EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Australian schools are placing an increasing emphasis on giving students direct knowledge of the world of work. This is happening in two main ways: through the long-established practice of work experience programs; and through the more recent development of structured workplace learning under the umbrella of vocational education and training (VET) in schools.

This report is based on 1996 and 1997 data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) program. It provides the most recent and comprehensive national estimates of the number of Year 10 and Year 11 students participating in work experience and workplace learning programs, and the amount of time involved. It also provides extensive information on the characteristics of the young people concerned - their gender, social background, achievement in literacy and numeracy, school sector, and geographic location. Such information provides important baseline data for evaluating the coverage and impact of such programs.

The report also includes some indicative material on the outcomes of such programs. Students were asked to assess the relative benefits of participating in work experience programs and the more direct way of learning about the world of work - actually having a part-time job.

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