



Australian Council for Educational Research

Issue 66, June 2008

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ACER eNews

***On Track* survey shows more students defer higher education**

A growing proportion of students are choosing to defer university studies or take up apprenticeships, according to new research from the Victorian government.

The research shows that a lower proportion of Year 12 completers are enrolling in university, with many young people, particularly those from rural areas, deferring studies to work for a year to become eligible for youth allowance and cover living costs.

The annual *On Track* survey, conducted by ACER for the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, surveyed more than 33,000 young people who completed the Victorian Certificate of Education, the International Baccalaureate, or the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (Intermediate or Senior).

The project also interviewed 4500 school non-completers about their post-school pathways. Their results will be published later this year.

The *On Track* survey found that 72 per cent of last year's school completers went on to further education or training. This figure is down three per cent on last year.

Of the 2007 class, 44 per cent enrolled in university and 18 per cent enrolled in TAFE. One in ten students deferred tertiary study.

But while study at university and TAFE decreased, the proportion of young people taking up apprenticeships and traineeships increased by two percentage points to 10 per cent of school completers.

Fourteen per cent of completers reported being in full-time employment, also an increase on last year. The proportion of school completers looking for work remained steady at three per cent.

The survey highlighted the relationship between school sector and geographical and socioeconomic background on students' post-school pathways.

On Track found that a greater proportion of private school students (54 per cent) enrol at university compared to government school students (36 per cent).

Almost 20 per cent of government school students entered the workforce after leaving school, compared with just nine per cent of private school students.

Ninety per cent of Year 12 completers who deferred further study reported that they did so to have a year off from study. One-third of students said that the costs of study influenced their decision to defer. Eighteen per cent said that they were waiting to qualify for youth allowance.

The rate of deferral was much higher among school completers from non-metropolitan areas. These results suggest that the financial burden of studying poses a greater problem for students who must leave home to undertake tertiary education than it does for metropolitan students.

Releasing the results, Victorian Education Minister Bronwyn Pike called on the Commonwealth government to rethink student income support as students increasingly report that AUSTUDY and Independent Youth Allowance payments do not adequately cover the costs of living.

The results of the *On Track* survey can be found online at www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/ontrack

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Last Updated: 07/31/2009 13:50:40