

## **Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY cohort**

**(LSAY Research Report Number 11)**

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August 1999**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The report examines early school leaving in Australia. It draws on the most recent and extensive set of national data on early school leavers. It focuses on students who leave school before the beginning of Year 11 using a national representative longitudinal survey of Australian youth who were in Year 9 in 1995. The first part of the investigation examines the social and demographic characteristics of early school leavers. The second part reports on their reasons for early school leaving. The third part of the study models leaving school with social background, demographic, school and attitudinal factors. Particular attention is paid to the influence of individual schools on early school leaving. The final part of the study examines the post-school activities of early school leavers focusing on their labour force participation.

The main findings of this report are as follows:

- approximately 9 per cent of the 1995 Year 9 cohort had left school before the beginning of the 1997 school year;
- students with low levels of school achievement (measured by performance in literacy and numeracy) are substantially more likely to leave school early;
- boys are more likely to leave school early than girls and this tendency is not fully explained by differences in academic achievement, attitudes to school or aspirations;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are much more likely to leave school early, a tendency which among girls cannot be wholly attributed to their socioeconomic background or levels of school achievement;
- in general, students of non-English speaking backgrounds are less likely to leave school early;
- students living in regional and rural areas are more likely to leave school early;
- there are substantial State and Territory differences in early school leaving;
- only about 5 per cent of students attend schools which have a substantial influence on early school leaving net of student characteristics and school system;
- positive attitudes to school and higher aspirations about school completion decreased the likelihood of early school leaving;
- over 50 per cent of students who leave school early say that the main reason they left was to find a job or an apprenticeship. A further 13 per cent said they left because they did not like school; and
- over 70 per cent of early school leavers were working full-time, a further 8 per cent were working part-time and 11 per cent were looking for work.