

## SENIOR SECONDARY STUDENTS AND PART-TIME PAID EMPLOYMENT

Report of a survey of students on the Hellyer Campus of the  
Tasmanian Academy and Tasmanian Polytechnic 2009

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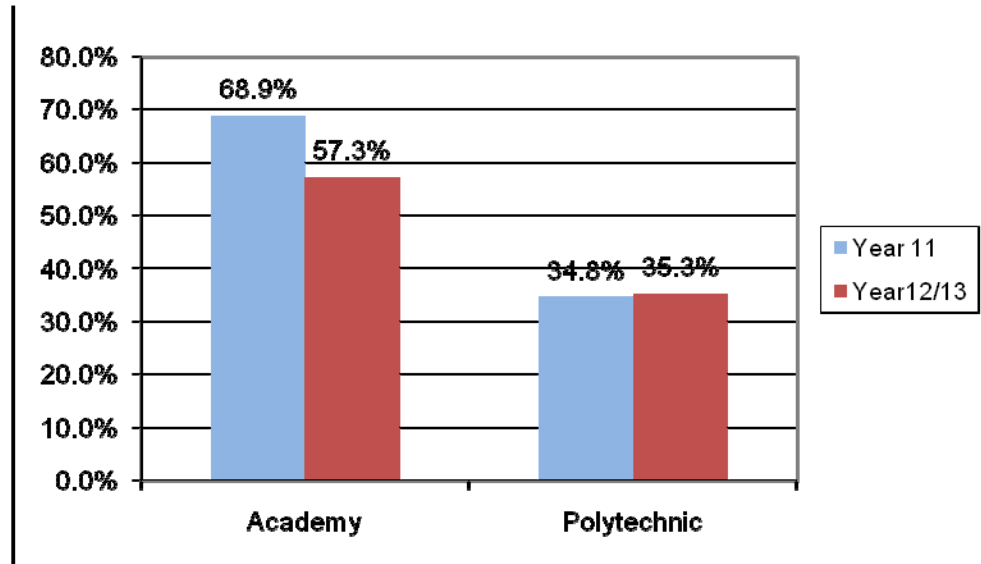


## Students in Part-Time Paid Employment

Over the last twenty-five years there has been a substantial increase in national retention rates of students from Year 7/8 through to the end of Year 12. In 1985 the Year 12 apparent retention rate was just 46.4% (ABS, 4102.0 *Australian Social Trends*, 1996). In 2007 this had risen to 74.3%, slightly down from its peak during the recession of the early 1990s of 76.6% (ABS, 4221.0, *Schools, Australia 2008*). Paralleling this rise in retention rates has been an increase in the participation of school students in paid work outside of school hours.

A survey of 325 students on the Hellyer Campus (Burnie) of the Tasmanian Academy and Tasmanian Polytechnic in the week ending 3 April 2008 found 58.8% of all respondents in part-time employment outside of school hours. The survey group represents a substantial sample of the total enrolments – 40.1% of all students (47.5% of students in the Academy and 32.2% of students in the Polytechnic). Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the survey sample by enrolment, year group and participation in part-time paid employment as a percentage of the total sample.

**Figure 1: Participation in Paid Employment by Enrolment and Year Group**

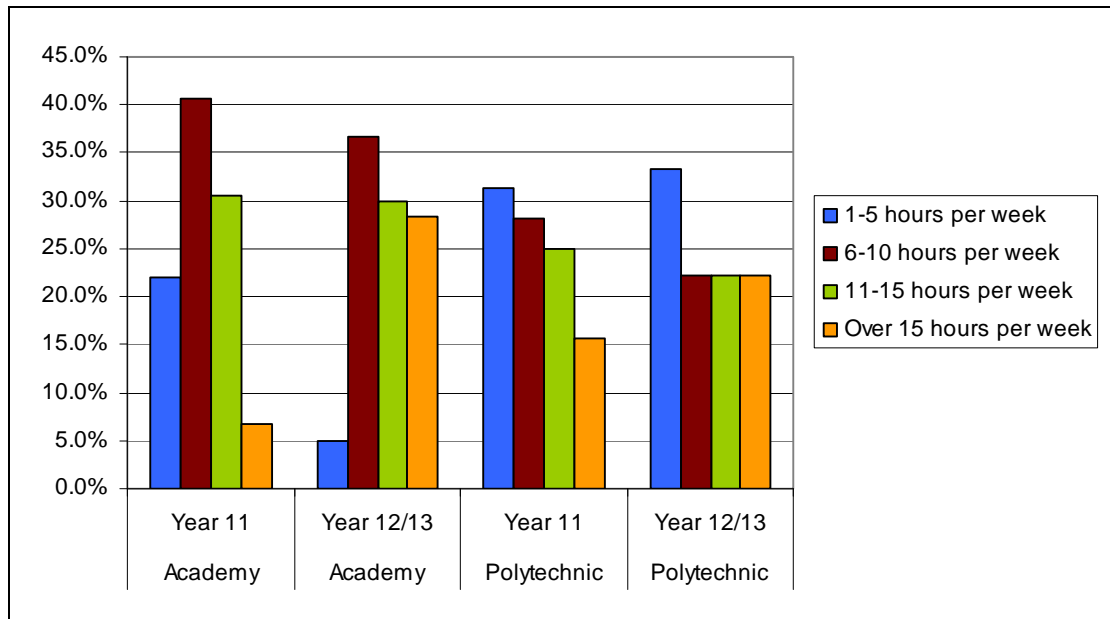


From the data it can be seen that students enrolled in the Academy are far more likely to be participants in paid employment than students enrolled in the Polytechnic. On average 63.3% of Academy students have paid jobs outside of education compared to 34.9% of Polytechnic students. Polytechnic students are defined by being enrolled in a vocational (VET) certificate. Academy students are all ostensibly on a university pathway, though not all Academy graduates will go on to university study.

## Hours of work

Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the hours a week students are working by year group in the Academy and Polytechnic.

**Figure 2: Hours of Paid Employment by Enrolment and Year Group**



As can be seen from Figure 2, the largest group of Academy students, 38% across Years 11 and 12/13, is working from 6 to 10 hours a week. A further 30% works from 11 to 15 hours a week. Year 11 students work on average slightly longer than Year 12/13 students but a higher proportion of Year 12/13 students are working over 15 hours a week, an indication that more of these students are living independently and rely on their part-time work to cover living expenses (see below).

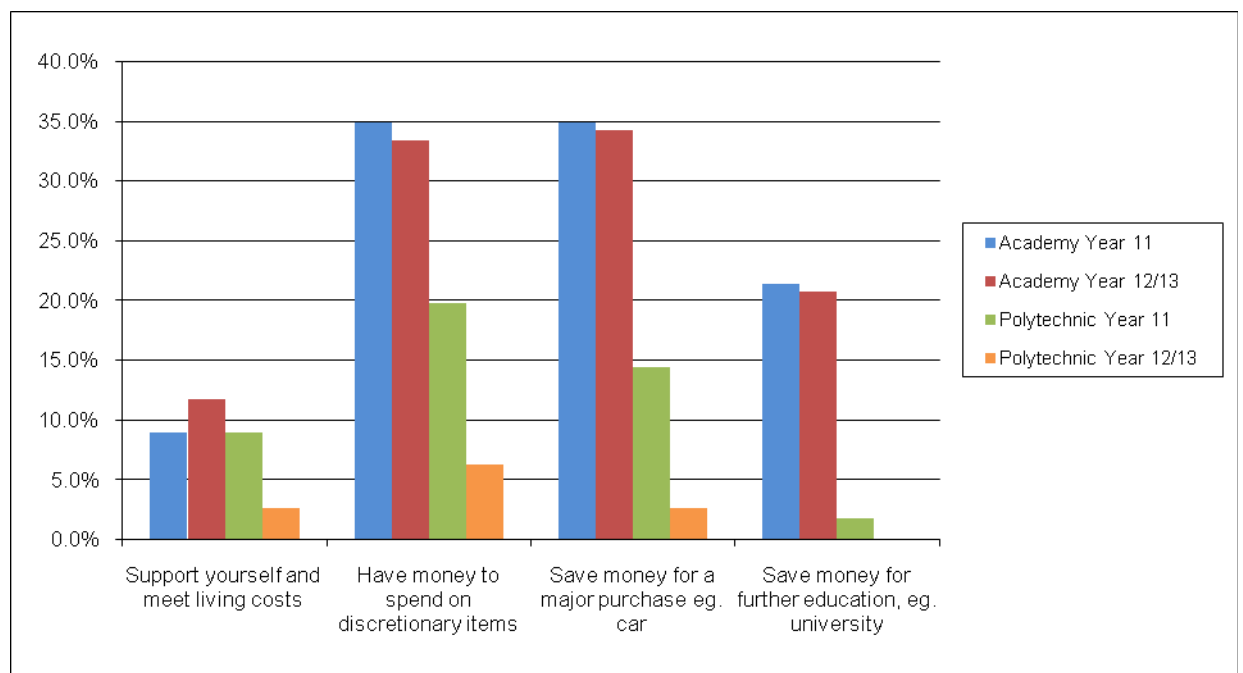
Polytechnic students are not only less likely to be employed outside of school time than Academy students, but those who are work fewer hours than their Academy counterparts. The largest group of Polytechnic students, 31%, work from 1-5 hours a week. The next largest group, 26.8%, work 6-10 hours a week.

The data shows a clear bias by employers for Academy students, bearing in mind that many Polytechnic students would be in work rather than education if they could obtain it.

### Reasons for working

Students were asked to identify their reasons for paid work outside of education being given four options as well as the opportunity to identify reasons that were not covered within the options. Students could identify any combination of reasons they felt appropriate. As can be seen from Figure 3, the major reasons identified for working were to have money to spend on discretionary items and to save money for the purchase of a major item such as a car. 10.5% of Academy students and 20.6% of Polytechnic students indicated they were living independently and needed to work to meet living costs.

**Figure 3: Reasons for Working**



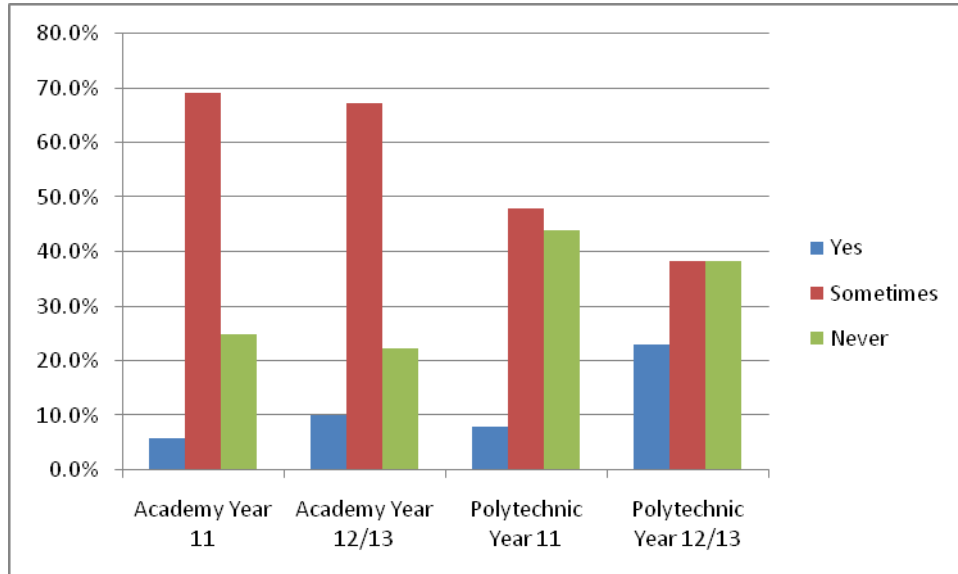
Roughly twenty percent of Academy students indicated they were working to save money to cover the cost of future education. In contrast, only two Polytechnic students indicated they were working to save money for future education, not a surprising outcome as the focus of the Polytechnic is very much on gaining qualifications to more directly into the workforce.

### The impact of paid work on study

Students were asked two questions about how working part-time affected their study and school work. As can be seen from Figure 4, the vast majority of students in the Academy in both Year 11 and Year 12/13 admitted that part-time work did interfere with their school work on some occasions. For students in the Polytechnic, the response was more evenly divided between 'sometimes' and 'never', perhaps an indication of the lower outside of school time demands placed upon Polytechnic students. It should be borne in mind,

however, that proportionately far fewer Polytechnic students are engaged in paid work outside of education and those that are on average work fewer hours each week than students in the Academy.

**Figure 4: Impact of paid work upon study**



Students were also asked whether their educational commitments were taken into account by their employers when putting together work rosters or asking the students to come into work. Responses indicated a majority of employers were sensitive to the educational commitments of their student employees with over 60% of respondents saying employers did consider their educational commitments and only just over 10% saying they were not.

**Figure 5: Consideration by Employers of Student's Educational Commitments**

