



Compulsory Education Age

'We all want the best for our children – education and training are the key to a better future for every young person'.

The compulsory education age will be increased to 17 from January 1 2009, as part of the State Government's efforts to reshape senior secondary education in South Australia and increase student retention in public schools.

The initiative is part of the government's School to Work strategy aimed at improving the career prospects of young people and to address the State's skills shortages.

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From 2009, all 16 year-olds will be required by law to be in school or another 'Approved Learning Programme' until they achieve a qualification or until they turn 17, unless they have been granted an exemption.

Research shows that young people who leave school too early are often unemployed by their 20s and then find it difficult to find work and careers of their choice.

The new system is aimed at giving young people more relevant and flexible opportunities to learn and gain skills by recognising the individual educational needs and circumstances of each child.

What is an approved learning programme?

- traditional secondary school, including studying towards the SACE, International Baccalaureate or Steiner Education Secondary Certificate

- TAFE courses or accredited courses offered by Registered Training Organisations
- apprenticeships or traineeships
- university degrees, diplomas or other university award courses
- other programmes authorized by the Minister for Education and Children's Services.

From 2009, the new SACE will enable young people to undertake a variety of learning and training subjects both within and outside school to achieve the SACE and other relevant qualifications.

What qualifies as an exemption?

- full time employment – a minimum of 25 hours a week - or
- individual personal circumstances: for example, if a young person of compulsory education age is required to work to support their family or has carer's responsibilities.

If a young person is doing any work as part of their learning or training, such as an apprenticeship, traineeship or as part of an Approved Learning Programme, they do not need to seek an exemption.

Will parents be penalised if their child does not comply with the new law?

- Parents will not be penalised. The aim of the new law is to support young people in achieving skills through education and training.

For further information please visit <http://www.edlawreform.sa.gov.au/pages/snrsec/faq> ■