding of what we can do.

“Each year, 86,000 kids don’t finish school. While there are a range of reasons that happens, the reality is there’s a lot of lost potential in that mix. There’s a wealth of evidence that shows keeping young people in education is good for everyone.

“Australians understand that we as a community all have a role to play in keeping our young people engaged in education, yet 35 per cent of people claim they don’t have a relationship with any young person of school age.

“There’s a clear desire to play a role in helping our next generation achieve their dreams, but it seems we just don’t know what practical steps we can actually take to do that.

“Helping our kids get a good education isn’t the sole responsibility of teachers, parents and governments. This campaign is the community sector’s way of taking ownership of the issue, and showing that we all have a role to play.”

**Tim Costello AO, Chief Advocate, World Vision Australia**

“We all want Australian kids to do well at school and be able to dream big about their future. Parents and teachers clearly play a vital role in our kids’ education, but so do many other people in our lives.

“You might be a sports coach, a local business owner, an uncle or even a neighbour – if you’ve got a young person in your village, you have a role to play in helping them get a good education and achieve their dreams.”

**Dr Lisa O’Brien, CEO, The Smith Family**

“Supporting young people in their education is the single-most important thing we can do to set them up for the future. Too many Australian children aren’t finishing school, which can put them on a much more difficult path in life.

“We all have the power to motivate and inspire young people. This is particularly important for students who are at risk of leaving school early.

“We often hear directly from the young people we support how much of a difference it makes when someone outside their own family – it could be their sponsor or a volunteer tutor or mentor – takes an interest in their educational journey and future success.”

**Paul Ronalds, CEO, Save the Children**

“The great opportunity is that that there are range of actions every single Australian can do to help keep kids engaged in school – whether it’s as simple as starting a conversation about career dreams with a young person at your local football club or taking part in a formal mentoring program.

“Students do better when they’re happy, have a sense of belonging and have a range of positive influences in their lives outside of school. There’s something each one of us can do to make that happen.

**Sean Barrett, Head of Origin Foundation**

“We’ve got to start asking ourselves what the Australia we want looks like. We know having an educated youth and low unemployment rates is good for all of us – now it’s time to start ensuring we’re all pulling our weight to make sure that happens.

“The It Takes a Village campaign aims to bridge the gap between good will and practical steps.”

The research, conducted by Essential Research also found that:

* 85 per cent – believe that having a range of supportive adults in their lives can help young people stay engaged and interested in school –
* Seven in ten Australians believe that the responsibility to keep our young people in education rests on the shoulders of everyone – not just teachers and parents;
* 76% of people believe that being involved in social and community activities outside school can help a young person stay engaged with their education;
* 66% of people believe they can be a role model to young people who are not their children and encourage them to stay engaged with education;
* 58% of people say they would volunteer to help a young person through mentoring or helping out at a school if given the opportunity

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