

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Australian teens' expectation of tertiary education declining**

Australian 15-year-olds' expectations of gaining a tertiary qualification – either a TAFE diploma or a university degree – declined between 2003 and 2015, according to a report released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

However, students' expectations of completing Year 12 or a Certificate 4, such as an apprenticeship, increased by 12 per cent over the same time.

In 2003, 63 per cent of Australian students expected to undertake a university degree, and by 2015 this had decreased to 54 per cent. This was higher than the average over the OECD (44 per cent).

In 2003, eight per cent of students thought they would complete a TAFE diploma and by 2015 this proportion had decreased by more than half, to three per cent.

ACER Deputy CEO (Research) Dr Sue Thomson said, "While there has been an overall decrease in the proportion of students expecting to go to university over the time studied, expectations of a university degree have remained quite high among students from a more advantaged background. In 2015, 76 per cent of students from the highest SES quartile expected to undertake university studies, compared to only 34 per cent of students from the lowest quartile."

"There is a worrying pattern of disadvantage in the results, with higher proportions of Indigenous students, students from remote schools and those from low socioeconomic backgrounds expecting to finish school before Year 11. This may well reflect the reality of life for these students, with financial constraints and access to universities having a greater impact on their decisions."

"Even high achievers from the lowest socioeconomic group had much lower expectations of going to university than high achievers from high socioeconomic backgrounds," Dr Thomson said.

The Australian Capital Territory recorded the highest proportion of students expecting to complete a university degree, at 66 per cent. The proportions of students expecting to complete a university degree were lower in Queensland, the Northern Territory and Tasmania, but these were similar to the OECD average, ranging from 44 to 46 per cent.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a large-scale three-yearly study of more than half a million 15-year-olds in 72 countries, including 14 500 students in 750 Australian schools. It measures reading, science and maths literacy to determine how well prepared students are for the challenges of adult life. The report released today takes a more detailed look at non-cognitive results from the most recent study in 2015 and asks about the educational qualifications Australian 15-year-olds expect to complete.

Read the full report, *PISA Australia in Focus Number 2: Educational Expectations*, published by ACER, at <https://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/31>

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