

EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TRAINING

SENATE LEGISLATION COMMITTEE - QUESTIONS ON NOTICE 2004-2005 ADDITIONAL ESTIMATES HEARING

Outcome: 1

Output Group: 1.2 – Assistance to individuals including those with special needs

DEST Question No. E527_05

Senator Harradine asked on 16 February 2005, EWRE Hansard page 76.

Question:

But I want to know precisely, if that is possible, the number of teenage parents who are leaving school prematurely.

Answer:

Teenage Parents

There is no administrative data on students leaving school before completing Year 12 because of pregnancy. The Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) are the most authoritative source for this kind of information.

LSAY is a series of longitudinal surveys which track young people each year from year 9 until they are aged 24/25 years. Currently information is being collected annually on three cohorts. The most recent and relevant cohort for addressing the question of the extent to which teenage pregnancy impacts on the completion of Year 12 is the Y98 cohort which commenced in 1998 with over 13,000 students.

In 2001 young people in the Y98 cohort would have been expected to be in Year 12 at the time of the interview, which was conducted in the second half of that year. By late 2001, 742 young women out of a total of 4,449 in the sample had left school before completing Year 12. Of these, 16 stated that they had left school because of pregnancy or having to look after their own children. This represents 2.2% of female early leavers in the un-weighted sample or 0.4% of all females in the un-weighted sample.

These percentages are small and subject to a significant standard error. However, applying these percentages to the total number of young women in a teenage age cohort in Australia would suggest that around 500 young women leave school each year across Australia because of pregnancy.