



Tasmanian
Audit Office



**Report of the Auditor-General
No. 13 of 2013-14**
Teaching quality in public high schools

June 2014

The Role of the Auditor-General

The Auditor-General's roles and responsibilities, and therefore of the Tasmanian Audit Office, are set out in the *Audit Act 2008* (Audit Act).

Our primary responsibility is to conduct financial or 'attest' audits of the annual financial reports of State entities. State entities are defined in the Interpretation section of the Audit Act. We also audit those elements of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report reporting on financial transactions in the Public Account, the General Government Sector and the Total State Sector.

Audits of financial reports are designed to add credibility to assertions made by accountable authorities in preparing their financial reports, enhancing their value to end users.

Following financial audits, we issue a variety of reports to State entities and we report periodically to the Parliament.

We also conduct performance audits and compliance audits. Performance audits examine whether a State entity is carrying out its activities effectively and doing so economically and efficiently. Audits may cover all or part of a State entity's operations, or consider particular issues across a number of State entities.

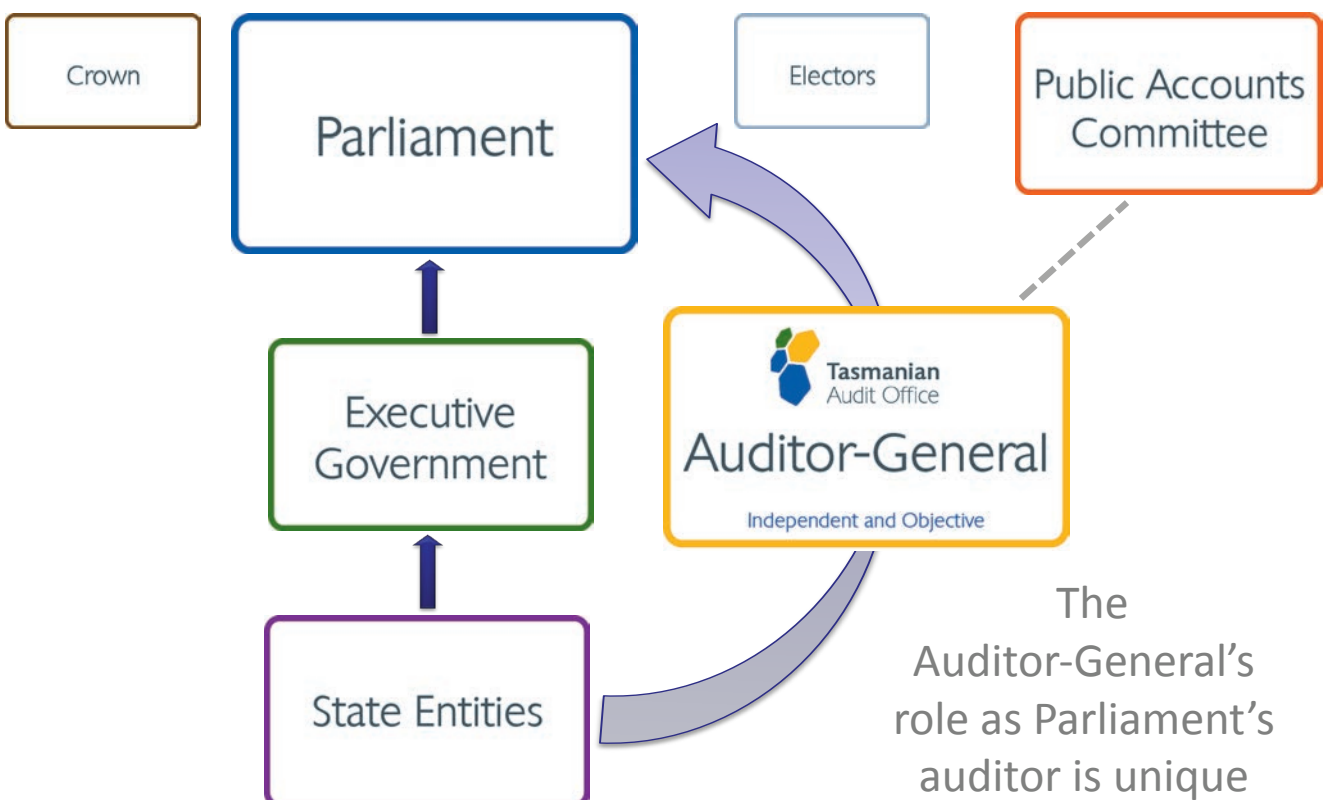
Compliance audits are aimed at ensuring compliance by State entities with directives, regulations and appropriate internal control procedures. Audits focus on selected systems (including information technology systems), account balances or projects.

We can also carry out investigations but only relating to public money or to public property. In addition, the Auditor-General is now responsible for state service employer investigations.

Performance and compliance audits are reported separately and at different times of the year, whereas outcomes from financial statement audits are included in one of the regular volumes of the Auditor-General's reports to the Parliament normally tabled in May and November each year.

Where relevant, the Treasurer, a Minister or Ministers, other interested parties and accountable authorities are provided with opportunity to comment on any matters reported. Where they choose to do so, their responses, or summaries thereof, are detailed within the reports.

The Auditor-General's Relationship with the Parliament and State Entities





2014

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

**REPORT OF THE
AUDITOR-GENERAL
No. 13 of 2013-14**

Teaching quality in public high schools

June 2014

© Crown in Right of the State of Tasmania June 2014

Auditor-General's reports are available from the Tasmanian Audit Office, Hobart, although in limited supply. This report, and other Special Reports, can be accessed via our home page (<http://www.audit.tas.gov.au>).

For further information please contact:

Tasmanian Audit Office

GPO Box 851

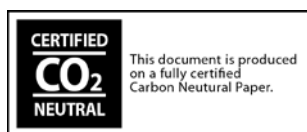
Hobart

TASMANIA 7001

Phone: (03) 6226 0100, Fax (03) 6226 0199

Email: admin@audit.tas.gov.au

This report is printed on recycled paper.



ISBN 978-0-9804409-4-2



Tasmanian
Audit Office

Level 4, Executive Building, 15 Murray Street, Hobart, Tasmania, 7000
Postal Address GPO Box 851, Hobart, Tasmania, 7001
Phone: 03 6226 0100 | Fax: 03 6226 0199
Email: admin@audit.tas.gov.au
Web: www.audit.tas.gov.au

26 June 2014

President
Legislative Council
HOBART

Speaker
House of Assembly
HOBART

Dear Mr President
Dear Madam Speaker

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL
No. 13 of 2013–14: Teaching quality in public high schools

This report has been prepared consequent to examinations conducted under section 23 of the *Audit Act 2008*. The objective of the audit was to assess the quality of teaching in public high schools.

Yours sincerely

H M Blake
AUDITOR-GENERAL

Contents

Foreword	vii
List of acronyms and abbreviations	viii
Executive summary	2
Background	2
Detailed audit conclusions.....	2
Recommendations made.....	4
Audit Act 2008 section 30 — Submissions and comments received	6
Introduction	10
1 Are performance measures indicative of quality teaching?	14
1.1 Background.....	14
1.2 Did NAPLAN results indicate quality teaching?.....	14
1.3 Did PISA results indicate quality teaching?.....	17
1.4 Did TIMSS results indicate quality teaching?	19
1.5 Did retention rates indicate quality teaching was taking place?	20
1.6 Conclusion.....	23
2 Has DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?	26
2.1 Background.....	26
2.2 Had DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?	26
2.3 Did assessment plans exist and support delivery of the Australian Curriculum?	27
2.4 Conclusion.....	27
3 Did the quality of teaching satisfy parents and students?	30
3.1 Background.....	30
3.2 Did DoE monitor satisfaction levels?.....	30
3.3 Were parents and students satisfied with teaching quality?	31
3.4 Conclusion.....	33
4 Were teachers relevantly qualified and trained?	36
4.1 Background.....	36
4.2 Did Tasmania have qualified teachers?	36
4.3 Were teachers teaching outside their speciality?	36
4.4 Was there adequate mentoring and professional development of teachers?	37
4.5 Conclusion.....	39

5	Were DoE and schools strategically managing high school teaching?..	42
5.1	Background.....	42
5.2	Did DoE have reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of individual high schools?.....	42
5.3	Did DoE and schools have reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of individual teachers?	43
5.4	Had DoE and schools implemented strategies for improving teacher quality?	44
5.5	Was relief teaching having an adverse impact on teaching quality?.....	46
5.6	Conclusion.....	46
6	Was the TRB contributing to teaching quality?	50
6.1	Background.....	50
6.2	Was TRB ensuring teachers were properly registered?	50
6.3	Was TRB improving teaching standards?	50
6.4	Conclusion.....	51
	Independent auditor’s conclusion.....	54
	Recent reports	58
	Current projects	60

List of Figures

Figure 1: NAPLAN Year 9 – results over time	15
Figure 2: NAPLAN including ICSEA scores — Year 9, 2012	16
Figure 3: PISA results for reading 2003 – 2012.....	18
Figure 4: TIMSS Mathematics Year 8	20
Figure 5: Apparent retention rates 1998–2012 government schools.....	21
Figure 6: Tasmanian government schools direct retention over time.....	22
Figure 7: Average student satisfaction levels for schools	31
Figure 8: Average parent satisfaction levels for schools	32

List of Tables

Table 1: Proportion of government schools’ NAPLAN Year 9 mean scores compared to similar Australian schools – 2012	17
--	----

Foreword

This performance audit set out to assess the quality of teaching in public high schools. I also considered how the Teachers Registration Board fulfils its role.

Overall, I concluded that Tasmanian teachers are performing effectively and that a key indicator of teacher performance, being student results, has remained steady in recent years. Tasmanian school results are, however, consistently below the Australian average on most measures. I found that the central explanation for this result is Tasmania's relatively low socio-educational status. When this is considered, Tasmania performed slightly above the national average.

One measure of performance which is regularly used is retention rates. I noted some difficulty in comparing Tasmania retention rates to other states, given the Department of Education's preferred measure, being direct retention, is not currently used by other states. It would be helpful if common measures were used.

The recommendations made in this Report were aimed at further improving retention rates, and the way in which satisfaction survey results are gathered and responded to by schools and the department. I am also keen to see guidelines developed for principals to assist them in making the very important decision of whether teachers have the necessary skills, qualifications and experience to teach particular subjects.

H M Blake

Auditor-General

26 June 2014

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ACARA	Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ARR	Apparent Retention Rate
DoE	Department of Education
DRR	Direct Retention Rate
ICSEA	Index of Community Socio–Educational Advantage
PAT	Progressive Assessment Tests
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLI	Professional Learning Institute
PNL	Principal Network Leader
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy
RTB	Raising the Bar
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TRB	Teachers’ Registration Board

Executive summary

Executive summary

Background

In order to succeed, high school students need quality teachers. This is established through national and international evidence which demonstrates that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students. Indeed, there is now a consensus that the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement is teacher quality¹.

Given the importance of teachers, the performance of Australia's school teachers has come under the microscope in recent years, due to a slight decline in student outcomes. The Australian Government responded in 2008 with the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality. This program provided Tasmanian government and non-government schools with \$10.5m over a five year period, and included requirements such as the introduction of performance reviews linked to national standards. Recent years have also seen national standards introduced to improve teacher quality².

All Tasmanian teachers must be registered with the Teachers' Registration Board (TRB). Newly trained teachers must progress through provisional registration before applying for full registration. The TRB also has responsibility to develop and improve teaching standards.

Detailed audit conclusions

The audit conclusions are based on criteria that we developed to support the audit's objective and are aligned to the chapter structure of the Report.

Are performance measures indicative of quality teaching?

A range of Australian and international performance measures were used to assess the quality of teaching in Tasmania. We found that while Tasmanian educational performance was generally quite stable over time, it was slightly below Australian and international averages. However, when socio-educational factors (such as parental education and employment) were

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Teachers matter: Attracting developing and retaining effective teachers: Overview*, 2005, p. 2.

² Australian Government, *National Smarter Schools Partnership – Tasmania Implementation Plan*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2010, p.19; National Smarter Schools Partnership, *Tasmania Smarter Schools National Partnerships Fast Facts*, p.1.

considered, Tasmania performed slightly above the national average³.

Has DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?

We concluded that the Department of Education (DoE) had demonstrated implementation of the Tasmanian and Australian curricula, supported by assessment plans.

Did the quality of teaching satisfy parents and students?

We were satisfied that DoE monitored satisfaction levels and that overall satisfaction levels for students and parents were at least reasonable. However, lack of absolute targets and poor survey response rates limited the capacity to form a stronger conclusion. It was also not always clear that actions had been taken at the school level in response to relatively poor survey results.

Were teachers relevantly qualified and trained?

We concluded that teachers had the necessary formal qualification of either full or provisional registration with TRB.

However, we believed it highly likely that non-specialist teachers were widely used in public high schools and that there was a lack of departmental guidance for school principals in relation to required skills, qualifications and experience.

The provision of mentoring and professional learning went some way to alleviating these concerns.

Were DoE and schools strategically managing high school teaching?

DoE and schools had reasonable mechanisms to assess:

- performance of schools
- performance of individual teachers.

They also had a range of strategies for improving the quality of teaching.

We were unable to determine the impact of relief teaching at a statewide level, but concluded that mechanisms existed to identify and address individual performance problems.

³ This is because Tasmanian student's lower test results have been attributed to the relatively low educational and occupational status of their parents, rather than poor teaching.

Was the TRB contributing to teaching quality?

We were satisfied that TRB was implementing applicable legislation and standards in relation to teacher registration.

We were also satisfied that the scope of work to improve the quality of teaching was appropriate, given the small size of the organisation and its mandate.

Recommendations made

The Report contains the following recommendations.

Rec	Section	We recommend that ...
1	1.5	... DoE develops an ambitious but achievable target for direct retention.
2	3.2	... DoE investigates ways to ensure higher levels of feedback from students and parents, to ensure survey results are meaningful and representative.
3	3.2	... DoE continues to engage with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to develop a range of survey options.
4	3.3	... relative school survey results are more overtly used to inform school planning. DoE should also follow up with schools to assess what actions will be undertaken to address poorer results.
5	3.3	... DoE continues to develop targets that indicate to schools minimum expectations for long-term satisfaction levels.
6	4.3	... DoE develops pragmatic and flexible guidelines to assist principals when deciding whether teachers have the necessary skills, qualifications and experience to teach particular subjects. Deviations from guidelines should require departmental approval.
7	4.4	... DoE explores options to reduce the cost and increase the availability of professional learning opportunities, especially in remoter schools.

Audit Act 2008 section 30 — Submissions and comments received

Audit Act 2008 section 30 — Submissions and comments received

Introduction

In accordance with section 30(2) of the *Audit Act 2008*, a copy of this Report was provided to the Department of Education and the Teachers Registration Board.

A summary of findings, with a request for submissions or comments, was also provided to the Minister for Education and Training and to the Treasurer.

Submissions and comments that we receive are not subject to the audit nor the evidentiary standards required in reaching an audit conclusion. Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of these comments rests solely with those who provided the response.

Minister for Education and Training

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss and respond to the performance audit: Teaching quality in public high schools.

I am pleased to accept the report and I note its recommendations. The report confirms the quality of teachers and teaching in Tasmanian public high schools.

Please convey my thanks to the Tasmanian Audit Office staff involved in the audit process.

The Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP

Department of Education

Thank you for providing me with the draft Report to Parliament for the performance audit: Teaching quality in public high schools.

I welcome the opportunity to comment on the report and thank the Tasmanian Audit Office for their work.

The quality of teaching in Tasmanian government schools is of utmost importance to all Tasmanians. I acknowledge the quality of teaching in public high schools and our schools' performance. I note in the report that the performance of our students in international and national assessments is slightly above the national average when adjusted for Tasmania's socio-economic index.

I also note the report's conclusion that public high school teachers have successfully implemented the Tasmanian and Australian curricula and teaching is supported by comprehensive assessment plans.

The recommendations outlined in the report are noted and will be taken into consideration and will inform our planning through the Learners First Strategy 2014–17.

I am pleased to acknowledge the detailed report that recognises the work of teachers, school principals and the department in ensuring learners in Tasmanian public high schools are afforded quality teaching.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to comment.

Colin Pettit
Secretary

Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft copy of the Tasmanian Audit Office Report on Teaching Quality in Public High Schools.

We note that the report acknowledges and affirms the role that the Teachers Registration Board has in contributing to teacher quality in Tasmania through the implementation of legislative requirements for Tasmanian teachers as described by the Teachers Registration Act 2000 (the Act) and that the scope of this work is appropriate, given the size of the organisation.

Stephen Mannering
Chair

Introduction

Introduction

Background

The quality of teaching in public high schools is critical to the success of high-school students. Indeed, there is national and international evidence that a teacher's effectiveness has a powerful impact on students, with broad consensus that teacher quality is the single most important in-school factor influencing student achievement⁴.

Australia's relative decline in student outcomes in recent years has brought this matter to the forefront of the national school improvement agenda⁵. Driving improved teacher quality across Australia's education systems and schools, in order to improve learning in the classroom, has been described as arguably the greatest and most worthwhile challenge facing Australian education⁶.

In responding to this challenge, in 2008 the Australian Government launched the Smarter Schools National Partnership for Improving Teacher Quality. This program provided \$550m nationally over five years (2008–09 to 2012–13), with Tasmania receiving \$10.5m over this period for both government and non-government schools⁷. As part of the partnership, Tasmania agreed in 2010 to introduce a requirement for performance reviews to be conducted with every staff member, both teaching and non-teaching. This was to be linked to national standards, which were subsequently developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, in February 2011⁸.

The national standards were designed to guide professional learning, practice and engagement, assisting with the

⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Teachers matter: Attracting developing and retaining effective teachers: Overview*, 2005, p. 2. Geoff Masters, 'What makes a good teacher?', *ACER eNews*. <http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/2004/05/what-makes-a-good-teacher>.

⁵ Programme for International Student Assessment, PISA in Brief. Highlights from the full Australian Report: Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009, Programme for International Student Assessment, 2009, pp.16-17.

⁶ Hay Group, *Growing our Potential: Hay Group's view on implementing an effective performance improvement and development framework for teachers*, Hay Group, 2012, p.2.

⁷ National Smarter Schools Partnership, *Tasmania Smarter Schools National Partnerships Fast Facts*, p.1; Australian Government Smarter Schools National Partnerships, *Smarter Schools National Partnerships Fast Facts*, p. 1.

⁸ Australian Government, *National Smarter Schools Partnership – Tasmania Implementation Plan*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2010, p.19.

improvement of teacher quality and the standing of the profession with the public.

In Tasmania, all teachers must be registered with the Teachers' Registration Board (TRB). Newly trained teachers must progress through provisional registration before applying for full registration. The TRB will only grant full registration, or renew a teacher's registration, when it is satisfied that a teacher has complied with certain criteria, including documented feedback, evidence of professional development and evidence of observations of recent teaching. TRB also has responsibility to develop and improve teaching standards.

Audit objective

The objective of this audit was to assess the quality of teaching in public high schools.

Audit criteria

The audit criteria developed for this audit were aimed at addressing the following effectiveness aspects:

- Are performance measures indicative of quality teaching?
- Has DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?
- Did the quality of teaching satisfy parents and students?
- Were teachers relevantly qualified and trained?
- Were DoE and schools strategically managing high school teaching?
- Was the TRB contributing to teaching quality?

Audit scope

This audit assesses teacher and teaching quality by applying the audit criteria and by:

- reviewing teaching at a number of selected high schools (excluding colleges) to provide coverage of large and small, rural and urban schools across the state
- reviewing the registration, renewal and complaint procedures at the TRB
- examining data covering the period from 2007–08 to 2012–13.

Where possible, comparison with other states and territories, and other countries, has been undertaken.

Internal audit

DoE has an internal audit function but internal auditors had not considered any matters related to the objective and scope in recent years.

Audit approach

In line with the six audit criteria we developed, we created a number of supporting sub-criteria and set about finding answers to each. We sought appropriate audit evidence by:

- interviewing DoE head office staff
- interviewing, and obtaining written information, from teachers and principals at six high schools (St Helens and Brooks in the North, Reece and Penguin in the North West, and Tarooma and Campania in the South)
- analysing DoE and publicly available statistics, including school results and satisfaction surveys
- examining policies, procedures and other documentation.

Timing

Planning for this audit began in August 2013. Fieldwork was completed in April 2014 and the report was finalised in June 2014.

Resources

The audit plan recommended 1075 hours and a budget, excluding production costs, of \$167 521. Total hours were 1015 and actual costs, excluding production, were \$156 064, which was below our budget

Why we did this audit

Our intention to undertake this audit was publicly disclosed in the *Annual Plan of Work 2013–14*, available on our website. This audit was developed because the subject area is a matter of considerable public interest and has experienced significant change in recent years.

1 Are performance measures indicative of quality teaching?

1 Are performance measures indicative of quality teaching?

1.1 Background

There are a number of performance measures available to DoE to assess the performance of Tasmania's public high schools. We selected the following four:

- National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)
- Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)
- Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)
- retention rates.

This Chapter outlines these measures and assesses the performance of all of Tasmania's high schools against them — relative to past years and other jurisdictions.

1.2 Did NAPLAN results indicate quality teaching?

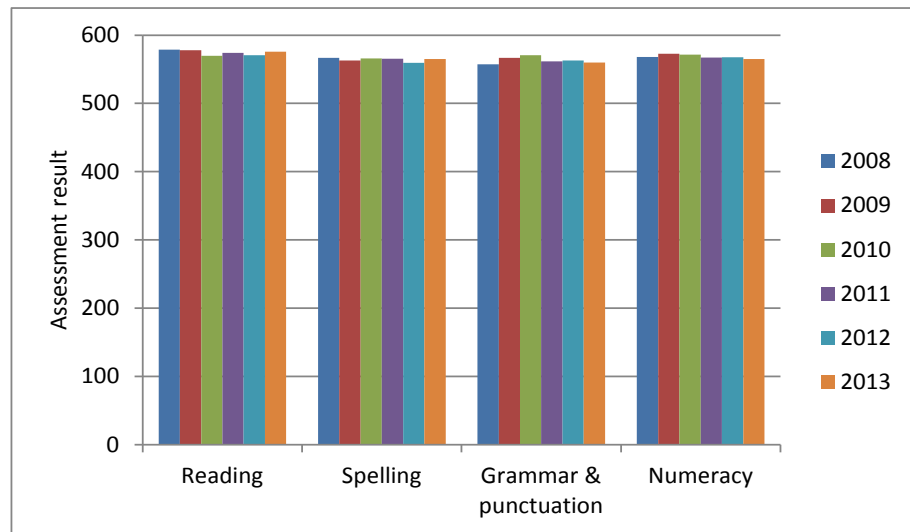
The most reliable literacy and numeracy assessment is NAPLAN, because it uses whole cohorts and has been developed for Australian students⁹. For secondary students it tests Years 7 and 9. NAPLAN, which commenced in 2008, has produced results for all jurisdictions for numeracy and a range of English-related assessments — reading, spelling, and grammar and punctuation¹⁰.

Tasmanian NAPLAN results over time

We have focused on Year 9 results as being a better indicator of teaching performance than Year 7 given by Year 9 students have been at the high school for over two years. Figure 1 compares NAPLAN 2013 results since 2008.

⁹ We were encouraged by the efforts some principals went to in ensuring as many students as possible participated in NAPLAN. This has resulted in response rates around 95 per cent, which were comparable with the national average.

¹⁰ NAPLAN now measures persuasive writing. However, this has not been consistent over time given it replaced writing in 2011. Therefore, it is not included in our analysis. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy, National Report for 2011, ACARA, Sydney, 2011, p.iv.

Figure 1: NAPLAN Year 9 – results over time

Source: National Assessment Program, 'National Reports'. Accessed 2 January 2014. <http://reports.acara.edu.au/Home/TimeSeries>

The results for Year 9 were stable, being between 557 and 579 (out of 1000) for all assessments¹¹. Further analysis showed a small fall in reading, numeracy, and grammar and punctuation, but a small improvement in spelling.

The Australian Curriculum and Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA), who publishes the NAPLAN results, considered the changes to be statistically insignificant.

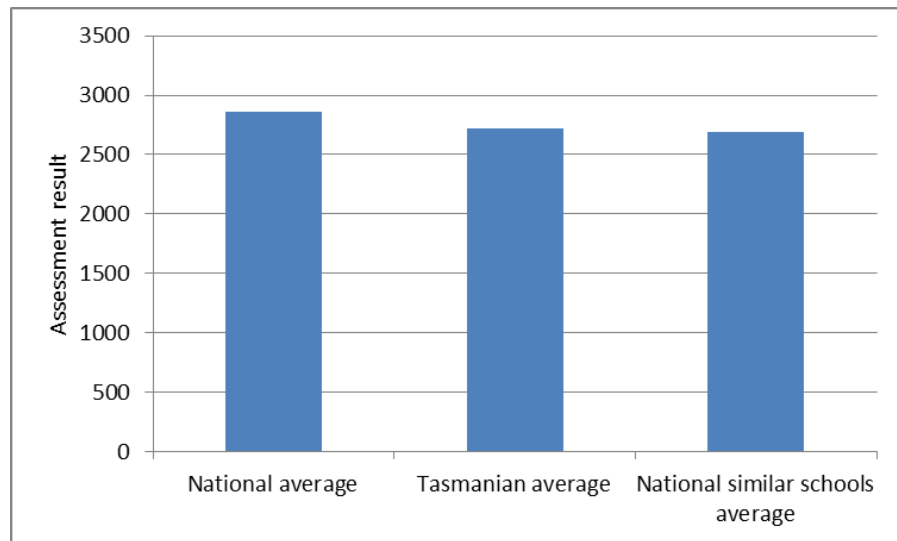
Comparative NAPLAN results 2013

Figure 2 shows 2013 NAPLAN summary results for Australian jurisdictions. We looked at a simple average of Australian schools. We also computed an average of 'similar' schools which had similar levels of socio-educational advantage, which we consider to be a fairer basis for comparison. Selection of similar schools was based on the Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA)¹².

¹¹ ACARA, 'National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy', National Report for 2013, p.viii.

¹² ICSEA includes factors such as parents' occupation, level of education and English proficiency. Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 'Guide to Understanding ICSEA', ACARA, 2012, p.7.

Figure 2: NAPLAN including ICSEA scores — Year 9, 2012



Source: <http://myschool.edu.au>.

The Tasmanian average for combined NAPLAN results was just below the national average. We also noted that only three of the 36 Tasmanian high schools analysed had an average score above the national average.

However, when compared to similar Australian schools, Tasmania was performing slightly (statistically insignificant) above the average. We also noted that 21 of the 36 Tasmanian schools analysed were above the similar school average.

Further analysis of results on a category basis showed a similar pattern. Generally, while Tasmanian schools performed below the Australian average for all schools, for similar schools Tasmania performed well, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Proportion of government schools' NAPLAN Year 9 mean scores compared to similar Australian schools – 2012

Domain	Below	Similar	Above	No result
Reading	5%	50%	31%	14%
Persuasive Writing	12%	46%	28%	14%
Spelling	17%	53%	16%	14%
Grammar & Punctuation	14%	50%	22%	14%
Numeracy	10%	60%	16%	14%

Source: <http://myschool.edu.au>.

When compared to similar schools, Tasmanian schools perform well. This is because in four of five categories, there is a greater proportion of Year 9 scores above, rather than below, the Australian similar schools mean.

In summary, although average NAPLAN scores for Tasmanian schools were just below the national average, the primary factor appears to be socio-educational disadvantage, rather than a difference in teaching quality.

1.3 *Did PISA results indicate quality teaching?*

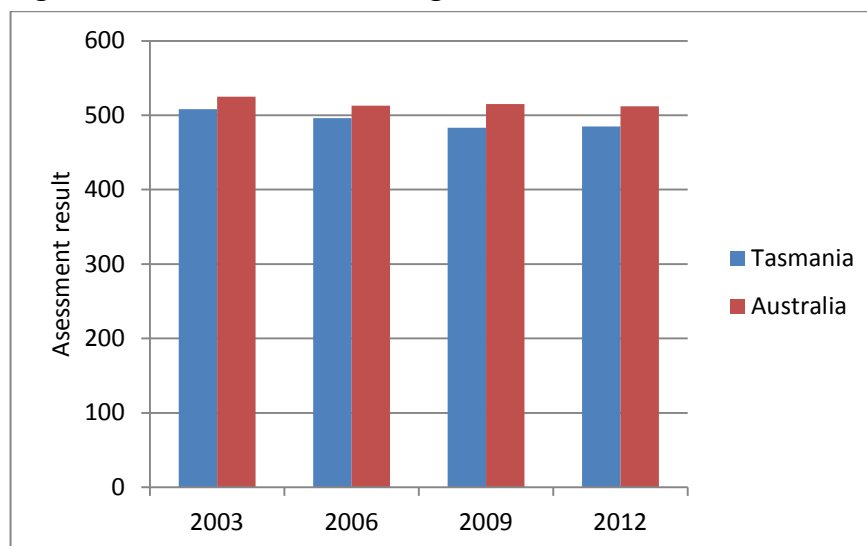
PISA is an international study that evaluates education systems (government and non-government) worldwide every three years, by assessing 15-year-olds' competencies in reading, mathematics and science on a 1000-point scale¹³. It should be noted that PISA results are not considered as robust as other measures such as NAPLAN for literacy and numeracy, given NAPLAN results are based on full cohorts rather than samples, drawn from students in the same year level, and are more closely aligned with the Australian Curriculum. Also, Tasmanian students aged 15 are generally in a lower grade compared to some other jurisdictions, because of differences in primary education systems. For example, in 2009, 53 per cent of 15-year-

¹³ OECD, *OECD Programme for International Student Assessment*. <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/> Accessed 5 November 2013.

olds in Western Australia were in Year 11 compared to five per cent in NSW and none in Tasmania¹⁴.

Figure 3 shows Tasmanian and Australian PISA results between 2003 and 2012 for reading, for both government and non-government schools.

Figure 3: PISA results for reading 2003 – 2012



Source: Sue Thomson, Lisa De Bortoli and Sarah Buckley, PISA in Brief: Highlights from the full Australian report: PISA 2012: How Australia measures up, Australian Council for Educational Research, pp. 10-12. Sue Thompson et.al, PISA in Brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report: Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009, p. 6; Statistical tables for the 2006 National Report, www.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/reports/

Tasmania's PISA results for reading showed a small (and statistically insignificant) decline between 2003 and 2012. Tasmania's results have been consistently but marginally worse than those for Australia for all years¹⁵. The PISA results were similar for mathematics and science¹⁶. To put those results in context, Australia performed significantly above the Organisation of Economic Co-Operation and Development's average in 2012¹⁷.

¹⁴ John Ainley, Eveline Gebhardt, *Measure for Measure: A review of outcomes of school education in Australia*, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013, p. 6.

¹⁵ Tasmanian Audit Office, Special Report Number 90, *Science Education in Public High Schools*, July 2010, p.16.

¹⁶ Sue Thomson, Lisa De Bortoli, Sarah Buckley, PISA in Brief: Highlights from the full Australian report: PISA 2012: How Australia Measures up. Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013, p. 10-12.

¹⁷ Australian Council for Educational Research, PISA in brief: highlights from the full Australian report: PISA 2012: how Australia measures up, 2013, pp.7-9.

As previously mentioned, no 15-year-old Tasmanian students were in Year 11 and consequently had less years of high school teaching than other jurisdictions. We were unable to adjust the data for the different systems, but the score variations would undoubtedly be smaller when adjusted. We noted, for example, that a study by the Australian Council for Educational Research showed that Tasmanian results for reading were much closer to those of other Australian jurisdictions, when adjusted for grade differences¹⁸.

As suggested above with the NAPLAN results, socio-educational factors are also central to student performance. PISA, in 2012, stated that socio-educational status was associated with performance at the system, school and student levels¹⁹.

Tasmania and the Northern Territory have the largest proportion of low socio-educational students enrolled in schools. As with NAPLAN, Tasmania's marginally weaker PISA results were largely explained by socio-educational factors. For instance, 84 per cent of Tasmania's variance in mathematical literacy can be accounted for by socio-educational differences at school level and a further 10 per cent by students' socio-educational differences within schools²⁰.

In summary, PISA scores for Tasmanian schools were just below the national average, however the primary factors appear to be the use of a 15-year-old cohort and socio-educational disadvantage, rather than a difference in teaching quality.

1.4 *Did TIMSS results indicate quality teaching?*

International comparison is also undertaken in over 50 countries by TIMSS, which assesses the performance of Year 8 government and non-government students in mathematics and science. The TIMSS results were based on testing in Year 8, less than half way through high school. In addition, like PISA, TIMSS

¹⁸ John Ainley, Eveline Gebhardt, *Measure for Measure: A review of outcomes of school education in Australia*, Australian Council for Educational Research, 2013, p. 37. Tasmanian 15-year-olds are usually in earlier years, i.e. Year 10 or Year 9.

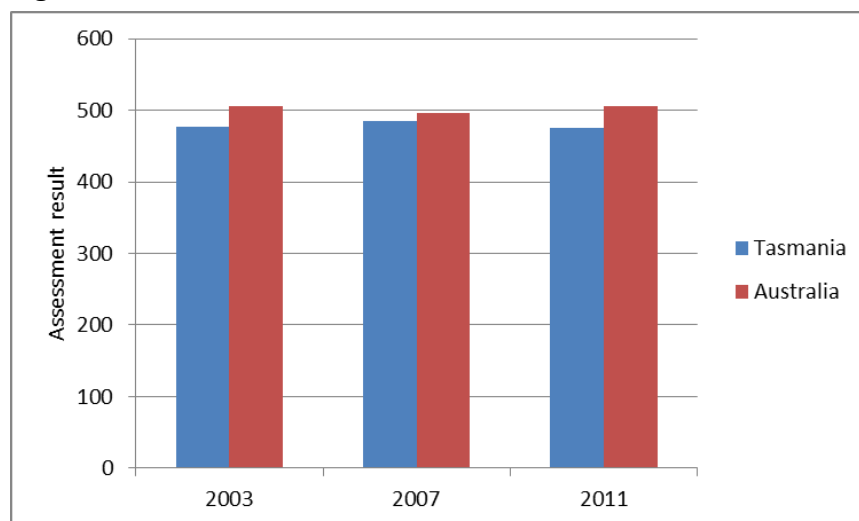
¹⁹ PISA uses the term socio-economic rather than socio-educational, to describe essentially the same thing – differences in a factors such as parent's education and employment. Sue Thompson, Lisa De Bortoli and Sarah Buckley, *PISA 2012: How Australia measures up*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 2013, p. xxxv. For consistency, we have used the term socio-educational throughout the report.

²⁰ Sue Thompson, Lisa De Bortoli and Sarah Buckley, *PISA 2012: How Australia measures up*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne, 2013, p. 278.

uses sample assessments, which are not as reliable as NAPLAN (whole cohorts).

The results for Tasmania for the last three periods of the assessment for mathematics are presented in Figure 4 (for government and non-government schools).

Figure 4: TIMSS Mathematics Year 8



Source: Sue Thomson et al, Highlights from TIMSS and PIRLS 2011 from Australia's perspective, ACER. Source: Sue Thomson et al, Highlights from TIMSS and PIRLS 2007 from Australia's perspective, ACER.

There was no change for Tasmania between 2003 and 2011, with all years being above the TIMSS intermediate international benchmark of 475 but below the average for participating countries at 500²¹. As with PISA and NAPLAN scores, Tasmanian results have been marginally but consistently lower than Australian results. We also found similar results for science.

In conclusion: Tasmanian schools were slightly below the national average. However, and as outlined above, the primary factor was likely to be socio-educational disadvantage, rather than a difference in teaching quality.

1.5 *Did retention rates indicate quality teaching was taking place?*

Retention rates could be viewed as an indicator of the success of the Tasmanian education system, and there are two ways of measuring retention rates:

²¹ ACER, Highlights from TIMSS and PIRLS 2011 from Australia's perspective, ACER, p.21. Tasmanian Audit Office, Special Report Number 90, Science Education in Public High Schools, July 2010, p.16.

- Apparent Retention Rate (ARR) was calculated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) using the number of school students in a designated year of education as a percentage of students in the base year. For this audit, we used Year 10 as the base and Years 12 and 13 as the final year.
- Direct Retention Rate (DRR) tracks the progression of individual students with these figures recorded by DoE for government schools for 2008–12 (they are not recorded nationally).

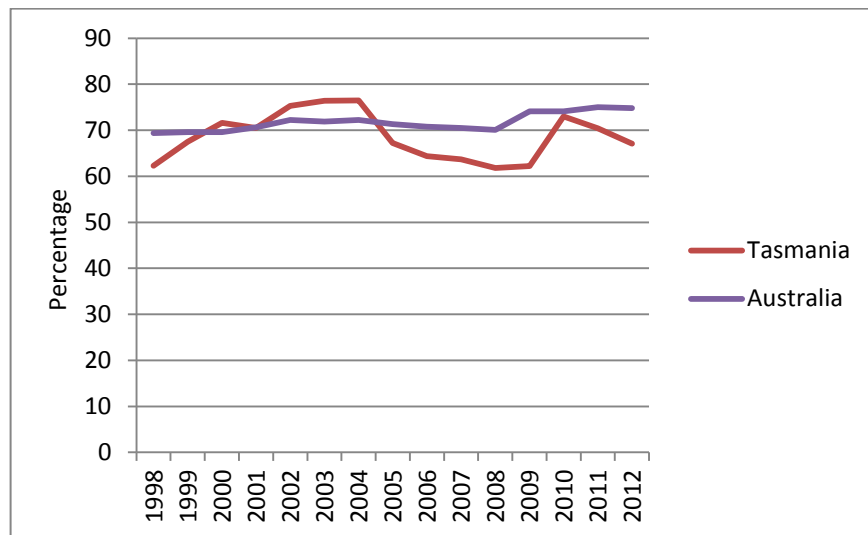
Apparent retention rate

AAR is based on the number of students in August 2010 compared with the number of students, two years later, in August of Year 12.

While reported by the ABS, we do not consider the ARR rate to be as robust or useful a measure of retention as DRR, since it includes students who have repeated years, moved between public and private sectors, or moved interstate. The ARR also includes adult learners as Year 12. On the other hand, ARR is the only measure for which comparisons with other jurisdictions can be made.

Figure 5 shows ARR for Tasmania and Australia over five years.

Figure 5: Apparent retention rates 1998–2012 government schools



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 4221.0 *Schools, Australia 2012*, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2012.

In the past 14 years, the ARR for government schools in Tasmania has fluctuated, between 62 and 76 per cent, with no real trend evident. The sharp increase in the Tasmanian ARR from 62 per cent in 2009 to 73 per cent in 2010 was largely due

to eligible students at the Tasmanian Polytechnic being counted as a result of the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms.

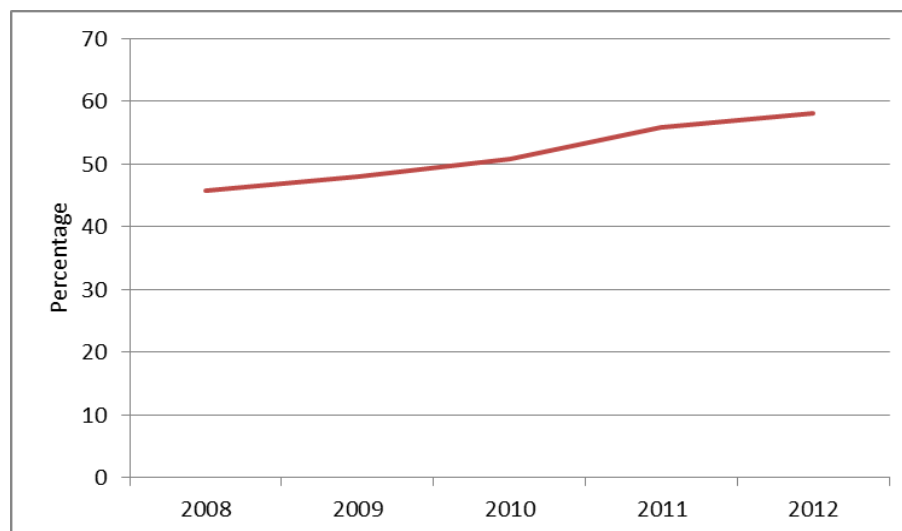
When we compared Tasmanian government schools to the Australian average, we saw that Australian government schools had usually been above the Tasmanian government schools, with a significant variation in 2012 (namely Tasmania 67 per cent, Australia 74 per cent).

As discussed above, the accuracy of ARR is limited. A better way to measure retention rates is direct retention, which tracks the progression of individual students.

Direct retention

Direct retention figures are not recorded nationally, but DoE believed it is a better measure. However, there are obstacles that can make it difficult to compare direct retention nationally, including different state-based legislation and different part-time or full-time counting rules. Figure 6 shows DoE direct retention percentages for government schools recorded for 2008–2012.

Figure 6: Tasmanian government schools direct retention over time



Source: Department of Education

There had been steady improvement over the five-year period, from 46 per cent in 2008, to 58 per cent in 2012²². However, these figures may not reflect the full retention in the education system, given TAFE students, apprentices and people in part-time study were not included. We were advised that DoE was

²² Department of Education, 'Retention and Attainment'. Direct retention is not used as a measure by the ABS. There is no comparable interstate data for direct retention rates.

working with Skills Tasmania to get a more complete picture of direct retention figures.

The improvement had largely resulted from a wide range of DoE strategies and projects, including a *Student Engagement and Retention Policy* and a *Retention and Attainment Strategy*. The latter included ‘pathway planning’ and a coordinated regional approach to course offerings at the Year 11 and 12 levels²³. DoE also considered that leadership programs had positively influenced students’ attitudes towards continuing education.

DoE currently does not have a target for DRR to assist with performance measurement. Instead, it relies on a target sourced from the Tasmanian Qualifications Authority, known as the Direct Continuation Rate, which includes government and non-government schools. Given DRR is DoE’s preferred measure for retention, we believe a target for DRR should be developed. The target should be ambitious, but achievable within a defined timeframe.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that DoE develops an ambitious but achievable target for direct retention.

Summary

Overall, the apparent retention rate suggested Tasmanian government schools were not as successful as their Australian counterparts at retaining students. However, direct retention figures, which are more reliable, suggested there had been a sharp rise in Tasmanian retention since 2008. Nevertheless, we would like to see a direct retention target developed for the future.

1.6 Conclusion

A range of Australian and international performance measures were used to assess the quality of teaching in Tasmania. We found that while Tasmanian educational performance was generally quite stable over time, it was slightly below Australian and international averages. However, when socio-educational factors (such as parental education and employment) were considered, Tasmania performed slightly above the national average.

²³ Department of Education, *Retention and Attainment Strategy Years 10–12*, September 2011, p.5–6. Department of Education, *Student Engagement and Retention Policy*.

2 Has DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?

2 Has DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?

2.1 Background

Another key element of effective teaching is delivery of the intended curriculum. The Tasmanian Curriculum was taught across all subjects until 2012, when the Australian Curriculum was introduced for subjects including mathematics, English and science.

We gathered data at six schools, being St Helens, Brooks, Reece, Penguin, Tarooma and Campania. From this data we examined in this Chapter whether:

- DoE had effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula
- Assessment plans existed and supported the delivery of either curriculum.

2.2 Had DoE effectively and demonstrably implemented the Australian and Tasmanian curricula?

We sought three types of documentary material, consisting of:

- annual lesson plans, to outline the content and structure of the year's teaching
- unit outlines (for groups of lessons), to outline topics to be covered by each unit
- materials and techniques (such as textbooks and websites) to be used for each unit.

We sought to establish through these documents whether there was an obvious connection to the relevant curriculum. We also interviewed 31 teachers and six principals from our selected schools to provide context for review of the materials.

Detailed unit outlines (for groups of lessons about a similar topic) and outlines of materials and techniques used, were provided by most teachers at all schools. Completed annual lesson plans were provided by all teachers at Brooks, Campania and Reece; four out of five at Tarooma; two out of five at Penguin; and one of five teachers at St Helens.

We found a clear connection to the curriculum in the planning documents of 29 of the 31 teachers. One teacher did not provide us with the documentation we required, while for another it was

unclear whether the documentation that was provided covered the material in the relevant curriculum.

Collectively, the results suggested that almost all teachers in our sample had acceptable documentation. We concluded that DoE had demonstrated implementation of the Tasmanian and Australian curricula.

2.3 Did assessment plans exist and support delivery of the Australian Curriculum?

Teachers used a variety of assessment plans to assess students' performance; some formative and some summative²⁴.

We asked the teachers at our sampled schools whether they had plans to help them assess student performance. We found that 30 of 31 teachers had assessment plans.

Most summative plans outlined what was expected at different levels of achievement, and showed a clear linkage with the curriculum. For instance, one plan for Year 9 science included expectations for five different grade levels, across four different aspects of performance (such as ability to analyse and present ecosystem theories).

Other summative plans were not as detailed and were more generic in nature. For instance, one plan for Year 10 history failed to mention the topic of the class (namely World War Two), but nevertheless gave clearly differentiated measures for achievement across a range of areas.

Some formative assessment plans for individual assignments employed formal and informal assessment. These were typically less detailed than end-of-unit summative assessments.

We concluded that both types of plans supported the delivery of the Australian Curriculum.

2.4 Conclusion

We concluded that DoE had demonstrated implementation of the Tasmanian and Australian curricula, supported by assessment plans.

²⁴ Formative assessment is administered during a unit of teaching, while summative assessment is administered at the end of the teaching unit.

3 Did the quality of teaching satisfy parents and students?

3 Did the quality of teaching satisfy parents and students?

3.1 Background

Another key element of effective teaching is whether it meets the expectations of parents and students (across all Tasmanian public high schools). In this Chapter we asked two questions, namely:

- Did DoE monitor satisfaction levels?
- Were parents and students satisfied with teaching quality?

3.2 *Did DoE monitor satisfaction levels?*

Between 2007 and 2011, a state-based survey was conducted, which consistently delivered high response rates. In 2013, the department was required to replace the state-based survey with an online tool called *SchoolSurvey*. At the time, DoE raised concerns with ACARA about the likely impact on response rates²⁵.

The 2013 survey detailed statewide results including those schools we visited. Scores for individual schools were highlighted if they were + or -0.5 (out of 10) compared to the state average. To us this indicated that DoE took an interest in individual school scores.

We also noted that some of our sampled schools had very low parent response rates (e.g. Penguin had two per cent and Reece nine per cent). DoE advised that the statewide average was only 19 per cent. In our view, these response rates did not give reliable results about parents' views on school performance.

The response rates for students were generally very high at between 80 per cent and 100 per cent. There were, however, two schools with student response rates below 50 per cent. For these schools, we considered improvements in response rates were also needed to ensure reliable data was used to inform school planning.

Overall, we were satisfied that DoE did monitor satisfaction levels, however poor response rates limited usefulness of the surveys.

²⁵ The 2013 survey was created by ACARA and the Commonwealth Government.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that DoE investigates ways to ensure higher levels of feedback from students and parents, to ensure survey results are meaningful and representative.

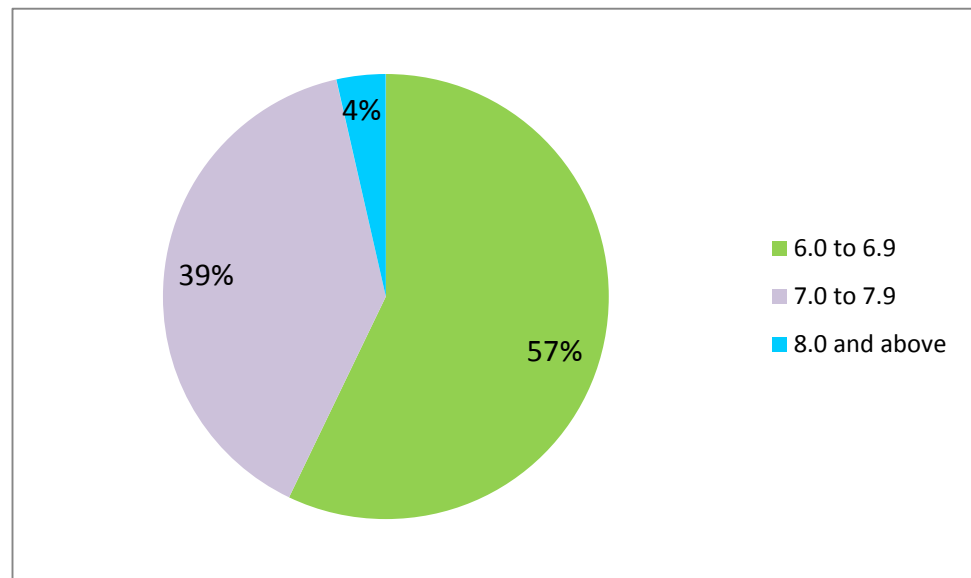
Recommendation 3

We recommend DoE continues to engage with ACARA to develop a range of survey options.

3.3 *Were parents and students satisfied with teaching quality?*

We analysed school satisfaction data provided by DoE, which showed that over the range of questions, student satisfaction levels were 7.4 out of 10, and parent satisfaction levels averaged 7.7 out of 10. The spread of satisfaction level data is illustrated by the following charts.

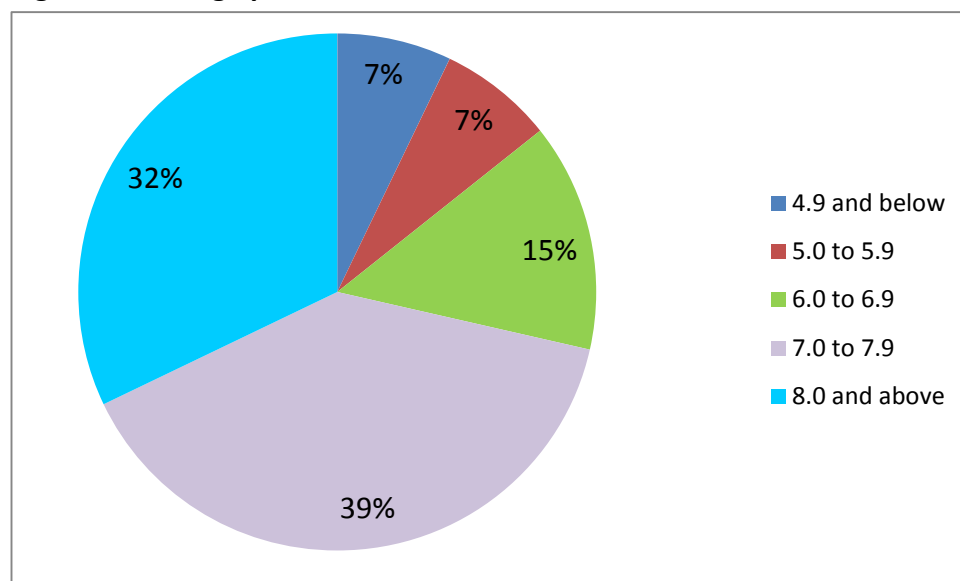
Figure 7: Average student satisfaction levels for schools



Student satisfaction scores for all schools averaged at least six out of ten, with 43 per cent being seven or above.

Parent satisfaction levels are shown below in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Average parent satisfaction levels for schools



Overall, the results for parents were stronger than those for students, with 71 per cent being at least seven out of ten. However, there was a greater spread of results than for the students' results, with some schools having average satisfaction levels below five. It should be noted that all of the schools with average scores below 5.0 suffered from very low response rates, impacting on the reliability of the results.

DoE advised that it used a benchmarking process to highlight schools with relatively low average satisfaction ratings for additional planning processes and remedial action. We obtained evidence of some of the poorer results being acted upon by schools, but in other cases no evidence was available.

We also noted that no absolute satisfaction targets existed for particular questions or for overall results. Such targets could be based on similar surveys in other jurisdictions. In this regard, DoE advised that work is currently underway to develop such targets in conjunction with the South Australian government.

Without targets, it was difficult to form an opinion as to whether the observed parent and student satisfaction levels were satisfactory. However, our view was that satisfaction levels were at least reasonable.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that relative school survey results are more overtly used to inform school planning. DoE should also follow up with schools to assess what actions will be undertaken to address poorer results.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that DoE continues to develop targets that indicate to schools minimum expectations for long-term satisfaction levels.

3.4 *Conclusion*

We were satisfied that DoE monitored satisfaction levels and that overall satisfaction levels for students and parents were at least reasonable. However, lack of absolute targets and poor survey response rates limited the capacity to form a stronger conclusion. It was also not always clear that actions had been taken at the school level in response to relatively poor survey results.

4 Were teachers relevantly qualified and trained?

4 Were teachers relevantly qualified and trained?

4.1 Background

In order to understand the quality of teaching in Tasmania, we decided to assess:

- whether Tasmania had qualified teachers
- whether teachers were teaching outside their speciality
- whether there was adequate mentoring and professional development of teachers.

4.2 Did Tasmania have qualified teachers?

At the time of the audit, any person wanting to teach in a Tasmanian school, the Tasmanian Academy or the Tasmanian Polytechnic (from 1 January 2014 TasTAFE) must be registered or have a limited authority to teach. This was legislated through the *Teachers Registration Act 2000*.

DoE had qualifications for teachers verified by the TRB and this information was uploaded and retained by DoE in its information systems. We selected a sample of teachers across all DoE high schools and verified the registration status against TRB records.

On the above basis we concluded that teachers were suitably qualified to teach at high school, given they were registered.

4.3 Were teachers teaching outside their speciality?

Some teaching experts have long maintained that excellent teachers possess deep content knowledge²⁶. Upon this basis, we were interested to assess whether teachers were teaching subjects where they could demonstrate to us that they had acquired this deep content knowledge, either through relevant qualification or subsequent training.

We found, from discussions with the six principals from our sampled schools, that there were teachers who were teaching outside of their speciality. We also noted:

- Of teachers interviewed, 58 per cent stated that they were currently teaching subjects for which they were not trained.

²⁶ Geoff Masters, 'What makes a good teacher?', *ACER eNews*.
<http://www.acer.edu.au/enews/2004/05/what-makes-a-good-teacher>.

- Of those teachers, five had physical education qualifications and were teaching subjects such as science and mathematics.
- There were five teachers who had primary school qualifications but who were teaching secondary school subjects.

Reasons provided for the above included remoteness, difficulty attracting specialist teachers and the practice of trying to limit the number of teachers for middle school students.

We concede that there will always be isolated cases where a teacher can be highly effective at teaching in a field in which the teacher was not trained. However, we accept the view of experts that, where possible, students should be taught by teachers with strong content knowledge. In addition, an academic from the University of Tasmania indicated to us that the new national accreditation placed greater emphasis upon specialisation and content expertise, which may make it increasingly difficult for teachers to teach outside their speciality.

We noted that DoE had developed a register for teachers to identify 'qualified' skill areas on the basis of formal qualifications, experience and professional learning. The department is also pursuing a number of activities to assist with the development of teachers which fill the skill gaps it has identified, in areas such as mathematics and science. On the other hand, DoE had no policies or guidelines to assist principals in determining what subjects teachers could teach, based on their qualifications and experience.

Given the high percentages of non-specialist teachers at our sampled schools, we believe it is likely that non-specialist teachers were widely used in public high schools in Tasmania.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that DoE develops pragmatic and flexible guidelines to assist principals when deciding whether teachers have the necessary skills, qualifications and experience to teach particular subjects. Deviations from guidelines should require departmental approval.

4.4 Was there adequate mentoring and professional development of teachers?

Even when specialist teachers were recruited, better educational outcomes were more likely when there was adequate mentoring of new teachers and continuing professional development.

We found that all sampled schools had a mentoring program in place. Of 13 teachers who started teaching after 2004, 11 were satisfied with the level of mentoring they had received. One teacher who did not receive adequate mentoring stated 'mentoring' only occurred when mistakes were made. Another teacher stated that there was no mentoring because teachers were too busy dealing with students.

We noted that new teachers had access to the Beginning Teacher Time Release Program, which allowed them additional free time to plan their lessons.

Regarding professional development, we found:

- DoE had an associated Professional Learning Institute (PLI), which was created in 2011 to provide professional learning to teachers²⁷.
- Additional time was provided for new teachers to attend a range of professional development activities.
- DoE required all teachers to undertake five days of professional activities each year, which may take place internally within school or with external service providers.
- All six principals told us that teachers had access to professional learning programs both within and external to the school.

Many of the PLI courses offered related to general skills such as self-development and leadership, but we noted some subject specific courses. In any event, teachers were not limited to using the PLI.

We concluded that the department and individual schools had adequate levels of mentoring and professional development of teachers.

Of the 31 teachers interviewed, only one wanted more professional learning and that was in relation to a particular subject, mathematics. Some teachers advised that they had adequate access to professional learning, but would do more if it were available. In our view, those difficulties could be largely overcome with greater flexibility of course delivery.

²⁷ The PLI was created in 2011 by DoE to provide ongoing training of Tasmania's teachers to improve student outcomes.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that DoE explores options to reduce the cost and increase the availability of professional learning opportunities, especially in remoter schools.

4.5 *Conclusion*

We concluded that teachers had the necessary formal qualification of either full or provisional registration with TRB.

However, we believed it highly likely that non-specialist teachers were widely used in public high schools and that there was a lack of departmental guidance for school principals in relation to required skills, qualifications and experience.

The provision of mentoring and professional learning went some way to alleviating these concerns.

5 Were DoE and schools strategically managing high school teaching?

5 Were DoE and schools strategically managing high school teaching?

5.1 *Background*

We assessed whether DoE and schools were strategically managing teaching through:

- the performance of individual high schools
- mechanisms to assess the performance of individual teachers
- strategies for improving teacher quality
- whether relief teaching was having an adverse impact on the quality of teaching.

5.2 *Did DoE have reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of individual high schools?*

DoE outlined a number of ways in which it assessed performance of individual high schools, which included the following:

- NAPLAN results and Toolkit
- Progressive Assessment Tests
- Consultant reviews.

NAPLAN results and Toolkit

DoE has developed a NAPLAN Toolkit, which allows teachers to understand the performance of classes and individual students involved with NAPLAN testing. NAPLAN results and DoE's NAPLAN Toolkit provided performance information at a school, class and individual student level. As outlined in Sections 1.2 and 1.3, this data also enabled comparison between jurisdictions and over time. Data was also available which took into consideration socio-educational status. From our own observations of the toolkit, we believed any schools that used the toolkit effectively could potentially improve results.

Progressive Assessment Tests

Progressive Assessment Tests (PAT) were created by the Australian Council of Educational Research (ACER) and provided standardised and consistent tests for areas including literacy and mathematics. PAT data had the capacity to provide assessment data for all years whereas NAPLAN data was only available for Years 7 and 9. It also potentially provided a

credible alternative to NAPLAN from which to compare results and make decisions about school resources.

DoE did not require PAT testing but it was performed by an unknown number of schools across the state. DoE had been provided with PAT data from about a third of schools across the state. A range of other tests are also undertaken, some of which are discussed in Chapter 1.

Consultant reviews

DoE was piloting an externally-conducted review process of high schools. The purpose of the review included providing an independent overview of each school's performance. The reviews were to be supported by an accredited principal. In 2013, six reviews were undertaken as part of a pilot review process, and 50 were planned in 2014. The department advised that if the pilot were considered successful, the intention was that all schools would be reviewed every four years.

Summary — performance measures

DoE had reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of schools.

5.3 Did DoE and schools have reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of individual teachers?

We found a range of mechanisms available to assess performance of individual teachers, including:

- DoE's Conduct and Behaviour Standards (e.g. professionalism, ethical behaviour, use of drugs and alcohol)
- Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Tasmania), which dealt with technical aspects of teaching (e.g. knowledge and planning)
- Annual Professional Development Plans for teachers and principals, developed jointly between a staff member and the responsible manager
- procedures for managing underperformance, with the potential, in extreme cases, for eventual termination of employment
- observation of lessons by senior teachers and principals
- review of lesson plans by senior teachers and principals.

In our discussions with principals, we were satisfied that they had sufficient authority and support from the department to remove under-performing teachers.

We concluded that DoE and schools had reasonable measures to assess the performance of individual teachers.

5.4 *Had DoE and schools implemented strategies for improving teacher quality?*

An important element of improving teaching quality is responding to unsatisfactory external measures and comparisons. We also expected that the department and schools would be constantly developing and implementing strategies for continuous improvement.

DoE provided information about a number of key improvement initiatives.

NAPLAN Toolkit

NAPLAN Toolkit-based analysis by principals and teachers led to corrective measures such as teaching of additional units on a topic and use of different teaching methods. DoE also demonstrated to us the *edi* data warehouse, which was a new product being developed by the department. It would allow, amongst other things, analysis of a range of student results and attendance data, and the creation of appropriate strategies to improve student performance.

Raising the Bar

DoE advised that it had implemented the RTB Program which provided additional staff resources to targeted schools, for one to two years, but it had typically been available for at least two years. The aim of the program was to provide ongoing improvement in teaching capability. In most cases, schools had used the funding to employ an assistant principal on a part-time basis, giving the principal time to work with teachers and teach some classes themselves. Expenditure on this program during 2014 totalled \$2.9m and provided assistance to 12 high schools and 8 combined primary and high schools.

An externally conducted evaluation of the Tasmanian program for primary and high schools utilised a survey of principals. Forty five principals participated and commented on improvements of their staff in a number of aspects of teaching as a result of the RTB program. Among the survey results were:

- 60 per cent stated that collaborative practice had improved to a great extent, while a further 35 per cent stated it had improved to a moderate extent.

- 53 per cent stated planning for literacy and numeracy had improved to a great extent, while a further 44 per cent believed it had improved to a moderate extent.
- 49 per cent stated that conditions for learning literacy and numeracy had improved to a great extent, while an additional 47 per cent stated conditions had improved to a moderate extent.

We were satisfied these results demonstrated improvements in aspects of teaching. The department also provided us with evidence showing that results such as NAPLAN were used to determine funding priorities for this program.

School Improvement Plans

Another important strategy was the requirement for each school to produce annually, a School Improvement Plan, based around the Australian Teaching and Learning School Improvement Framework, developed by ACER²⁸. The plan would include school-level strategies to address concerns identified from NAPLAN testing, satisfaction surveys and teacher concerns.

Literacy and Numeracy Framework

The department had created a strategic document titled *Tasmania's Literacy and Numeracy Framework*²⁹ and supporting materials. The framework improvement strategies discussed included:

- consistent teaching methods and documentation
- creating good conditions for learning
- team-based planning and teaching
- targeted teaching — meeting individual needs of students
- evidence-based practice.

Network Leaders

DoE had recently established 11 networks of schools, with each network having a shared staff member, called a Principal Network Leader (PNL). The PNLs role is to support the school principals in their network to improve performance, including

²⁸ Australian Teaching and Learning School Improvement Framework was developed by the Australian Council for Educational Research.

²⁹ Department of Education, *Annual Report 2012-13*, Department of Education, Hobart, 2013, p. 31.

assistance with development of School Improvement Plans. Among their tasks was to identify schools needing intensive support. The PNLs also provided leadership, direction and high level support across the network in the implementation of the Literacy and Numeracy Framework³⁰.

Summary - strategies

We were satisfied that the department and schools had implemented a wide variety of practical initiatives for improving teaching quality. We also found that results such as NAPLAN was being used to determine which schools are eligible for RTB funding.

5.5 Was relief teaching having an adverse impact on teaching quality?

In planning the audit, we were appraised of concerns that the level of relief teaching could impact on the quality of teaching. The NSW Auditor-General had also raised a number of questions regarding the performance management of relief teachers in previous performance audits in that state³¹.

DoE stated that it did not have any way of measuring the overall impact of relief teaching at a statewide level. We were also unable to find any research or data regarding possible jurisdictional impact. In any event, use of relief teachers at our sampled schools was low (approximately 5 to 10 per cent).

Regarding performance assessment of individual relief teachers, we were satisfied that DoE obtained adequate performance information for all teachers (see Section 5.3), including relief teachers. DoE also considered that schools could assess performance of relief teachers from student feedback and assessment by returning regular teachers.

In summary, we were unable to determine the impact of relief teaching at a statewide level, but concluded that the department had adequate mechanisms to identify and respond to individual performance issues.

5.6 Conclusion

DoE and schools had reasonable mechanisms to assess:

- performance of schools

³⁰ Department of Education, *Annual Report 2012-13*, Department of Education, Hobart, 2013, p. 31.

³¹ Audit Office of New South Wales, *Management of casual teachers*, October 2013.

- performance of individual teachers

They also had a range of strategies for improving the quality of teaching.

We were unable to determine the impact of relief teaching at a statewide level, but concluded that mechanisms existed to identify and address individual performance problems.

6 Was the TRB contributing to teaching quality?

6 Was the TRB contributing to teaching quality?

6.1 *Background*

TRB had a mandate to ensure Tasmanian teachers complied with relevant standards. We assessed whether the TRB was:

- ensuring teachers were properly registered
- improving teaching standards.

6.2 *Was TRB ensuring teachers were properly registered?*

Registration of teachers was controlled by the TRB under provisions of the *Teachers Registration Act 2000* (the Act), which imposed various requirements on teachers before they could be registered. Requirements for provisional registration included certified copies of relevant qualifications, and satisfying good character checks.

For full registration, teachers must have also demonstrated employment as a teacher for a set period as well as providing evidence that professional standards had been met, as determined by the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

To ensure the professional standards were met, TRB required evidence that three lessons had been observed by a fully-registered teacher and that documentation of lesson planning existed. A panel, comprising the principal and other fully-registered teachers recommended whether full registration should be awarded. TRB also audited approximately ten per cent of teachers who became fully registered.

Registration renewal covered a period not exceeding five years, and provisional teachers were expected to apply for an upgrade to full registration sometime within their first five years in the profession.

We concluded that TRB adequately ensured registration requirements were met, as outlined in the Act.

6.3 *Was TRB improving teaching standards?*

We were also interested in finding out what other activities the TRB undertook to improve teaching standards. We found that the TRB:

- accredited teacher education programs, which provided the basis for establishing the accepted benchmark for teacher training

- collaborated with other jurisdictions on nationally consistent registration of teachers and promotion and use of professional standards
- investigated complaints (complaints are rare, with only seven in 2013).

6.4 *Conclusion*

We were satisfied that TRB was implementing applicable legislation and standards in relation to teacher registration.

We were also satisfied that the scope of work to improve the quality of teaching was appropriate, given the small size of the organisation and its mandate.

Independent auditor's conclusion

Independent auditor's conclusion

This independent conclusion is addressed to the President of the Legislative Council and to the Speaker of the House of Assembly. It relates to my performance audit of the quality of teaching in public high schools.

Audit objectives

The objective of the audit was to form an opinion about the quality of teaching in public high schools.

Audit scope

This audit assesses teacher and teaching quality by applying the audit criteria and by:

- reviewing teaching at a number of selected high schools (excluding colleges) to provide coverage of large and small, rural and urban schools across the state
- reviewing the registration, renewal and complaint procedures at the TRB
- examining data covering the period from 2007–08 to 2012–13.

Where possible, comparison with other states and territories, and other countries, has been undertaken.

Responsibility of the Secretary of the Department of Education

The Secretary is responsible for developing processes so that DoE provides quality teaching in public high schools.

Auditor-General's responsibility

In the context of this performance audit, my responsibility was to carry out audit procedures to enable me to express a conclusion on whether the processes implemented resulted in quality teaching in public high schools.

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standard ASAE 3500 *Performance engagements*, which required me to comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements. I planned and performed the audit to obtain reasonable assurance whether DoE was delivering quality teaching in public high schools.

My work involved obtaining evidence that DoE had managed the delivery of teaching quality in its public high schools.

I believe that the evidence I have obtained was sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

Auditor-General's conclusion

Based on the audit objective and scope, and criteria and for reasons outlined in this Report, it is my overall conclusion that:

- While Tasmanian educational performance was slightly below Australian and international averages, it performed slightly above the national average when socio-educational factors were considered.
- DoE had demonstrated implementation of the Tasmanian and Australian curricula, supported by assessment plans.
- DoE monitored satisfaction levels and that overall satisfaction levels for students and parents were at least reasonable. However, it was not always clear that actions had been taken at the school level in response to any relatively poor survey results.
- Non-specialist teachers were widely used in public high schools and there was a lack of departmental guidance for school principals in relation to required skills, qualifications and experience. The provision of mentoring and professional learning went some way to alleviating these concerns.
- DoE and schools had reasonable mechanisms to assess the performance of schools and the performance of individual teachers. However, the impact of relief teaching at high schools was unable to be determined.
- TRB was implementing applicable legislation and standards in relation to teacher registration

My report contains seven recommendations. Three were aimed at improving the response rate and action taken in response to survey data. Another three recommendations focused on target and guideline development. The remaining recommendation asked the department to look at increasing the availability of professional learning whilst reducing its cost .

H M Blake
Auditor-General
26 June 2014

Recent reports

Recent reports

Tabled	No.	Title
Dec	No. 7 of 2012–13	Compliance with the <i>Tasmanian Adult Literacy Plan 2010–15</i>
Mar	No. 8 of 2012–13	National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness
Mar	No. 9 of 2012–13	Royal Derwent Hospital: site sale
May	No. 10 of 2012–13	Hospital bed management and primary preventive health
May	No. 11 of 2012–13	Volume 5 — Other State entities 30 June 2012 and 31 December 2012
Aug	No. 1 of 2013–14	Fraud control in local government
Nov	No.2 of 2013–14	Volume 1 — Executive and Legislature, Government Departments, Tasmanian Health Organisations, other General Government Sector State entities, Other State entities and Superannuation Funds
Nov	No.3 of 2013–14	Volume 2 — Government Businesses, Other Public Non-Financial Corporations and Water Corporations
Dec	No.4 of 2013–14	Volume 3 — Local Government Authorities
Dec	No.5 of 2013–14	Infrastructure Financial Accounting in Local Government
Jan	No. 6 of 2013–14	Redevelopment of the Royal Hobart Hospital: governance and project management
Feb	No. 7 of 2013–14	Police responses to serious crime
Feb	No. 8 of 2013–14	Analysis of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2012-13
May	No.9 of 2013–14	Volume 5 — State entities 30 June and 31 December 2013, matters relating to 2012–13 audits and key performance indicators
May	No.10 of 2013–14	Government radio communications
May	No.11 of 2013–14	Compliance with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Plan 2008–13
June	No.12 of 2013–14	Quality of Metro services

Current projects

Current projects

Performance and compliance audits that the Auditor-General is currently conducting:

Title	Audit objective is to ...	Annual Plan of Work 2013–14
Security of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure	... assess the effectiveness of security measures for ICT infrastructure and its functionality.	Page 11, Topic No. 3
Motor vehicle fleet usage and management	... determine whether use by selected government departments of vehicles is effective, efficient and economic. The audit will also consider allocation and use of motor vehicles complies with government guidelines and whether fleets are properly managed.	Page 13, Topic No. 2
Follow up audit	... ascertain the extent to which recommendations from reports tabled from October 2009 to September 2011.	Page 12 Topic No. 4
Budgeting of capital works	... look at the effectiveness of Treasury's capital works budgeting processes.	Page 11 Topic No. 1

Other performance audits that are listed in the *Annual Plan of Work 2013–14* are in the early stages of planning. As they are approved for commencement, they will be added to the above table and advised on the TAO website (<http://www.audit.tas.gov.au>).

Audit Mandate and Standards Applied

Mandate

Section 17(1) of the *Audit Act 2008* states that:

‘An accountable authority other than the Auditor-General, as soon as possible and within 45 days after the end of each financial year, is to prepare and forward to the Auditor-General a copy of the financial statements for that financial year which are complete in all material respects.’

Under the provisions of section 18, the Auditor-General:

- ‘(1) is to audit the financial statements and any other information submitted by a State entity or an audited subsidiary of a State entity under section 17(1).’

Under the provisions of section 19, the Auditor-General:

- ‘(1) is to prepare and sign an opinion on an audit carried out under section 18(1) in accordance with requirements determined by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards
- (2) is to provide the opinion prepared and signed under subsection (1), and any formal communication of audit findings that is required to be prepared in accordance with the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards, to the State entity’s appropriate Minister and provide a copy to the relevant accountable authority.’

Standards Applied

Section 31 specifies that:

‘The Auditor-General is to perform the audits required by this or any other Act in such a manner as the Auditor-General thinks fit having regard to –

- (a) the character and effectiveness of the internal control and internal audit of the relevant State entity or audited subsidiary of a State entity;
- (b) the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards.’

The auditing standards referred to are Australian Auditing Standards as issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board.



Tasmanian Audit Office

Phone (03) 6226 0100
Fax (03) 6226 0199
email admin@audit.tas.gov.au
Web www.audit.tas.gov.au

Address Level 4, Executive Building
15 Murray Street, Hobart
Postal Address GPO Box 851, Hobart 7001
Office Hours 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday

Launceston Office

Phone (03) 6336 2503
Fax (03) 6336 2908

Address 2nd Floor, Henty House
1 Civic Square, Launceston