

MEDIA RELEASE

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Report calls for more emphasis on technical skills in secondary school

A greater focus on developing technical skills in secondary schools is required to draw more young Australians into apprenticeships, a new research report by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) recommends.

Releasing the latest findings from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program today, Deputy CEO (Research), Dr John Ainley, said that more effort is also required to attract Year 12 completers to the trades.

The new study, *Participation in and Progress through New Apprenticeships*, examined the characteristics and completion rates of participants in New Apprenticeships drawing on the experiences of a group of young Australians who were in Year 9 in 1995, focusing on those who had participated in a traditional apprenticeship or traineeship up until the end of 2003.

Twenty per cent of the group had participated in a New Apprenticeship (both traditional apprenticeships and traineeships) with most having completed their training. For example, by 2003, 74 per cent of traditional apprentices had completed their training, 16 per cent had discontinued their training while the remaining 10 per cent were continuing with their training.

Participation in a traditional apprenticeship was influenced by vocational interests, family background and gender. Males were more than three times as likely as females to be apprentices, those of an English speaking background were more four times as likely as other students to be apprentices and those whose father is a tradesman were nearly 60 per cent more likely than other young people to be an apprentice.

“We have seen a steady flow of people into trade apprenticeships in recent years, which is a positive development in meeting Australia’s skills shortages,” Dr Ainley said. “If we want to further increase the flow of young people into trades then we need to create more opportunities for young people to explore trades related experiences in the early years of secondary school.”

Dr Ainley also noted that there had been little change in the percentage of Year 12 completers entering traditional apprenticeships and more needs to be done to attract these students to the trades.

The electrical and electronic fields currently draw the most Year 12 completers with more than 70 per cent of traditional apprentices in these fields completing Year 12. In contrast, fewer than half of the commencing apprentices in the food trades and hairdressing had completed Year 12.

Further findings are available in the report, *Participation in and Progress through New Apprenticeships* by John Ainley and Matthew Corrigan. The study is research report number 44 in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), a program conducted jointly by ACER and the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

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LSAY background information is available on the ACER website at www.acer.edu.au