FAST FORWARD
SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

▶ A total of 109 participants took part in this research through online and paper surveys, made up of year 9–12 students, parents, Western Sydney University Fast Forward Project Officers and two university support staff members.

▶ When asked what was important to them, participants said that getting into a job they are passionate about, completing high school by finishing year 12, being able to balance study, family and community commitments (including household chores), and being able to balance study and paid work commitments were considered most significant.

▶ As a result of being involved in the Fast Forward program, participants found they had a greater understanding of how further education and training can help their future, how to better use their time to cater for homework and study, were more comfortable about going onto a university campus and were more motivated to go to university.

WHAT IS FAST FORWARD?

The Fast Forward program is a partnership between Western Sydney University and Western Sydney schools which helps students to see the value of continuing their education through to year 12 and beyond. The Fast Forward program has been running since 2004 and, in 2017, operated in 64 high schools across Greater Western Sydney, working with 3,671 high school students. Fast Forward has impacted thousands of students to aspire towards further study after secondary school. The program is delivered through different workshops and on-campus visits to WSU campuses, with a whole-day on campus and 2–4 workshops per year for year 9–12 students.

YEAR 12 students also have optional access to an HSC Preparation Day at Western Sydney University and attend Open Day alongside a yearly conference that helps direct them in their post-high school goals.

Parents take part in an introductory Welcome to Western evening, a Tertiary Information and Pathways session, and workshops that address how parents can help their children excel in school.

WHAT IS SROI?
The Social Return On Investment (SROI) is a principles-based methodology for measuring additional financial value relative to the resources invested. The methodology assigns a financial proxy to the impacts and puts participants at the centre of the research process – students, parents, Fast Forward Project Officers and WSU Support Staff participated in this evaluation. Their survey responses determined what the program was doing well and how people have been helped by it. The SROI ratio is represented as a return, in dollar value, for every dollar invested (see below).

MEASURING IMPACT

A total of five schools took part in this research project, forming a cross section of the Fast Forward program. Participant perspectives were collected through paper (for students) and online (parents, Project Officers and WSU Support Staff) surveys, which were conducted in schools that had an active working relationship with the Fast Forward program. Participants were asked basic questions about their school level and professional background, as well as what they considered important from a list of study-related topics, what the best parts of the program were and what had improved and changed as a result of the program. This research investigated the impact of Fast Forward in 2017 – a one-year analysis. The results were analysed and developed into academic journal articles by the research team (see contact details below).

“[The best part of the program is] giving me the opportunity to succeed and reach my full potential and to help me to take on anything that comes my way”

YEAR 9 FAST FORWARD STUDENT
STAKEHOLDER OUTCOMES

Each stakeholder group had different outcomes:

**Year 9 students** felt more motivated to go to university, felt more welcome being on campus and had a greater understanding of how to manage time more appropriately to cater for homework and study.

**Year 10 students** improved their understanding of how further education and training can enhance their future, gained confidence in going on to further education and had a greater understanding of how to get into university.

**Year 11 students** became more familiar with the services available at university, more interested in finding out more about university, improved their understanding of how further education can help their futures and more motivated to go to university.

**Year 12 students** reported more confidence to go to university, a better understanding of how to balance their time to cater for homework and study, more interest in going onto university, a better understanding of how further education and training can help their future, and became more familiar with university services.

Parents appreciated their child’s increased understanding of how further education and training can help their future as well as their child’s understanding of how to use their time more effectively for homework and study. They also liked that their child is more comfortable to go on campus and more familiar with the services available at a university.

Project Officers highlighted that the program has helped students understand how to get to university as well as improved their interest in going to further study and finding out more about university. Project Officers also highlighted how students realised further education and training can help their future, the need to balance time for homework and study, and that they are more comfortable going onto campus. Project Officers also said students are more familiar with how a university operates, the services it provides and more motivated to go to university.

WSU Support Staff said students had a better understanding of how to get into university, a better idea of how further education can help their future, how to use time more appropriately for homework and study, that they are more comfortable on campus and are more familiar with how a university operates. They also reported that students have more confidence to talk to their parents about university and are more motivated to go to university.

**INSIGHTS**

- A total of 63% of year 9 to 12 students said their parents either did not attend university or they were unsure of their attendance, while 88% of these same students were encouraged a lot or somewhat to attend university by their parents. The Fast Forward program is, therefore, preparing students for their future at a time when it is needed most and exposing them to what higher education has to offer.
- Parents have been made more aware of the opportunities further education can give their children and are being included as part of the educational journey to help support this transition.
- Project Officers and WSU Support Staff are encouraged by their participation in the program which provides a sense of vitality and purpose to their work, as they are able to inspire the next generation.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

- The figures presented here are a cross section of five out of 64 schools that took part in the Fast Forward SROI Research Project in 2017. As such, the findings in this summary are representative and do not speak for each individual school.

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