

Another Charity to be supported by this year's All Ford Day is

THE SMITH FAMILY

The Smith Family was founded in 1922 by five businessmen who identified a need and responded accordingly. In many ways, this typifies who we are today – an organisation that is enterprising and evidence based.

Throughout the past 80 years, we have continued to review the needs of disadvantaged children and families and responded accordingly.



The beginning

Shortly before Christmas in 1922, five Australian businessmen were returning from a trip to the Blue Mountains. They debated whether everyone was enjoying the Christmas spirit but rather than go on their opinion only, they established that there was disadvantage and decided to do something about it.

They believed that all children should be able to join in at Christmas so they went to an orphanage where children were without the love of families surrounding them and gave them the joys of Christmas – toys and sweets. They were happy to do this anonymously and when the matron asked them their names so that the children could write a letter of thanks, one of the men replied:

“Er .. Smith.”

“What about the others?” asked the matron.

“They’re Smiths too,” replied the man “We’re all Smiths. We’re The Smith Family...”

And so The Smith Family came into existence.

How did we get to where we are today?

The Smith Family has continually evolved to respond to the needs of disadvantaged Australians.

During the Depression of the late 1920s and early 30s, The Smith Family assisted with the food and clothing needs of thousands of Australians as unemployment soared and responsibility for the care of children and families fell to organisations such as ours.

In 1933 when rheumatic fever became a major health issue effecting children, The Smith Family set up a special hospital to care for them. Mt Arcadia operated in North Parramatta until 1958.

The 1970s saw The Smith Family reacted to the needs of refugee families fleeing war in Vietnam and Timor and supporting the residents of Darwin recover from the devastation inflicted by Cyclone Tracey.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s The Smith Family was spending more than ever before on direct financial relief - in many cases to generations of the same family. We asked our emergency help clients what they believed needed to be done to put an end to intergenerational disadvantage. They replied “help us help our children to get an education.”

“Help us help our children to get an education - so they can help themselves.”

This is what our clients told us back in 1987 when we asked what we could do to help them above and beyond what we were already doing. Our response was to set up EDU-CATE for students in the junior secondary years. The program was designed to ensure kids didn’t miss out at school just because of their family’s financial situation.