

# CLIENT PROFILE



## ONLY BRAINY KIDS GO TO SCHOOL

I thought school was only for brainy kids. When I went to school I was always bored because most of the time I did not understand what they were talking about. I just sat there trying to keep still because if you move around too much the teacher does something that brings you to the attention of others. I don't like getting attention and there is shame in being singled out. It was better not to go to school, so my brother and I would watch TV, or go down to the beach and hide in the scrub. We weren't the only ones, sometimes there were five of us, sometimes ten.

My mother always says she has lots going on and that she is busy. She has to make visits to other communities and there is always lots of family business that she has to help with that I don't understand. My dad lives with us some of the time and my sister is at boarding school. Sometimes we never had any adults around the house to tell us what to do. We have heaps of aunties and uncles in town and some of them give us a telling off about not going to school, but they always let us come over for a feed at night.

I think it was last year that our mother had to go to see the Commissioners at the FRC because I only went to school 9 days out of 48 school days. The Commissioners were unhappy with our mother about leaving us in the house and going away. They told her that as children we needed to be supervised and were not to be left alone, and she also needed to do more to get us to go to school. When she came home she was upset and told us we needed to go to school or she would end up with the BasicsCard. We didn't take it very seriously and just kept going down to the beach. The Commissioners kept making her come back and talk to them and they got her to agree to see some people and talk about us and the family. This went on for some time, and when we still didn't go to school, mum was given the BasicsCard.

After the BasicsCard, our mother started talking to us about school and asking us why we did not want to go. She had some meetings with the teachers and then talked to us about giving school a chance. She said that there was a different way of teaching

happening at the school and the teachers would give us more attention, but in a good way, not making us look silly because we did not know how to do our work. We started going there more and more each week. It was hard, and I felt dumb sometimes, but the teacher would come over and talk in a quiet voice. Our mother was staying home a lot more. She did not like the BasicsCard in the beginning, but then she liked having money for groceries for dinner every night and she did not have any cash to give family members when they came around asking for money. We didn't have to go to our aunties for food.

One Sunday I was in church and picked up the Bible, and then got a big surprise to find out that I could read most of the words in the Bible. I showed my mum the words I could read and she was very proud of me. Our dad has also began to tell us to go to school, and he told me how proud he was of both of us. Things were going well until mum had to go away again. At the same time my sister got kicked out of boarding school. This time though mum had talked to our aunty and she came to live with us. She was much harder than mum. She made us do homework every night and we had to clean up all the time. We were so glad when mum came home. We kept going to school and my brother told mum it was to keep away from aunty, but the truth was we liked going to school. My teacher tells me I am one of the best students and that I am setting an example to the others. I have improved in my reading and writing and I am learning sums now. I know my attendance is very good because last time the Commissioners spoke to mum they said I am one of the best attenders, I only missed 5 days out of 44 in the term and some were half days to go to the clinic.

When I am at school I get to ask questions and show I am smart. Mum and dad are getting better at listening and talking to me. Our mum still goes away but usually not for very long. She still needs to get better with some things, but even she says our home is much better and we are all a lot smarter. As a family we now know how important school is, and that you don't have to be brainy to go to school, but you have to go to school to become brainy.