STEPS
(STRIVE TOWARDS EDUCATIONAL PARTICIPATION AND SUCCESS) SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

→ 82 participants took part in an evaluation of the STEPS program via online and paper surveys. These participants were made up of 78 year 9 and 10 students, two Western Sydney University (WSU) Project Officers and two WSU Support Staff members.

→ When asked what was important to them, participants stated that getting into a job they are passionate about, completing high school by finishing year 12 and supporting their families were most significant.

→ As a result of taking part in the STEPS program, participants reported better understanding of how further education and training could help their futures, a greater interest in finding out more about university and more familiarity with university services.

WHAT IS STEPS?
The STEPS program has been running since 2014 in 20 high schools across Greater Western Sydney, inspiring students to consider university and other tertiary educational pathways as a viable option for their future. In 2017, the STEPS program worked with 2,233 high school students.

The key features of the program are:

→ Year 9: Two full days on campus and one in-school meeting per year.
→ Year 10: As above with year 9, plus additional event days with WSU Support Staff and academics.

In 2018, the STEPS Program is merging with the Fast Forward Program.

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 places participants at the centre of the research process – students, STEPS Project Officers and WSU Support Staff participated in this evaluation. Their perspectives shared through the surveys 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

Five STEPS schools took part in this research project, to provide a cross-sectional look at the STEPS program. Participant perspectives were collected through paper (for students) and online (Project Officers and WSU support staff) surveys. Schools were chosen on the basis of having an active working relationship with the program. Participants were asked basic questions about their school level and professional background, 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 for the 2017 academic year. The results were analysed and developed into academic journal articles by the research team (see contact details below).

“The content the staff provides for the students like myself, make us somewhat more eager to learn and push ourselves to fulfil our full potential.”

YEAR 9 STEPS STUDENT
STAKEHOLDER OUTCOMES

The outcomes of this evaluation were different for each stakeholder group:

**Year 9 students** had a greater understanding of how further education and training could help their future, an increased interest in finding out more about going to university and were made more familiar with what services were offered there.

**Year 10 students** had a greater understanding of how further education and training could help their future, a greater understanding of how to use their time more appropriately to cater for homework and study, and more confidence to talk to their parents about going to university.

**Project Officers** noted an increase in students’ confidence to go onto further study and increased interest in finding out more about going to university, a greater understanding of how further study can help their future, being more comfortable about going onto a university campus and being more motivated to go to university.

**WSU Support Staff** found that students who took part in the program had more comfort in going onto campus, were more familiar with how a university operates and the services it offers, had more confidence to talk to their parents about going to university and were more motivated to attend university.

CALCULATING VALUE – RATIO

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Schools</th>
<th>Research Participants</th>
<th>Investment (Present Value)</th>
<th>Benefits (Present value)</th>
<th>SROI Ratio</th>
<th>Value per $1 Investment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>$52,058</td>
<td>$274,804</td>
<td>5.28:1</td>
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A Present Value Investment of $52,058 for 82 students from 4 schools involved in the STEPS SROI Research Project resulted in a Present Value Benefits of $274,804 i.e. $5.28 for every dollar invested.

INSIGHTS

- A total of 73% of year 9 and 10 students said their parents either did not attend university or they were unsure of their attendance. Despite this, 87.5% of these students’ parents encouraged them to attend university in the future. The STEPS program, therefore, creates a bridge between parents’ aspirations for their children and giving students the means to seriously consider higher education as a viable option for their future.
- Project Officers were encouraged by the impact of the program, as it awakens possibilities and the potential of students to attain their future life goals.
- WSU Support Staff highlighted how the program changes students’ perceptions of tertiary education and its attainability. They also stated how students to have a more positive self-concept, and encourages collaboration between high school students.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The figures presented here are a cross section of four out of 20 schools that took part in the STEPS program in 2017. As such, the findings in this summary are representative and do not speak for each individual school.

RESEARCH TEAM

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CONTACT DETAILS

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“[STEPS] has helped me understand what university will be like and it has helped me decide if I want to go. The talks and tours have encouraged me to go to university.”

YEAR 10 STEPS STUDENT