

ATAR NOT TRUE TEST

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EXPERTS may be divided on the future of the ATAR as a measure of academic capability, but year 12s are not.

School-leavers overwhelmingly report extreme stress and burnout related to the pressure of their final ranking, prompting calls to offer senior students better mental health and wellbeing support.

A recent survey of more than 1300 young people found that almost 70 per cent did not believe their ATAR score accurately measured their academic ability, and only 14 per cent felt it was accurate.

“The results are not surprising,” co-founder of post-school support service Year13 Saxon Phipps said.

The ATAR causes students so much stress. They’re told it’s going to be the measuring stick for their whole life and it’s not true.”

An SA Commissioner for Children and Young Peoplesurvey of 223 final year students, previously reported by The Advertiser, similarly found only 17 per cent felt “very prepared” for year 12, and less than half felt very supported during the pressure-cooker year of study.

Professor John Fischetti, past president of the NSW Council of Deans of Education, said uni entry had “already moved past the ATAR as an admission standard”.

He said fewer than of students in NSW used an ATAR to get into uni in the past three years, as unis had “moved in the competitive world to try to snap up those students”.

“If you have a credential-like approach, or a portfolio approach ... the assessment is much more applied and authentic,” he said.

Rob Joseph, a data scientist and author of a new report into the relevance of the ATAR, disagreed, arguing it was the only option until transparent and rigorous alternatives were found.

He said outcomes for the quarter of students nationally admitted without an ATAR cwere much poorer – twice as likely to drop out in first year.