

MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release Thursday 24 November 2005

Time out of the labour market a common experience for Australian youth

The majority of young Australians experience at least a short period of time outside of full-time education and the labour force in the early years after leaving secondary school, new research has found.

A report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) identified the characteristics, activities and later destinations of young people who had spent time outside of the labour force.

The study was based on annual interviews with a group of 10,700 young Australians who were tracked from 1997 (average age 16) until the end of 2003 (average age 22). It focused on those who spent at least one month during that time not studying full-time and working or looking for work.

Overall, close to two-thirds, or 64 per cent of participants spent some time outside the labour force and full-time education over the time they were surveyed. For the majority of these young people, their time spent outside the labour force was relatively short, between one and three months, after which they moved back into the labour market or full-time education with little apparent difficulty. Most saw their state as temporary and planned to enter full-time education or look for employment in the near future.

Young people who had not achieved highly at school, did not have a Year 12 certificate, were female, or who had a health problem or disability were more likely to have reported extended periods of time outside the labour force and full-time education.

“It would appear that for young people today, spending some time outside the labour force and full-time education is a common experience and can be seen as part of the transition process from school to work or further education,” chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said. “There are some groups of young people, however, for whom the experience of time outside the labour force and full-time education may be more disruptive.”

Professor Masters warned that young people who spend extended periods outside the labour force and full-time education may be missing out on employment experience, the development of work skills and familiarity with new technologies, all of which appear to decrease their chances of finding employment in the future.

Further information and additional findings are available in the report, *Young people outside the labour force and full-time education: activities and profiles* by Kylie Hillman. The study is research report number 45 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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Media enquiries:

Louise Reynolds

Corporate Publicity and Communications Manager

Phone: (03) 9277 5582 Mobile: 0419 340 058 Email: reynolds@acer.edu.au

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

Australian Council for Educational Research Limited

19 Prospect Hill Road (Private Bag 55) Camberwell VIC 3124 Australia

t +61 3 9277 5555 f +61 3 9277 5500 w www.acer.edu.au

ACN 004 398 145 ABN 19 004 398 145