

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *Early school leavers can do well in workforce*

Many early school leavers progress well in the first few years after leaving school, according to a report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) that questions the widespread belief that all students who leave school before Year 12 struggle to make a successful transition to the workforce.

The report is the first major national study to compare the post-school experiences of students who did not complete Year 12 (non-completers) with those who completed Year 12 but did not enter university (completers).

The study is based on recent data on the post-school outcomes of a group of almost 8000 young Australians who were in Year 9 in 1995. Their transitions from school to work were followed annually until late 2000, when most of the participants were 19. The study participants made the transition from school to work in the late 1990s and benefited from the improved, post-recession economic conditions.

“Those non-completers who had successfully gained employment on leaving school were more likely than completers to be working full-time, receive higher earnings, display greater job stability and report being in the type of job they would like as a career,” said ACER’s chief executive officer, Professor Geoff Masters. He noted that non-completers had been in the workforce longer which may partly explain these results.

He said apprenticeships were an important pathway between school and the workforce and reduced the risk of unemployment for school non-completers by half.

The report also noted that disengagement from school is not the same as disengagement from education. In the year after leaving school, around half of all non-completers were engaged in some form of education or training.

“Education does not necessarily only take place in the classroom,” Professor Masters said. “It is important to make sure that relevant alternative education and training pathways are available to all young people, and that they are structured to assist in the transition from school to employment.”

Professor Masters cautioned that the study takes a five-year snapshot in the lives of young Australians, and more research into this group in the future would be necessary to identify long-term outcomes.

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The report, *School Leavers in Australia: Profiles and Pathways* by Dr Julie McMillan and Dr Gary Marks, is research report number 31 in the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) research program jointly managed by ACER and the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

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