

MEDIA RELEASE

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One quarter of non-metropolitan youth leave for the cities

More than one third of young Australians from non-metropolitan areas relocate to a major city in the years immediately after leaving school and, although some return, non-metropolitan areas experience a net loss of a quarter of their young people.

A new report, released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), is the first Australian national longitudinal study of young people's geographic mobility. It focuses on the experiences of around 5000 young Australians who were living in a non-metropolitan area in their final years of school. They were tracked from 1997 (when most were in Year 11) until 2004 when most were 23 years old.

Those making a move to a major city were typically drawn by the pursuit of further study, most often at university. Over the project's seven year period, approximately 40 per cent of the non-metropolitan youth who had moved to a city were studying either at a university or a TAFE institution or were undertaking an apprenticeship or traineeship.

By contrast, those with full-time employment in their non-metropolitan homes were more likely to stay there. Full time employment also worked to keep young people in the city after completing their studies.

"The report suggests that young people are leaving their rural communities because those communities are not able to provide as many further education and training, employment and other opportunities as are available in the major cities of Australia," said ACER's chief executive Professor Geoff Masters.

On the other hand, no significant difference was found in rates of employment, average income, work hours and life satisfaction of young people who left non-metropolitan areas for the city in comparison to those who stayed in a non-metropolitan area or returned to a non-metropolitan area after a time in the city. Home ownership was slightly higher among those who had chosen to remain in non-metropolitan areas.

"Non-metropolitan youth are likely to continue to leave their homes to pursue university study," Professor Masters said. "Rural communities therefore have a challenge ahead of them to convince these young people to return after completing their education in the cities."

Further information and additional findings are available in the report, *The movement of non-metropolitan youth towards the cities* by Kylie Hillman and Sheldon Rothman. The study is research report number 50 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