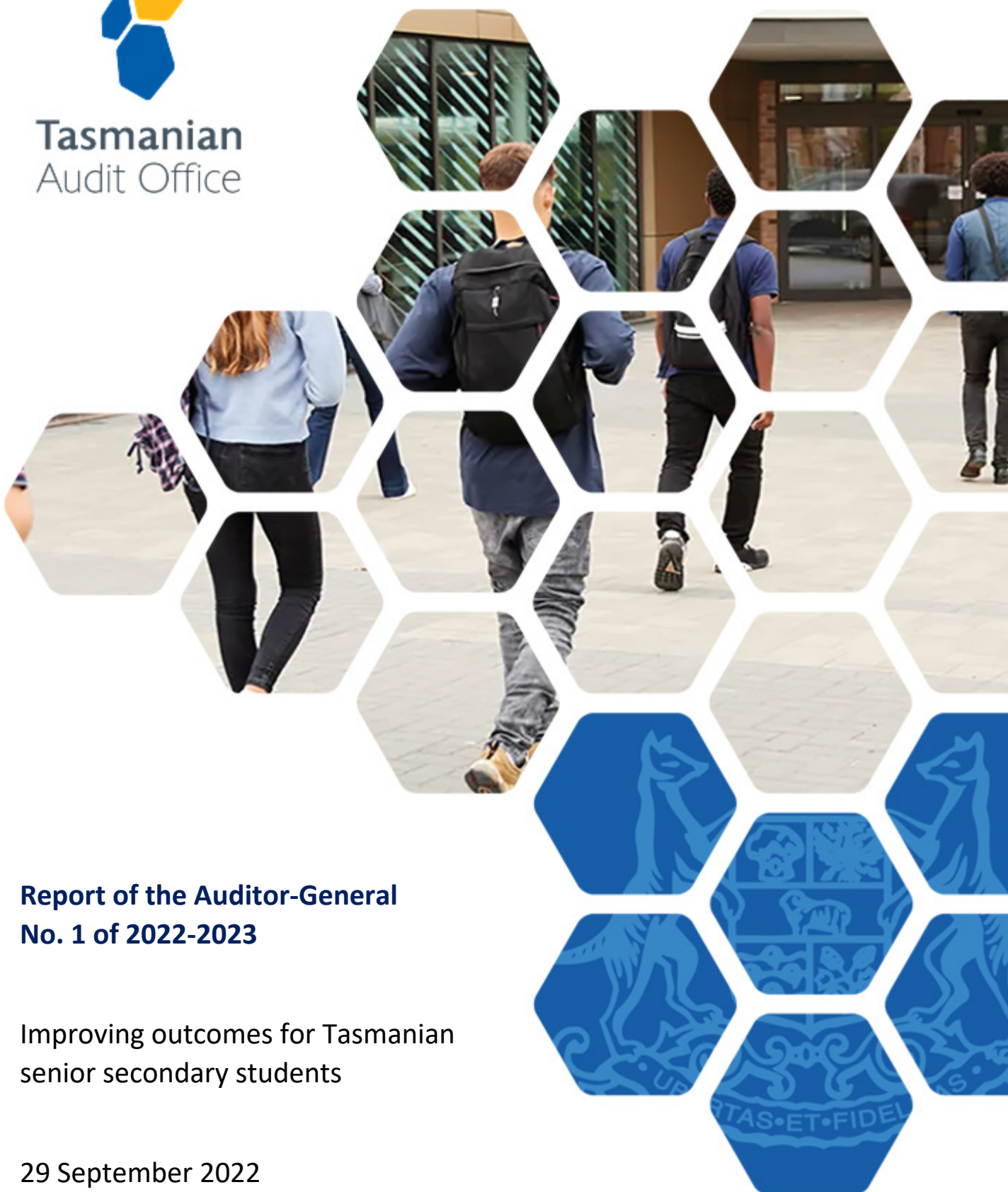




Tasmanian
Audit Office



Report of the Auditor-General No. 1 of 2022-2023

Improving outcomes for Tasmanian
senior secondary students

29 September 2022

Our role

The Auditor-General and Tasmanian Audit Office are established under the *Audit Act 2008*. Our role is to provide assurance to Parliament and the Tasmanian community about the performance of public sector entities. We achieve this by auditing financial statements of public sector entities and by conducting audits, examinations and investigations on:

- how effective, efficient, and economical public sector entity activities, programs and services are
- how public sector entities manage resources
- how public sector entities can improve their management practices and systems
- whether public sector entities comply with legislation and other requirements.

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We acknowledge Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of this Land, and pay respects to Elders past and present. We respect Tasmanian Aboriginal people, their culture and their rights as the first peoples of this Land. We recognise and value Aboriginal histories, knowledge and lived experiences and commit to being culturally inclusive and respectful in our working relationships with all Aboriginal people.



2022
PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

Improving outcomes for Tasmanian senior secondary students

29 September 2022

Presented to both Houses of Parliament pursuant to
Section 30(1) of the *Audit Act 2008*

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29 September 2022

President, Legislative Council
Speaker, House of Assembly
Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear President, Mr Speaker

**Report of the Auditor-General No. 1 of 2022-23 – Improving outcomes for
Tasmanian senior secondary students**

This report has been prepared consequent to examinations conducted under section 23 of the *Audit Act 2008*. The objective of the audit was to express a reasonable assurance opinion of the effectiveness of the Department of Education's implementation of education reforms, including extending State secondary schools to Years 11 and 12, the Years 9 to 12 Project and implementing changes resulting from the *Education Act 2016*.

Yours sincerely



Rod Whitehead
Auditor-General

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Foreword

Tasmania's education system – from early childhood learning to the end of Year 12 and lifelong learning – has long been a pillar of Tasmania's economic growth and social advancement. Education leads to innovation, increases productivity and has a direct impact on an individual's health, wellbeing and social mobility. The school education system plays a vital role in equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need for lifelong learning.

In the lead up to the 2014 State election, the performance of Tasmania's education system was subject to significant public discourse, largely driven by Tasmania's underperformance on a number of education metrics compared to the rest of the country, in particular, Tasmania's Years 11 and 12 school retention rates, which showed the State lagging well behind other states and territories.

Following its election win on 15 March 2014, the Liberal Government immediately began enacting its policy of progressively extending high schools to Years 11 and 12. This was quickly followed by a range of further significant education reforms.

My hope from this report is to identify the lessons to be learned from the way in which three elements of those reforms – the extension of State secondary schools to Year 12, the Years 9 to 12 Project, and the Youth Participation Database – were planned and implemented by the Department of Education, and to identify whether they are having the impact that was intended.

I thank the Department of Education for its cooperation throughout this audit.

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Rod Whitehead
Auditor-General

29 September 2022

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Independent assurance report

This independent assurance report is addressed to the President of the Legislative Council and the Speaker of the House of Assembly. It relates to my audit of the effectiveness of the Department of Education's (DoE) implementation of education reforms.

Audit objective

The objective of the audit was to express a reasonable assurance opinion on the effectiveness of DoE's implementation of education reforms, including extending State secondary schools¹ to Years 11 and 12, the Years 9 to 12 Project and implementing changes resulting from the *Education Act 2016* (Education Act).

Audit scope

Since 2014, the Government² has implemented a number of reforms to improve senior secondary student (Year 11 and 12 students) attendance, retention and attainment outcomes. This audit assesses the following 3 projects managed by DoE in connection with those reforms:

- Years 11 and 12 Extension Program (Extension Program)
- Years 9 to 12 Project
- Youth Participation Database.

These projects have been collectively referred to as the 'Projects'.

This audit considered how DoE worked in partnership with relevant stakeholders.

The audit also considered DoE's actions that were relevant to non-government school³ students, but excluded activities that were the responsibility of non-government schools.⁴

Audit approach

The audit was conducted in accordance with the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements* issued by the Australian Auditing and Assurance Standards Board, for the purpose of expressing a reasonable assurance opinion.

¹ A State secondary school means a school providing education from the school year commonly known as Year 7 established or formed by the amalgamation of schools under the *Education Act 2016* or any other enactment that provided for the establishment of schools by the Crown.

² All references to Government refer to the Tasmanian Government unless otherwise stated.

³ Non-government school means a school, other than a State school, that provides educational instruction at any level up to and including the final year of secondary education.

⁴ Part 6 of the *Education Act 2016*, sets out DoE's responsibilities in regard to non-government schools.

The audit evaluated the following criteria:

1. Did DoE plan effectively to implement the Projects?
 - 1.1. Did DoE develop plans and related strategies based on evidence in the planning of the Projects?
 - 1.2. Did DoE develop these plans and strategies in consultation with key stakeholders?
2. Did DoE implement the Projects efficiently and effectively?
 - 2.1. Did DoE efficiently and effectively allocate resources to support implementation of the Projects?
 - 2.2. Did DoE work in partnership with key stakeholders to implement the Projects?
 - 2.3. Did DoE provide support to schools, colleges and students to implement the Projects?
3. Was reporting on the progress of implementation and impact of the Projects sufficient and appropriate?
 - 3.1. Were key performance indicators used by DoE to monitor the implementation and impact of the Projects effective and support decision-making?
 - 3.2. Was data used to monitor the implementation and impact of the Projects of sufficient quality?
 - 3.3. Did DoE identify and address gaps in information needed to monitor the implementation and impact of the Projects?

Responsibility of management

DoE was responsible for implementing the Projects.

Under the Education Act:

- the Secretary of DoE may issue instructions on attendance at a State school⁵ and the curriculum, teaching practice, home, assessment and reporting procedures at a State school

⁵ State school means a school, including a college for senior secondary education, established, or formed by the amalgamation of schools, under the Education Act or any other enactment that provided for the establishment of schools by the Crown.

- principals of State schools must:
 - ensure the curriculum, teaching practice, homework assignment, assessment and reporting procedures are consistent with the Secretary's instructions
 - ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the safety and welfare of students and staff while on school premises or attending school activities elsewhere
 - provide educational leadership to teachers, staff and students at the school.

Under the *Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act 2003*, the Secretary of DoE is responsible for:

- developing, and regularly revising, the curriculum for senior secondary education⁶
- ensuring the curriculum is developed and revised in accordance with any priorities established by the Minister and suitable for use in State and non-government schools
- in undertaking the above responsibilities:
 - consulting and working collaboratively with any organisations that represent all, or any group of, registered schools
 - consulting with relevant teacher unions and parent associations and taking their opinions into consideration
 - considering the needs of the Tasmanian workforce and the needs of vocational education and training providers and higher education providers in developing their own accredited training courses and higher education courses.

Responsibility of the Auditor-General

My responsibility was to express a reasonable assurance opinion on the effectiveness of DoE's implementation of the Projects to improve outcomes for Tasmanian senior secondary students.

Independence and quality control

I have complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements relating to assurance engagements, and apply Auditing Standard ASQC 1 *Quality Control for Firms that Perform Audits and Reviews of Financial Reports and Other Financial Information, Other Assurance Engagements and Related Services Engagements* in undertaking this audit.

Conclusion

It is my conclusion DoE's implementation of the education reforms encompassing the extension of State secondary schools to Years 11 and 12, the Years 9 to 12 Project and the

⁶ Education for the school years commonly known as Year 11 and Year 12.

Youth Participation Database did not perform, in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, with respect to the identified criteria of the performance audit. This is because DoE only partially performed against the following sub-criteria:

- 1.1 Did DoE develop plans and related strategies based on evidence in the planning of the Projects?
- 2.1 Did DoE efficiently and effectively allocate resources to support implementation of the Projects?

DoE partially performed against sub-criteria 1.1 as there was an absence of detailed planning, which subsequently impacted the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation. This is because the project plan for the Extension Program was not comprehensive or complete; the project plan for the Years 9 to 12 Project did not sufficiently detail the complex nature of the reform; and a standalone project plan was not established for the Youth Participation Database, although DoE had developed a number of planning documents. Further, the respective project Steering Committees did not map the responsibilities and accountabilities for project tasks of individual projects. This meant that there was no structured process to consider the interrelationships between the multiple projects affecting Years 9 to 12 when allocating DoE's resources to the Projects.

DoE partially performed against sub-criteria 2.1 as project risk reviews were not embedded in the approach to implementing the Projects, and the availability of project management expertise, key person dependencies and inconsistent record keeping also impacted the efficiency and effectiveness of project implementation.

1


Rod Whitehead
Auditor-General

29 September 2022

Executive summary

Summary of findings

Over many years, Tasmania has performed below the national average on several performance measures for students in Years 11 and 12. Reasons identified in the 2016 review by the Australian Council for Educational Research (the ACER review) included: weak literacy and numeracy levels; low attendance rates; high anxiety around transitions between Year 10 and Year 11 by some students; students seeking alternative education options; and family, financial, health and carer based issues.

Since 2014, DoE has implemented a number of significant reforms which include an aim to improve student outcomes. These reforms have included:

- extending State secondary schools to Year 12, referred to as the Extension Program
- implementing the Government's response to the ACER review, referred to as the Years 9 to 12 Project
- enactment of the Education Act, which raised the minimum education and training leaving requirements so that students must participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or turn 18 years of age (whichever occurs first) and introduced approved learning programs for senior secondary students.

The Youth Participation Database monitors compliance with the approved learning program requirements of the Education Act.

This audit reviewed the implementation and impact of the above reforms, referred to as the Projects.

Project planning

Planning for the Projects varied and would have benefited from using consistent project management processes and consideration of options available to DoE for implementation. Limited project planning was undertaken for the Extension Program as DoE moved straight to implementing the policy reforms laid out by the newly elected Liberal Government in 2014. Project planning for the Years 9 to 12 Project was much more detailed, using the ACER review and subsequent workshops to inform the approach to implementation. However, it did not provide sufficient detail on the sub-projects being implemented under the Project; or recognise the interdependencies between those sub-projects. Consequently, the time required for implementation was underestimated. A number of key planning documents were developed under the Student Tracking Project in 2018, including a risk register, action and decisions register; however, a standalone project plan was not developed.

The adequacy of governance arrangements established in the planning phase also varied. Adequate governance arrangements were established for the Years 9 to 12 Project and the Youth Participation Database, but were not in place for the Extension Program, which was initially led by the Secretary, who chaired the Implementation Taskforce and the General Manager, Early Years and Schools, within existing departmental governance structures. The

respective Steering Committees did not map the responsibilities and accountabilities for project tasks of individual projects. This meant that there was no structured process to consider the interrelationships between the multiple Projects affecting Years 9 to 12 when allocating DoE's resources to the Projects.

While frameworks to support consultation with key stakeholders were in place, and the majority of actions identified in communication strategies were completed for the Extension Program and the Years 9 to 12 Project, strategies were not finalised early enough. The communication strategy for the Youth Participation Database was not comprehensive as it did not contain spokespeople, risks or actions.

Project implementation

As the Projects moved into the implementation phase, the absence of detailed planning impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation.

The timeframes for completion of the Extension Program were brought forward 2 years from 2024 to 2022 under a 2018 election commitment by the Government (with all schools extending to Years 12 by 2022).⁷ DoE met this new timeframe; however, it meant some risks to successful implementation were not addressed. DoE would have benefited from more detailed planning in the initial planning stages to support earlier identification and mitigation of such risks. However, inadequate planning meant some risks to successful implementation were not addressed in a timely manner, if at all. For example, DoE did not substantively address the risk of competition between schools and colleges for student enrolments until the introduction of the Collective approach in 2017.

The Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation Database fell behind the anticipated timeframes as a result of DoE's reprioritisation of focus to COVID-19 responses and support for schools; and project personnel and resources changing over the life of the projects. Availability of project management expertise improved over time for the Extension Program, but was inconsistent for the Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation Database. Key person dependency and inconsistent record keeping also impacted implementation. In response to the delays, the Years 9 to 12 Project deliverables were redefined to ensure timely realisation of some outcomes and the time needed to implement the Years 9 to 12 Project was extended.

The Youth Participation Database was piloted in 2020 and phased-in in 2021. Delays were experienced and functionality continues to be an ongoing focus for DoE.

Variability in governance arrangements continued through implementation of the Projects. Governance arrangements for the:

- Extension Program were established during implementation and improved over time
- Years 9 to 12 Project had many layers, but were stable and generally effective

⁷ [Premier of Tasmania - New Opportunities for Years 11 and 12 students in 2021](#)

- Youth Participation Database changed multiple times during the Project, with no clear governance arrangements in place in the latter stages of implementation, until the establishment of the Upper Secondary Governance Group.

Project risk reviews were not embedded in the approach to implementing the Projects. Risk reviews were rarely performed after August 2019 for the Youth Participation Database and after October 2020 for the Years 9 to 12 Project.

DoE worked in partnership with stakeholders during implementation, and in particular, with stakeholders involved in the steering committees and various working groups. Comments about DoE's stakeholder engagement approach from external stakeholders involved in the Years 9 to 12 Project were generally positive, with some noting it was the first time they had been included early in the reform implementation process.

Consultation with school-based stakeholders, who were implementing the reforms in schools, was generally effective and the level of support was appropriate. DoE used a range of approaches to engaging school-based stakeholders, including:

- regular Principals and Leaders Meetings
- provision of information packages
- workshops
- direct communication between the project teams and school leaders.

Additional support provided to stakeholders involved in implementation of the Projects included peer support networks, professional learning, upgrading of facilities and access to ICT equipment.

Project monitoring

The Projects would have benefited from the development and use of a set of measures to evaluate progress and impact. A set of measures to evaluate progress and impact were established but not reported on for the Years 9 to 12 Project. Similar measures were not initially established for the Extension Program or Youth Participation Database.

Internal reporting on the Extension Program improved over time. DoE compiled its first progress report on the Extension Program in 2017, after 30 schools had already extended. Information requested in yearly progress reports was relevant, appropriate and improved in quality. This information was used to improve implementation of the Extension Program.

The framework used by DoE to ensure the quality of data used to inform decision-making regarding the Extension Program, assigned responsibility for data quality to school leaders. DoE's Educational Performance and Review unit reviewed data to ensure there were no obvious anomalies. However, monitoring and evaluation reports noted low levels of data literacy across some schools and errors in enrolment and contact information for students.

Shared use of data held by the relevant stakeholders and data custodians could have supported the development of more targeted and meaningful outcomes for the Years 9 to 12 Project to measure progress and impact.

Impact of the Projects

The range of education reforms implemented since 2014 makes it difficult to attribute the improvement in senior secondary student education outcomes to any individual reform initiative. Broadly, performance is heading in the right direction with improved:

- access to senior secondary courses since 2014
- State-level apparent retention rates⁸, which increased from 69.4 per cent in 2014 to 74.5 per cent in 2021
- State-level attainment rates, which increased from 48.8 per cent in 2014 to 59.0 per cent in 2021.

Attendance rates fell slightly from 2016 to 2021, which was consistent with the trend in attendance rates across Australia. This result may, in part, be due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the attainment rate has improved since 2014, it has remained below the 2022 goal⁹ of 75 per cent of students to attain a TCE outlined in the Years 9 to 12 Project Education Framework.

Recommendations

The Department of Education (or its succeeding agency¹⁰):

1. Ensures project initiation planning is undertaken as a first step in the implementation of reforms.
2. Undertakes communication planning to define key terminology, develop key messages and support a shared understanding of the project and its intended outputs and outcomes.
3. Supports the resourcing of project teams, including people with project management experience and/or expertise.
4. Ensures its project management approach includes clear responsibilities and accountabilities down to the project task level.
5. Regularly reports implementation progress towards benefits to be realised from projects to the appropriate oversight body against performance measures established from project commencement.

⁸ An indicative measure of the number of full-time school students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. For example, the apparent retention rate for Year 10 – Year 12, 2021, is the number of students in Year 12 2021 as a percentage of the number of students in that cohort in Year 10 in 2019 (the base year), two years earlier. Part-time and ungraded students are not included in calculations of apparent retention rates.

⁹ Source: [Tasmanian Liberal Government Policy - Building Your Future - 15 August 2017](#).

¹⁰ The Department of Education will become the Department for Education, Children and Young People following the restructure and abolition of the Department of Communities Tasmania from 1 October 2022.

6. Continues to work with stakeholders, to ensure shared use of and access to relevant data, to drive evidence-based:
 - policy development and project management
 - course design and delivery
 - student engagement.
7. Develops data literacy initiatives, focussed on Years 9-12, to support system, project and school level insights to inform ongoing policy and project implementation.

Submissions and comments received

In accordance with section 30(2) of the Audit Act, a summary of findings or report extract was provided to the Treasurer and other persons who, in our opinion had a special interest in the report, with a request for commissions or comments. Submissions and comments 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. However, views expressed by the responders were considered in reaching audit conclusions. Section 30(3) of the Audit Act requires this report include any submissions or comments made under section 30(2) or a fair summary of them. Submissions received are included below.

Response from the Minister for Education, Children and Youth

I thank the Tasmanian Audit Office for its work.

I note the recommendations and findings and am pleased to note the conclusion that performance is heading in the right direction. The Tasmanian Government has a strong record of supporting and investing in reform to improve access, choice, and participation in senior secondary education. Extending Tasmanian Government Schools to Years 11 and 12; developing the system to support student tracking; and working with our education sector partners have all contributed to the improvement of retention rates, creating a job-ready generation and ensuring students have the necessary skills to reach their full potential.

Education improvement requires generational change; however, we are seeing a change in the attitudes of young Tasmanians, their families and the wider community that education does not finish in Year 10. We know that investing in the education of young people is an investment in our future. The Tasmanian Government remains committed to increasing retention and attainment rates, and ensuring students can access appropriate pathways based on their goals and aspirations.

Going forward we will continue to drive ongoing cultural change. As with any change, it is important to learn what works from experience, make improvements and embed that into implementation. This Audit Report provides guidance on where we can focus our efforts to drive the best outcomes for our learners and more broadly for all children and young people through the new Department for Education, Children and Young People.

The past two years have been particularly challenging, and I thank all of our dedicated school leaders, teachers, support staff, learners and families, for their efforts and support of these important initiatives.

Hon Roger Jaensch MP

Response from the Secretary of the Department of Education

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

The audit focused on three significant reforms that the Department of Education has led since 2014: the Years 11-12 Extension Project, the Youth Participation Database, and the Years 9 to 12 Project. Extending all Tasmanian Government schools to Years 11 and 12 is part of ongoing efforts to drive the generational and cultural change needed to reinforce that school does not end at Year 10. The Youth Participation Database is helping to identify the students we need to support to re-engage in their learning journey. The Years 9 to 12 Project is driving efforts of the broader education and training system to support learners and increase rates of retention and attainment.

It is pleasing to see that in the face of many challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department has been able to deliver initiatives that are supporting our learners and that performance is heading the right direction, with improved access to senior secondary courses since 2014 and increased state level apparent retention and attainment rates. It is also positive to note that levels of stakeholder engagement and consultation, in particular the engagement and level of support provided to schools, was effective.

The Report comes at an important and exciting time, as we establish the new Department for Education, Children and Young People on 1 October 2022. The Report outlines areas of opportunity for the Department and I look forward to using the recommendations to guide our refined approaches to managing projects. Our focus on continuous improvement will ensure the planning; implementation and monitoring; and evaluation of our projects drives better outcomes for all learners, children and young people. I'm pleased to advise that the Department of Education has already taken a number of steps to enhance its project management capabilities. This includes works to establish a Project Management Office and the facilitation of project management professional development opportunities for staff. In addition, since 2019, the Department has actively focused on working collaboratively across divisions to drive aligned development and implementation of policies and projects and support the appropriate allocation of resources in the Years 9 to 12 space. The establishment of internal governance arrangements has supported coordination and alignment across projects, which will be further strengthened through the portfolio structure of the new Department.

I thank the project teams that have supported these significant reforms, and all our staff who support learners to achieve their potential through Years 9 to 12 and beyond, in further study, training and employment.

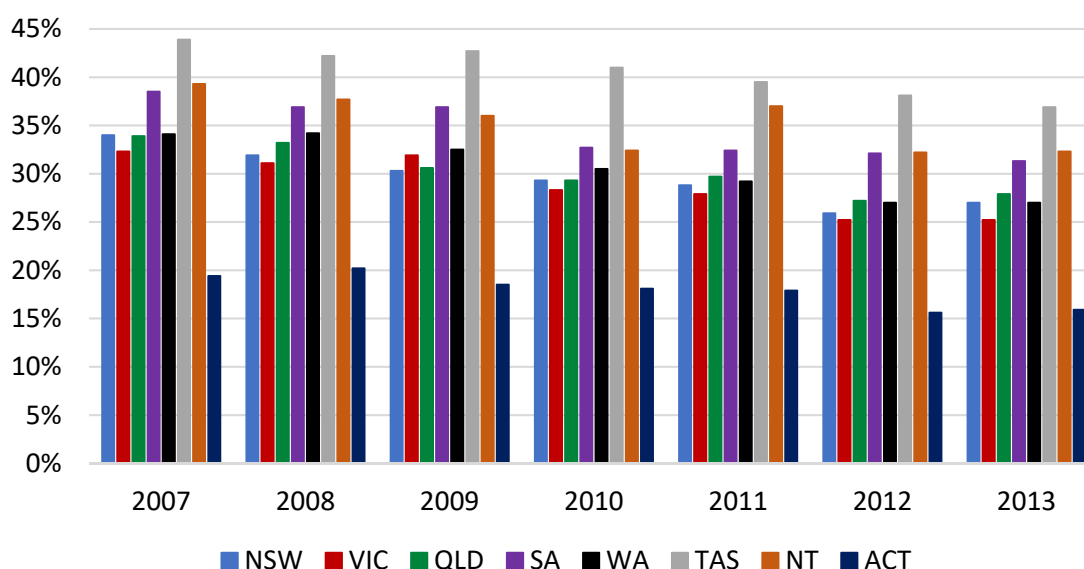
Tim Bullard

1. Introduction

The need for reform

- 1.1 Over many years to 2013, Tasmania had performed below the national average on several performance measures for students in Years 11 and 12. This is illustrated in Figure 1, which shows between 2008 and 2013 Tasmania had the lowest proportion of people aged between 15 and 64 years old¹¹ with at least Year 12 or equivalent education¹² compared to other Australian jurisdictions.

Figure 1: Proportion of Tasmanians that have not completed Year 12 or its equivalent



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

- 1.2 The ACER review outlined challenges that contributed to Tasmania's historically poorer performance in comparison to other jurisdictions, including:
- weak literacy and numeracy levels
 - low attendance rates
 - high anxiety around transitions between Year 10 and Year 11 by some students, especially among those living outside of the larger cities
 - students seeking alternative education options
 - family, financial, health and carer based issues.

¹¹ As Tasmania has an older population and because younger people tend to be more highly educated than older people, these factors combined show Tasmania as having the least educated population overall.

¹² A non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above.

- 1.3 Until 2015, most State secondary schools ended at Year 10 and 8 urban-based colleges provided Years 11 and 12. This meant, after Year 10, students had to travel or move to either Burnie, Devonport, Launceston or Hobart to complete Years 11 and 12.
- 1.4 In response to the increase in public discourse in Tasmania concerning post-secondary school retention rates, following the March 2010 State election the Liberal Party opposition adopted a policy of providing post-secondary classes for all Tasmanian secondary schools. This was in contrast to the Green-Labor Government status quo policy of only providing comprehensive post-secondary classes to its senior colleges in Tasmania's four major centres of Burnie, Devonport, Launceston and Hobart.
- 1.5 Following its election win on 15 March 2014, the Liberal Government immediately began enacting its policy of progressively providing post-secondary classes to high schools. In its Plan for the first 100 days in office, the Government promised to, under its Year 7 to 12 Implementation Plan:
 - write to all rural and regional high school communities inviting formal expressions of interest in extending their school to Year 12
 - commence the consultation process with shortlisted rural and regional high schools, parents, teachers and local communities to identify the first four schools to be extended to Year 12 in stage one in 2015.
- 1.6 By June 2014, 6 secondary schools had been selected to extend in 2015.
- 1.7 The Year 7 to 12 Implementation Plan subsequently became known as the Years 11 and 12 Extension Program. By early 2021, all except 1 of the 57 State secondary schools offered Years 11 and 12. Extension at the last of these schools, Taroona High School, began from 2022.
- 1.8 To further identify opportunities to improve attendance, retention and attainment outcomes, in June 2016, the Government announced an independent review would be undertaken to assess the way education was provided in Years 9 to 12 in Tasmanian schools, including vocational education and training provision. On 30 July 2016, the Government announced ACER would undertake the review, which was to encompass data, curriculum policy and provision and design and delivery in the three Tasmanian education sectors: DoE, Independent Schools Tasmania (IST) and Catholic Education Tasmania (CET). The final report of the ACER review was published on 23 December 2016.
- 1.9 In response to the ACER review, DoE established the Years 9 to 12 Project, the purpose of which was to enable all students to achieve their potential through Years 9 to 12 and beyond in further study, training and employment. It aimed to achieve this by making education in Tasmania more meaningful and engaging to Year 9 to 12 students, thereby improving the:
 - number of students staying in school through to Year 12 and/or undertaking further training and education
 - attendance rates of students at school and/or undertaking further training and education

- achievements of students in the career pathway they choose.
- 1.10 In addition to the Extension Program and the Years 9 to 12 Project, between 2014 and 2016, the Government also implemented the following additional significant reforms:
- the *Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification Act (2003)* replacing the *Tasmanian Qualifications Authority Act (2003)*
 - the My Education career and life planning initiative in State schools
 - the *Education Bill 2016*.
- 1.11 One of the reforms in the *Education Bill 2016*, which eventually became the *Education Act 2016*, was to raise the minimum education and training leaving requirements so that students must participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or turn 18 years of age (whichever occurs first). In 2020, the minimum leaving age of 18 years of age came into effect. DoE developed the Youth Participation Database to track students' compliance with this legislative requirement.
- 1.12 This report assesses DoE's implementation of the:
- Extension Program
 - Years 9 to 12 Project
 - Youth Participation Database.
- 1.13 These reforms have been collectively referred to as 'the Projects' within this report.

The Extension Program

- 1.14 The original objective of the Extension Program was to extend 21 secondary schools in rural and regional areas to Year 12 by 2018.¹³ The anticipated outcomes were:
- to increase the proportion of Tasmanian students completing their education to Year 12 by mainly, but not exclusively, focussing on students at risk of not completing Year 12
 - to increase senior secondary education attainment.
- 1.15 The Government's 2014 commitment to extend secondary schools to Year 12 was based on the following parameters:
- Years 11 and 12 provision into 21 regional secondary schools within 4 years
 - existing colleges to remain open
 - investment of \$45.5 million over 4 years to employ up to 105 teachers over the next 4 years and \$6 million for capital upgrades
 - assistance and advice through an Implementation Taskforce
 - consultation with local communities

¹³ In 2017, the Government reframed its scope to include all Tasmanian public high schools.

- effective use of technology to help with the delivery of some subjects
- the first 4 schools to be providing Year 11 and 12 courses by January 2015.

1.16 Schools were responsible for:

- identifying, through the Expressions of Interest process, when the school was ready to extend
- nominating, through the Expressions of Interest process, whether capital works were required to provide the Years 11 and 12 courses that the school intended to deliver
- completing the preparatory work to ensure the school was ready to extend to Years 11 and 12 and students were aware of the option to continue to Years 11 and 12 in the same school facility
- ensuring students had access to a broad range of courses by working with other schools in the same geographical location and supporting access to online learning programs
- raising school communities' awareness about school not finishing in Year 10.

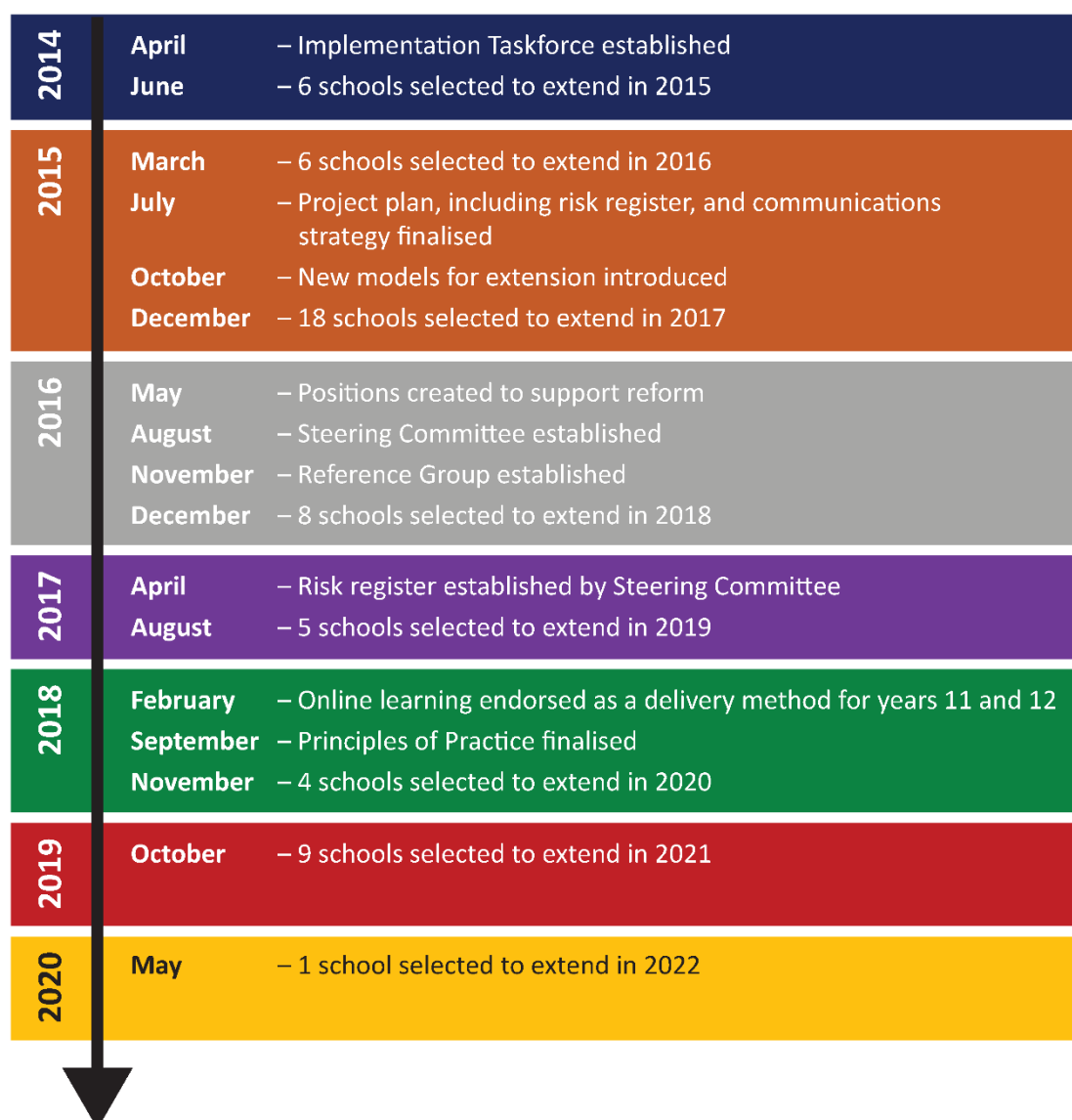
1.17 DoE's responsibilities included:

- oversight of the Extension Program through the Implementation Taskforce and later the Steering Committee
- advising when schools were ready to extend and coordinating the Expression of Interest process
- addressing challenges identified at the system-level
- providing resources and infrastructure to support schools extending to Years 11 and 12, such as professional learning, IT equipment and improvements to existing schools facilities or new school facilities
- providing technical support to school principals when preparing to extend and in interpreting and responding to data.

1.18 The Minister ultimately decided when schools would extend, based on advice from DoE and the Implementation Taskforce that assessed expressions of interest from schools ready to extend. In 2016, a Reference Group replaced the Implementation Taskforce.

1.19 Key events that occurred during the implementation of the Extension Program implementation are summarised in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Key events in the Extension Program implementation



Source: TAO

The Years 9 to 12 Project

- 1.20 Following the completion of the ACER review in December 2016, the Government accepted all but 1 of the 7 overarching recommendations. The recommendation not accepted was to establish multi-campus schools.
- 1.21 In 2018, DoE held workshops with representatives from all education sectors to discuss how the ACER review recommendations would be implemented. Representatives included principals and teachers from State schools, non-government schools (representing CET and IST), TasTAFE, University of Tasmania (UTAS); Skills Tasmania and the Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC).

Following the workshops, DoE established the Years 9 to 12 Project governance structure.

1.22 The Years 9 to 12 Project Plan set out the following objectives:

- improve attendance, engagement and completion rates for Tasmanian students from Years 9 to 12
- review and update formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements for Years 9 to 12
- provide better pathways for students from Years 9 to 12
- improve the status of vocational education learning (VEL) and vocational education and training (VET) in schools.

1.23 The Years 9 to 12 Education Framework¹⁴ stated the Years 9 to 12 Project would achieve its goal to improve the retention, attainment and completion for Tasmanian students in Years 9 to 12 through:

- high quality and contemporary curriculum, assessment and teaching practices
- customisation of learning opportunities for students
- a focus on transferable skills (including General Capabilities, and Core Skills for Work)
- clear learning pathways and effective pathways advice for students from Years 9 to 12 and beyond
- measuring the individual progress a student makes over time along a defined learning progression
- supporting schools to deliver innovative programs appropriate to their community and context
- equipping every student to be creative, connected and engaged learners in a rapidly changing world.

1.24 The Education Framework outlined the following success indicators for government and non-government schools:

- from 2020, all students will participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 18 years of age (Education Act, 2016)
- by the end of 2022 attendance rates for our Year 9 and Year 10 students will be at or above the national average
- by the end of 2022, 75% of all students (15 to 19 years) will complete their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE)

¹⁴ [Years-9-to-12-Education-Framework](#)

- by the end of 2022:
 - 95% of Year 10 students will continue into Year 11 on an Approved Learning Program
 - 85% of Year 11 students will continue into Year 12 on an Approved Learning Program.
- 1.25 State school students in Years 11 and 12 can access a mixture of pre-tertiary and non-pre-tertiary courses and VET. Students can attend classes at schools and complete some of their study load online via Virtual Learning Tasmania (VLT). Students completing VET Certificates in secondary schools can undertake further VET either through their own school, another school in their geographic region, TasTAFE or other registered training organisations. School-based apprenticeships are also available, where students are paid for work undertaken while still attending school.
- 1.26 As at 30 June 2022, the Years 9 to 12 Project was 3 years into an expected 5-year implementation period.

The Youth Participation Database

- 1.27 The Youth Participation Database was initially part of the Education Act Implementation Project. It aimed to build a system to house data from across the Tasmanian education sector and to assist schools to identify and monitor students missing from any form of educational provision. It was intended the Database would generate a list of 'missing youth' in years 11, 12 or equivalent, who had not met a minimum leaving requirement under the Education Act and were not participating in an Approved Learning Program.
- 1.28 The Database uses data reported by Approved Learning Program Providers to identify and support the re-engagement of learners who are not meeting their education and training obligations.
- 1.29 In 2018, DoE provided an initial specifications draft for the participation database to a systems architect for review. On 23 March 2019, DoE advertised a tender for the development of both the Youth Participation Database and TASC's Reporting, Assessment and Certification System. The tender remained open until mid-April 2019. DoE awarded a 5-year contract to the successful contractor in May 2020.
- 1.30 The objective of the Youth Participation Database was to:
- capture information about youth participation from different sources, including TasTAFE, CET and IST
 - determine youth participation by provider(s) and activity types
 - report information about youth participation according to the range of attributes available
 - report on youths, their participation (or not) along with changes to the status of youths and their activity

- facilitate support and follow-up actions with youths identified as not participating, including documentation of the outcome of follow-up on youths' files
- allow users from non-government schools (principals, teachers and administrative staff) to upload the required information to the Database and have permission to update their own student records.

1.31 In July 2020, as part of project closure of the Education Act Implementation Project, ongoing project management for Database was transferred to Years 9 to 12 Learning within DoE.

2. Did DoE plan effectively to implement the Projects?

In this Chapter, we assessed whether DoE:

- developed plans and related strategies based on evidence in the planning phase of the Projects, including the:
 - establishment of governance structures consistent with contemporary project management practices
 - development of adequate project planning documentation
- developed plans and strategies in consultation with key stakeholders.

Chapter summary

Planning for the Projects varied and would have benefited from using consistent project management processes and consideration of options available to DoE for implementation. Limited project planning was undertaken for the Extension Program as DoE moved straight to implementing the policy reforms laid out by the newly elected Liberal Government in 2014. Project planning for the Years 9 to 12 Project was much more detailed, using the ACER review and subsequent workshops to inform the approach to implementation. However, it did not provide sufficient detail on the sub-projects being implemented under the Project; or recognise the interdependencies between those sub-projects. Consequently, the time required for implementation was underestimated. A number of key planning documents were developed under the Student Tracking Project in 2018, including a risk register, action and decisions register; however, a standalone project plan was not developed.

The adequacy of governance arrangements established in the planning phase also varied. Adequate governance arrangements were established for the Years 9 to 12 Project and the Youth Participation Database, but were not in place for the Extension Program, which was initially led by the Secretary, who chaired the Implementation Taskforce and the General Manager, Early Years and Schools, within existing departmental governance structures. The respective Steering Committees did not map the responsibilities and accountabilities for project tasks of individual projects. This meant that there was no structured process to consider the interrelationships between the multiple Projects affecting Years 9 to 12 when allocating DoE's resources to the Projects.

While frameworks to support consultation with key stakeholders were in place, and the majority of actions identified in communication strategies were completed for the Extension Program and the Years 9 to 12 Project, strategies were not finalised early enough. The communication strategy for the Youth Participation Database was not comprehensive as it did not contain spokespeople, risks or actions.

Planning for the Projects was not sufficient

- 2.1 A challenge for public sector agencies is undertaking project planning following the public announcement of a project timeframe, output or outcome by the Government or relevant Minister. Regardless of time pressures, developing a project initiation plan is necessary to identify, and provide a record of, project parameters, options for implementation, any associated risks and risk mitigations. This is particularly important where early decisions or discussions have occurred prior to the formal commencement of the project. It also ensures a comprehensive record of the project which can assist when project personnel change.
- 2.2 Specifically, an initial step in planning for public sector projects is to identify alternative ways that the policy can be implemented and selecting the best option. Useful elements include:
- gap analysis to assess the difference between the existing system (current state) and the ideal system (desired future state) and the differing pathways to achieve this
 - cost-benefit analysis to control costs while achieving the best outcomes
 - defining what project success looks like (benefits realisation), outlining the tasks that need to be completed to reach that point and assigning responsibility for those tasks.
- 2.3 Broadly, we found:
- the project plan for the Extension Program was not comprehensive or complete
 - the project plan for the Years 9 to 12 Project did not sufficiently detail the complex nature of the reform
 - a standalone project plan was not established for the Youth Participation Database, although DoE had developed a number of planning documents.

The Extension Program would have benefited from an initiation plan that identified project parameters

- 2.4 Shortly after the Liberal Government's win in the March 2014 election, DoE commenced implementing the Extension Program in accordance with the Government's First 100 Days Implementation Plan. Early actions included the Minister:
- writing to all regional and rural secondary schools, and to each school's association¹⁵, inviting the schools to consider whether they were in a position to begin delivering Years 11 and 12 courses from the beginning of 2015

¹⁵ An association established under the Education Act to perform the functions outlined in section 113 of the Education Act.

- establishing the Implementation Taskforce, made up of key Tasmanian education stakeholders, to assist with the process of identifying schools ready to extend.
- 2.5 DoE identified strong partnerships between regional secondary schools and colleges as essential to the success of the initiative. Other challenges identified by DoE in advice to the Minister included the need to:
- ensure critical mass of students to support viable subject options
 - define which secondary schools were 'regional' – DoE's recommended methodology resulted in 28 secondary schools classified as rural or regional
 - consider courses that would be offered
 - develop curriculum options that encourage students to stay at school.
- 2.6 DoE finalised the Project Plan in July 2015 after 6 secondary schools had already extended to Year 12. The Project Plan:
- covered the operating and capital costs for the first 4 years of implementation, in line with the budget estimates cycle
 - did not estimate the cost of implementing the policy
 - identified the number of schools delivering Years 11 and 12 and TCE attainment as project deliverables
 - provided a list of ongoing responsibilities for principals, the Extension Program Manager and the Capital Project Officer
 - included milestones by school term for 2015 and 2016.
- 2.7 The responsibilities outlined in the Project Plan suggest that while DoE had an overarching leadership role, and provided support through the Project Officer, schools were given a high level of authority and autonomy in implementation to design locally relevant provision to meet the needs of their cohort in consultation with their community and the broader context of schools and colleges in their region.

Planning work undertaken for the Years 9-12 Project was comprehensive

- 2.8 The ACER review identified the strengths and limitations of the education system in delivering education to Years 9 to 12. The following overarching recommendations were made in the ACER review:
- take an holistic approach to system and sector
 - review and update the formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements
 - consider the establishment of multi-campus government schools
 - initiate regular long-term strategies to change public perceptions about the value of school education and VET in Schools

- improve the status of VET and VEL in schools through community involvement in the development of a future vision and associated implementation strategy
- re-evaluate the nature and use of data collected.

2.9 The Government accepted all overarching recommendations, except for the recommendation to establish multi-campus government schools.

2.10 DoE then:

- appointed a project manager and project officer to support the Years 9 to 12 Project
- created a Steering Committee, which first met in January 2018
- held workshops with stakeholders from across the education sector in February 2018 to discuss how the ACER review recommendations would be implemented.

2.11 The outcomes from these workshops were summarised in the Years 9 to 12 Report and included new recommendations, which were accepted by DoE, and an agreed approach to implementing all recommendations. This agreed approach was outlined in an Action Plan, prepared by the Project Team, considered by the Steering Committee and published on DoE's website in May 2019. The Action Plan addressed 6 of the 7 overarching recommendations in the ACER review and all of the 9 recommendations arising from the 2018 workshops. The Action Plan also outlined the deliverables for each action area. A summary of the recommendations by action area, source of recommendation and who was responsible for implementation is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Years 9 to 12 Project recommendations and implementation leads

Action Area	Recommendations	Implementation leads
Strategic oversight	<i>2016 ACER Review</i> Take a holistic approach to system and sector improvements.	DoE, Years 9 to 12 Project Steering Committee
	<i>Years 9-12 Workshop Report</i> Close coordination of work through a Years 9 to 12 Project Team. Forming of working groups for each of the major work streams, with work by these groups guided by a strategic plan endorsed by the Steering Committee. Information collected through the workshops be the basis for a comprehensive Years 9 to 12 Strategic Plan.	
Curriculum, assessment and teaching	<i>2016 ACER Review</i> Review and update the formal curriculum, assessment, reporting and accreditation requirements.	DoE, Curriculum Services and Vocational

Action Area	Recommendations	Implementation leads
	<p>Initiate strategies to change public perceptions about the value of school education and VET in Schools.</p> <p>Improve VET and VEL status in schools through community involvement in developing a future vision and associated implementation strategy.</p>	Education and Learning Divisions
	<p><i>Years 9-12 Workshop Report</i></p> <p>Base curriculum for Years 9 to 12 students on a developmental model that enables multiple pathways for all Tasmanian students.</p> <p>Embed the Australian Curriculum's general capabilities and Core Skills for Work in Years 9 to 12 courses.</p> <p>Recognise VET as equivalent to other curriculum provisions in promotional and marketing strategies.</p> <p>Undertake planning to extend VET for universal provision ensuring that all Tasmanian students can access VET should that support future pathway choices.</p> <p>In the VET Forum, address: planning for access to VET and VEL; setting VET and VEL targets; and establish, increase and support Industry-school partnerships.</p>	
Accreditation and certification	<p><i>Years 9-12 Workshop Report</i></p> <p>Review and update the formal curriculum, assessment and accreditation requirements.</p> <p>Develop a State definition for equivalence between VET units and Year 12.</p>	TASC
Workforce support	<p><i>2016 ACER Review</i></p> <p>Implement and development strategy to support the rejuvenation of the workforce.</p> <p>Support UTAS to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce quotas for initial teacher education • increase the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank level required by applicants to initial teacher education • align teacher demand in Tasmania with successful applicants to initial teacher education • align qualification with teaching and leadership requirements. 	DoE, Workforce Planning and Support Unit
Data	<p><i>2016 ACER Review</i></p> <p>Re-evaluate the nature and use of data collected:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify differences when reporting nationally agreed data • give VET a higher profile in public reporting 	DoE, Education Performance and Review Unit, TASC

Action Area	Recommendations	Implementation leads
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognise positive trends in public reporting comment on reports from outside sources and issue reports using official statistics. 	

Source: DoE

2.12 The Steering Committee also considered the draft Project Plan, prepared by the Project Manager, in September 2018. The Project Plan described the project objectives, target outcomes, outputs, governance arrangements and risks. However, it did not provide:

- enough detail on the project tasks, timing of tasks or the relationship between tasks
- an expected project cost — early costs were met by existing DoE and TASC budgets.

The relevant Steering Committee considered key planning documents for the Youth Participation Database, but did not develop a standalone project plan

2.13 DoE could not provide a project plan for the implementation of the Youth Participation Database. However, we saw evidence that suggested the Steering Committee for the Education Act Implementation Project had considered the following key project documents in September 2018:

- a high-level project timeline
- the actions, decisions and questions register that helped define project scope
- a draft Terms of Reference for the Project Team
- the Risk Register as at 12 September 2018
- a draft Communications Plan.

DoE would have benefited from the coordination and alignment of project governance across the Projects, where possible, to maximise outcomes

2.14 Governance structures were established to support all Projects; however, as Projects were also DoE priorities, the initial role of existing DoE governance structures was not always captured in early project documentation.

2.15 Governance arrangements were in place for the Year 9 to 12 Project as it moved into the implementation phase and the Youth Participation Database as it moved into the development phase. For the Extension Program, a Steering Committee was not established until August 2016, with the Implementation Taskforce undertaking support until this change.

- 2.16 More broadly, DoE did not have a framework in place for understanding or mapping the interrelationships between the Projects to support efficient allocation of tasks. That could have been achieved by adopting a Program approach to the Projects so that they essentially sat under one Governance umbrella. DoE has since looked to address this issue and in 2020, it identified a range of work had been initiated in the upper secondary (Years 9 to 12) space across various business areas but not connected.
- 2.17 In order to get a better understanding of this work and how it supported DoE's goals in relation to access, participation and engagement, DoE prepared an internal report in 2020 to clarify the current status of the Projects and what the it had learned to date. That report highlighted the need:
- to coordinate and align current and future work to maximise outcomes from limited resources
 - for mechanisms for coordinating and planning the allocation of resources across Years 9 to 12.
- 2.18 As a result, DoE formed an 'Upper Secondary Governance Group' to:
- provide strategic oversight of the initiatives being implemented in State schools in the Upper Secondary Portfolio
 - develop understanding and engagement internally, while leading decisions on allocating resources and prioritising tasks
 - ensure a streamlined approach to communicating with State schools.

It was unclear whether governance arrangements were established before implementation of the Extension Program

- 2.19 While an Implementation Taskforce was in place from the start of the Extension Program, DoE could not provide documents developed by the Implementation Taskforce between March 2015 and August 2016, such as Terms of Reference, meeting agendas, meeting minutes and papers. However, there is evidence of the Implementation Taskforce responding to the Government's timeframe for immediate implementation; identifying school readiness and making recommendations to the Minister; developing key messages and communications materials for schools and developing a Project Plan 2015-16 and Communication Strategy.

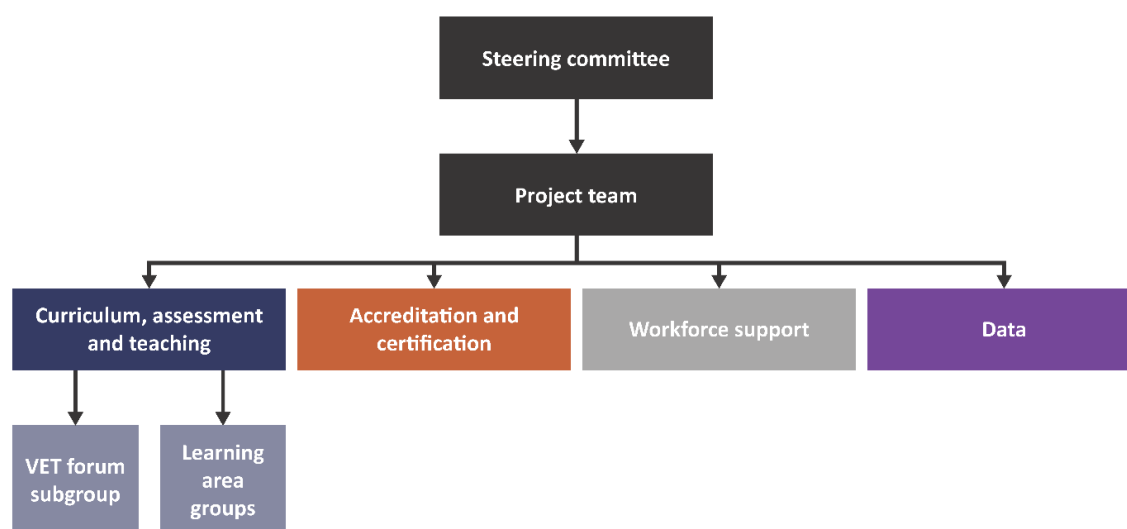
Multi-layered governance arrangements were established for the Years 9 to 12 Project

- 2.20 Governance arrangements for the Years 9 to 12 Project suited the Project. Allocating project tasks to working groups was an effective method of reducing complexity while ensuring that consultation with the right stakeholders occurred.
- 2.21 In January 2018, DoE established a Steering Committee for the Years 9 to 12 Project that was responsible for:
- overseeing ACER review implementation

- ensuring actions across the Working Groups aligned with each other and with the ACER review recommendations
- developing an action plan for the Project.

2.22 As shown in Figure 3, the Steering Committee oversaw the work of the Project Team, 4 working groups and 2 sub-groups that reported to the Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Working Group giving the project a defined structure that reflected the relevant areas of input. Members of the Steering Committee and Working Groups reflected the stakeholders that needed to be involved in decision-making for, or engaged in consultation on, the reform.

Figure 3: Governance framework for the Years 9 to 12 Project



Source: DoE

Clear governance arrangements were in place initially for the Youth Participation Database

2.23 The Education Act Implementation Steering Committee initially had oversight over the Youth Participation Database. While there was evidence to suggest that Committee considered planning documents as discussed earlier in this chapter, there was no evidence that it took an oversight role for the remainder of the project.

Frameworks to support consultation with key stakeholders were not in place early enough

2.24 Project success depends on effective communication. Communication strategies are common in public sector projects and generally identify stakeholders and prioritise stakeholder engagement. Communication strategies that identified the project and communication objectives, target audiences, key messages, spokespeople, risks and actions were prepared for Extension Program and the Years 9 to 12 Project. While a draft communication plan for the Youth Participation Database was also prepared in February 2019 that identified the project and communication objectives, target audience and key messages, it did not identify the spokespeople, risks or actions. In all

cases, the communication plans could have been prepared earlier to better support communication with stakeholders.

- 2.25 While the communication strategy for the Extension Program was relatively detailed, the strategy was not finalised until July 2015, meaning 6 schools had already extended to Year 12. Whilst the strategy identified communication actions and tools, it did not record deadlines for communication actions.
- 2.26 The Years 9 to 12 Project communication strategy, was prepared in February 2019, and was similarly detailed. However, it was not finalised until September 2019, 10 months after the Steering Committee started to meet. While the strategy identified communication actions and deadlines, it did not record the communication tools that would be used to execute all of the individual communication actions. Even though governance groups and working groups were established as part of the Project, stakeholders advised papers were often provided for approval or notation out of session, which meant that opportunities for full consideration of recommendations proposed were constrained.
- 2.27 The development of a communications strategy as part of project planning for the Extension Program may have supported schools to better understand the intended outcomes of the reform – increasing retention and completion of Year 12. Strong key messages focused on the target cohort of students – those who may not have traditionally continued to Year 12. This focus may have reduced the emphasis on the eligibility of schools, particularly when the scope of the Extension Program expanded from rural and regional schools to include urban schools.

3. Did DoE implement the Projects efficiently and effectively?

In this Chapter, we assessed whether DoE:

- efficiently and effectively allocated resources to support implementation of the Projects, including appropriate governance, resources to manage risks to successful implementation and the ability to take on board lessons learnt during implementation to improve future actions
- worked in partnership with key stakeholders to implement the Projects, including implementing communication strategies and listening and responding to feedback from stakeholders
- provided the appropriate level of support to secondary schools to implement the Projects by providing training to school-based employees, funding to implement reforms and establishing peer support networks for school leaders

Chapter summary

Public sector entities often implement policy initiatives using a project-based approach. Effectively managed projects achieve the Government's intended outcomes while also providing transparency and accountability. Because of their nature, Government projects are often characterised by uncertainty, ambiguity and complex stakeholder management issues. Project managers lessen the risk associated with these characteristics through adequate planning and a strategic approach to project implementation.

As the Projects moved into the implementation phase, the absence of detailed planning impacted on the effectiveness and efficiency of implementation.

The timeframes for completion of the Extension Program were brought forward 2 years from 2024 to 2022 under a 2018 election commitment by the Government (with all schools extending to Years 12 by 2022).¹⁶ DoE met this new timeframe; however, it meant some risks to successful implementation were not addressed. DoE would have benefited from more detailed planning in the initial planning stages to support earlier identification and mitigation of such risks. However, inadequate planning meant some risks to successful implementation were not addressed in a timely manner, if at all. For example, DoE did not substantively address the risk of competition between schools and colleges for student enrolments until the introduction of the Collective approach in 2017.

The Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation Database fell behind the anticipated timeframes as a result of DoE's reprioritisation of focus to COVID-19 responses and support for schools; and project personnel and resources changing over the life of the projects. Availability of project management expertise improved over time for the Extension Program, but was inconsistent for the Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation

¹⁶ [Premier of Tasmania - New Opportunities for Years 11 and 12 students in 2021](#)

Database. Key person dependency and inconsistent record keeping also impacted implementation. In response to the delays, the Years 9 to 12 Project deliverables were redefined to ensure timely realisation of some outcomes and the time needed to implement the Years 9 to 12 Project was extended.

The Youth Participation Database was piloted in 2020 and phased-in in 2021. Delays were experienced and functionality continues to be an ongoing focus for DoE.

Variability in governance arrangements continued through implementation of the Projects. Governance arrangements for the:

- Extension Program were established during implementation and improved over time
- Years 9 to 12 Project had many layers, but were stable and generally effective
- Youth Participation Database changed multiple times during the Project, with no clear governance arrangements in place in the latter stages of implementation, until the establishment of the Upper Secondary Governance Group.

Project risk reviews were not embedded in the approach to implementing the Projects. Risk reviews were rarely performed after August 2019 for the Youth Participation Database and after October 2020 for the Years 9 to 12 Project.

DoE worked in partnership with stakeholders during implementation, and in particular, with stakeholders involved in the steering committees and various working groups. Comments about DoE's stakeholder engagement approach from external stakeholders involved in the Years 9 to 12 Project were generally positive, with some noting it was the first time they had been included early in the reform implementation process.

Consultation with school-based stakeholders, who were implementing the reforms in schools, was generally effective and the level of support was appropriate. DoE used a range of approaches to engaging school-based stakeholders, including:

- regular Principals and Leaders Meetings
- provision of information packages
- workshops
- direct communication between the project teams and school leaders.

Additional support provided to stakeholders involved in implementation of the Projects included peer support networks, professional learning, upgrading of facilities and access to ICT equipment.

Governance arrangements suited each project, but varied in effectiveness

3.1 Once established, governance arrangements suited each project, but varied in effectiveness over the life of the Projects. Governance arrangements for the:

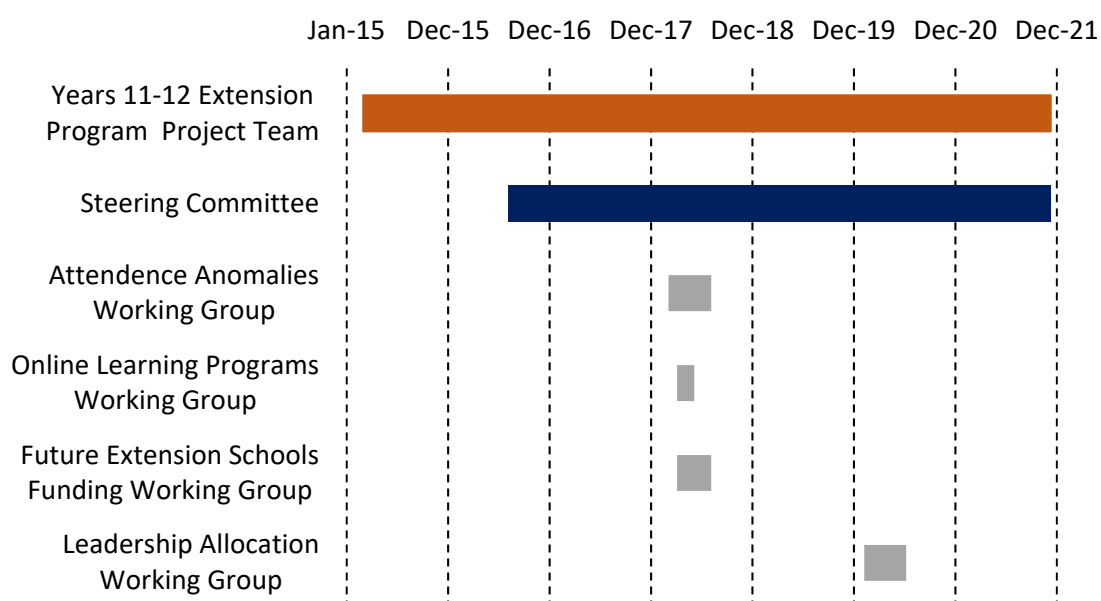
- Extension Program improved over time

- Years 9 to 12 Project had many layers, but were generally stable and effective
- Youth Participation Database changed multiple times during the project, with no clear governance arrangements in place through part of the implementation phase.

Extension Program governance arrangements improved over time

- 3.2 DoE created a Steering Committee for the Extension Program in August 2016, towards the end of the second year of implementation and after 12 secondary schools had extended to Year 12. DoE provided a Terms of Reference, meeting agendas, meeting minutes and papers to support the operation of the Steering Committee.
- 3.3 Prior to the establishment of the Steering Committee, governance was provided by the Secretary of DoE with project management undertaken by the General Manager Early Years and Schools. In May 2014 an Implementation Taskforce, chaired by the Secretary of DoE was established which included representatives from key stakeholder groups.¹⁷
- 3.4 Once in place, the Steering Committee created working groups to address specific issues. The date of establishment and duration of activity of the working groups is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Governance Framework for the Extension Program from January 2015



Source: Tasmanian Audit Office

- 3.5 All elements of the governance arrangements improved over the life of the project, including the Steering Committee. Specifically, while half of the items included in the Steering Committee's Actions Register in 2017 and 2018 remained open as at 25

¹⁷ Key stakeholder groups included the Australian Education Union, Tasmanian Principals Association, Tasmanian Association of State School Organisations, Local Government Association of Tasmania, Regional Councils grouping, Vocational Education and Training providers and the Federal Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

November 2021, all items included from 2019 onwards had been completed. The Steering Committee also did not document acceptance of the recommendations made in progress reports in Steering Committee minutes or track implementation of recommendations in progress reports until 2021.

Year 9 to 12 Project governance arrangements were generally effective

- 3.6 The Steering Committee retained the same structure discussed in the previous Chapter during the implementation phase of the project.
- 3.7 From January 2018 onwards, the Steering Committee met 6 to 7 times a year.
- 3.8 The effectiveness of the Steering Committee was generally consistent over time. As at 1 November 2021, actions that came out of Steering Committee meetings:
- were completed by the due date 64 per cent of the time
 - were completed after the due date had passed 19 per cent of the time
 - were not completed and the due date had passed 11 per cent of the time
 - had no recorded due date 6 per cent of the time.
- 3.9 DoE stated that Project team membership changes meant that many actions were completed, but not updated in the actions register.

Youth Participation Database governance arrangements changed many times impacting effectiveness

- 3.10 While the Education Act Implementation Steering Committee initially had oversight of the Youth Participation Database, it was later allocated to the Years 9 to 12 Project Steering Committee when the Education Act Implementation concluded.
- 3.11 The Steering Committees were supported by the Student Tracking Project Working Group from September 2018 to November 2018 and the Youth Engagement in Education and Training Working Group from October 2018 to August 2019. However, once the Working Groups ceased operating, documentation on budget, costs, ongoing and emerging risks and timeline for this project was sparse.
- 3.12 The Youth Participation Database Project Manager was the Strategic Systems Development Unit, which is part of DoE's Strategy and Performance Division, until the conclusion of Phase 1 in June 2021. Responsibility for the Youth Participation Database then transferred to DoE's Vocational Learning and Career Education unit.

Implementation was impacted by changing levels of project resourcing and project management expertise and experience

- 3.13 To ensure projects are run effectively, having an experienced project manager, coupled with adequate project resources, including people with project experience, are success factors in delivering a successful outcome.

3.14 Resourcing of the project teams varied over the life of the Projects. Project management expertise:

- improved over time for the Extension Program
- was initially available in the Years 9 to 12 Project Team, but a key person dependency and an inability to recruit meant those skills were no longer available after a change in project team membership
- was inconsistent during planning and implementation of the Youth Participation Database.

3.15 DoE completed the Extension Program two years earlier than planned. However, the Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation Database fell behind schedule, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Planned and estimated completion dates

Project	Planned completion year	Estimated completion year	Variance
Extension Program	2024	2022	2 years ahead of schedule
Years 9 to 12 Project	2025	2027	2 years behind schedule
Youth Participation Database	2020	Ongoing	3 years behind schedule

Source: DoE

3.16 Key reasons for the delays were:

- a reprioritising of DoE's efforts to its COVID-19 response, with project team members working on COVID-19 response activities as required
- changes in project resourcing and project management expertise and experience of project teams.

Project risk reviews were performed on an ad hoc basis during implementation

3.17 Project reviews identify what is working well when implementing reforms, what is not working well and what needs to be done to address the resulting risks. These reviews may occur at the end of the planning and implementation phases or at key decision points. Reviews can also be done regularly during implementation. A review done at regular intervals may take the form of a risk review.

3.18 DoE performed risk reviews on an ad hoc basis after August 2019 for the Youth Participation Database and after October 2020 for the Years 9 to 12 Project.

- 3.19 A more structured and consistent approach to risk management would have supported the respective steering committees to monitor and mitigate risks to the Projects' success.

Risk reviews for the Extension Program were not done regularly

- 3.20 DoE did not develop a project initiation plan to record risks and mitigation actions ahead of schools being selected to extend.
- 3.21 The Steering Committee established a new risk register in April 2017, which was refined in June 2017. Eight of the 20 risks identified required immediate management action, but only 4 risks had documented management actions. The Steering Committee did not formally document another risk review after June 2017.
- 3.22 The Steering Committee and Project Team did identify some issues that posed a risk to successful project implementation, with the Steering Committee establishing working groups to identify solutions to overcoming the identified issues. For example, the Extension Program Steering Committee Future Work Plan, considered by the Steering Committee in November 2016, identified timetabling as a medium priority area. In February 2017, a Minute to the Deputy Secretaries also identified that:
- online course offerings would provide equity of access to the senior secondary curriculum across the state
 - a system-wide approach to timetabling was essential to the successful roll out of online courses in 2017 and may also support other activities such as teach Professional Learning, collaboration and moderation.
- 3.23 A Deputy Secretary gave approval work to start on addressing the risks related to timetabling in February 2017. The timetabling review identified risks associated with the timetabling support model. It also provided recommendations to better address current and expected demand for timetabling support in schools.

Risk reviews for the Years 9 to 12 Project were done regularly up until October 2020

- 3.24 The Project Team established a risk register and regularly reviewed risk in the planning phase of the project, with any changes in the risk profile reported to the Steering Committee. Regular risk reviews, conducted between April 2019 and September 2019, resulted in the risk register expanding from 4 to 29 risks and updating of the risk response when the assessed likelihood or consequence changed. The risk profile of the project increased between September 2019 and October 2020.
- 3.25 After a change in the Project Team in late 2020, the Steering Committee did not review risk at the project-level. The leaders of the individual work streams responded to risks as they arose.

Risk reviews for the Youth Participation Database were done regularly up until August 2019

- 3.26 In September 2018, DoE established a detailed risk register with documented mitigation actions.

- 3.27 Risk review was also a standing item on the agenda for Working Group meetings between November 2018 and August 2019, with meeting minutes describing the risks added to the risk register.
- 3.28 There were no reviews documented after the Working Group was dissolved and responsibility for the Youth Participation Database was allocated to another area of DoE.

Implementation of the Extension Program would have benefited from a consistent and documented approach to risk management

- 3.29 DoE adopted a principle-based approach to implementing the Extension Program. However, the lack of planning prior to implementation, as discussed in Chapter 2, meant:
- the Extension Program principles were not finalised until 2018, 4 years into implementation
 - improved documentation of risk management may have supported DoE to manage risks in a more structured and timely manner.
- 3.30 A number of risks were identified in the project plan and in a subsequent risk register prepared by the Steering Committee in June 2017. These identified risks included:
- restricted subject offerings
 - inadequate systems and processes to support shared enrolments
 - falling enrolment numbers in colleges and extended secondary schools
 - VET teacher and subject specialist teacher availability
 - increased teacher workload due to the need for teachers to teach multiple subjects within the one class
 - increased time pressures for school leaders due to need to deliver both the Australian curriculum for Years 7-10 and the Tasmanian curriculum for Years 11 and 12
 - timetabling support for extended secondary schools
 - differences between school and college start and end dates
 - need for teachers to attend separate moderation meetings for Years 7-10 and Years 11 and 12
 - change in principals of schools in the process of extending to Year 12.
- 3.31 Improved recording of risk management processes, identified risks and mitigation actions may have assisted DoE adopt a more strategic approach to responding risks,

particularly where risks applied more broadly or were the result of factors other than or in addition to the Extension Program, for example:

- the availability of specialist teachers, which is a broader workforce issue across the sector
- funding for capital works to support increased numbers of students, as a result of implementation of legislative changes requiring more students to be in schools, and the Extension Program.

Not all identified risks to the successful implementation of the Extension Program were resolved

3.32 DoE addressed some of the risks to successful implementation of the Extension Program by creating Working Groups to review issues identified and make recommendations to resolve the issue identified to the Steering Committee. Risks addressed by the Working Groups included attendance, online learning and shared enrolments, funding and allocation of leadership for Years 11 and 12.

3.33 Risks to successful implementation that were not resolved included:

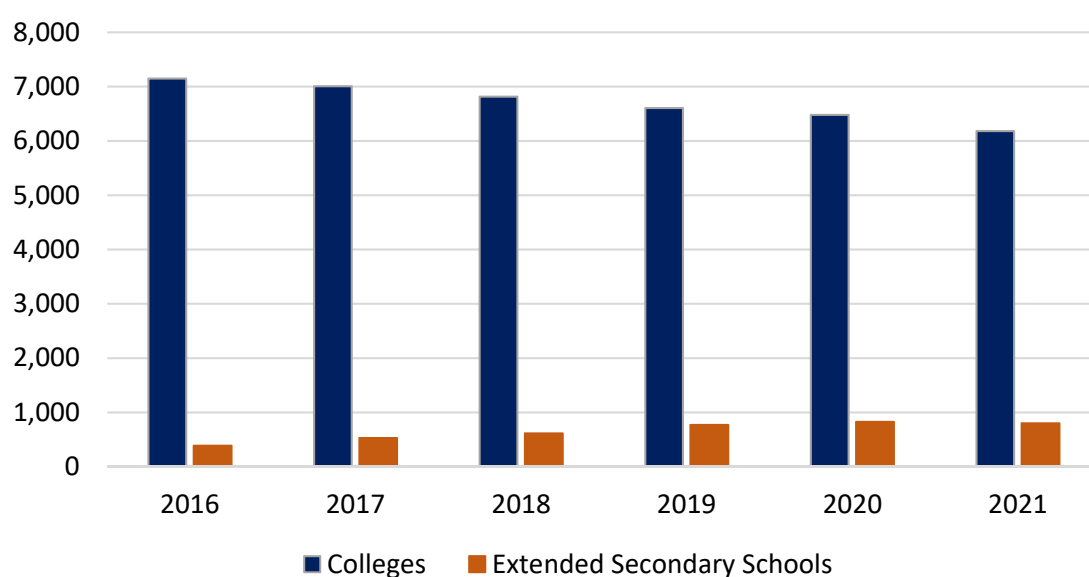
- Inconsistent terminology used during the reforms, which may have distracted from changing the community's perception that school finished in Year 10. While DoE now refers to 'Years 11 and 12 providers', language used throughout the reforms was inconsistent. During implementation, DoE referred to secondary schools providing years 11 and 12 as 'colleges', 'high schools' and 'extended high schools'. In addition, while 2 extended secondary schools rebranded as 'senior secondary colleges', another extended secondary school that expressed interest in rebranding was not successful.
- Different start and finish dates of terms for schools and colleges. Presently, there is a systemic division between Years 7 to 10 and Years 11 and 12 as a result of the different start and finish dates of terms. Aligning the start and finish dates of terms would reinforce the perception of a Years 7 to 12 framework and provide additional learning days for those student involved in subjects, such as VET subject, that involve regular assessments as opposed to examinations.
- Different professional learning and moderation days.¹⁸ In a number of schools, teachers are teaching courses from Year 7 through to Year 12. This means that, while the moderation days for Years 11 and 12 have priority due to TASC requirements, teachers may need to attend both moderation days. Many schools commented on the challenge of securing resources to cover absences resulting from the different moderation days.

¹⁸ Professional learning days enable teachers to participate in important learning that improves their teaching. Moderation days for student assessments ensure all students across Tasmania are being assessed against the same benchmarks, and that student assessments are comparable across schools.

Competition in the system affected Extension Program implementation, but was partly addressed by the Collective approach introduced in 2017

- 3.34 Competition for enrolment numbers was inherent in the system. Enrolment numbers affected the number of teachers and administrative staff employed in schools, the breadth of Years 11 and 12 courses delivered by schools and principals' salaries.
- 3.35 As shown in Figure 5, colleges have continued to be the main provider of education to Year 11 and 12 students. It should also be noted the data presented in Figure 5 is also reflective of a downward trend in the 17 and 18 year old population in Tasmania from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 5: FTE enrolment numbers by State secondary school type, 2016 to 2021



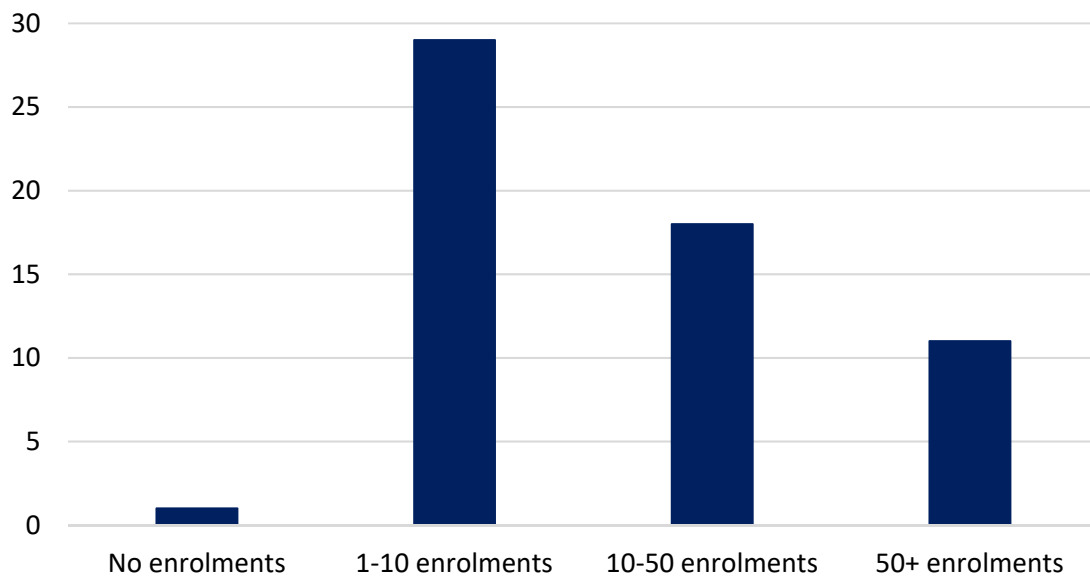
Source: TAO analysis of DoE data

- 3.36 There have been low enrolment numbers in extended secondary schools, with impacts such as:
- some secondary schools prepared to deliver specialist courses that were not run due to low enrolment numbers
 - teachers of year 11 and 12 courses in some extended secondary schools delivered multiple levels of the same course at the same time.

These impacts have been somewhat mitigated by online learning offerings and, later, through shared enrolments in the Collective approach as discussed further below.

- 3.37 Figure 6 shows that, in 2021, more than half of the State secondary schools had less than 10 full-time equivalent students. Location was not a significant factor driving enrolment numbers. Of the secondary schools that have less than 10 enrolments, 16 were within 20 km of a college and 14 were more than 20 km from a college.

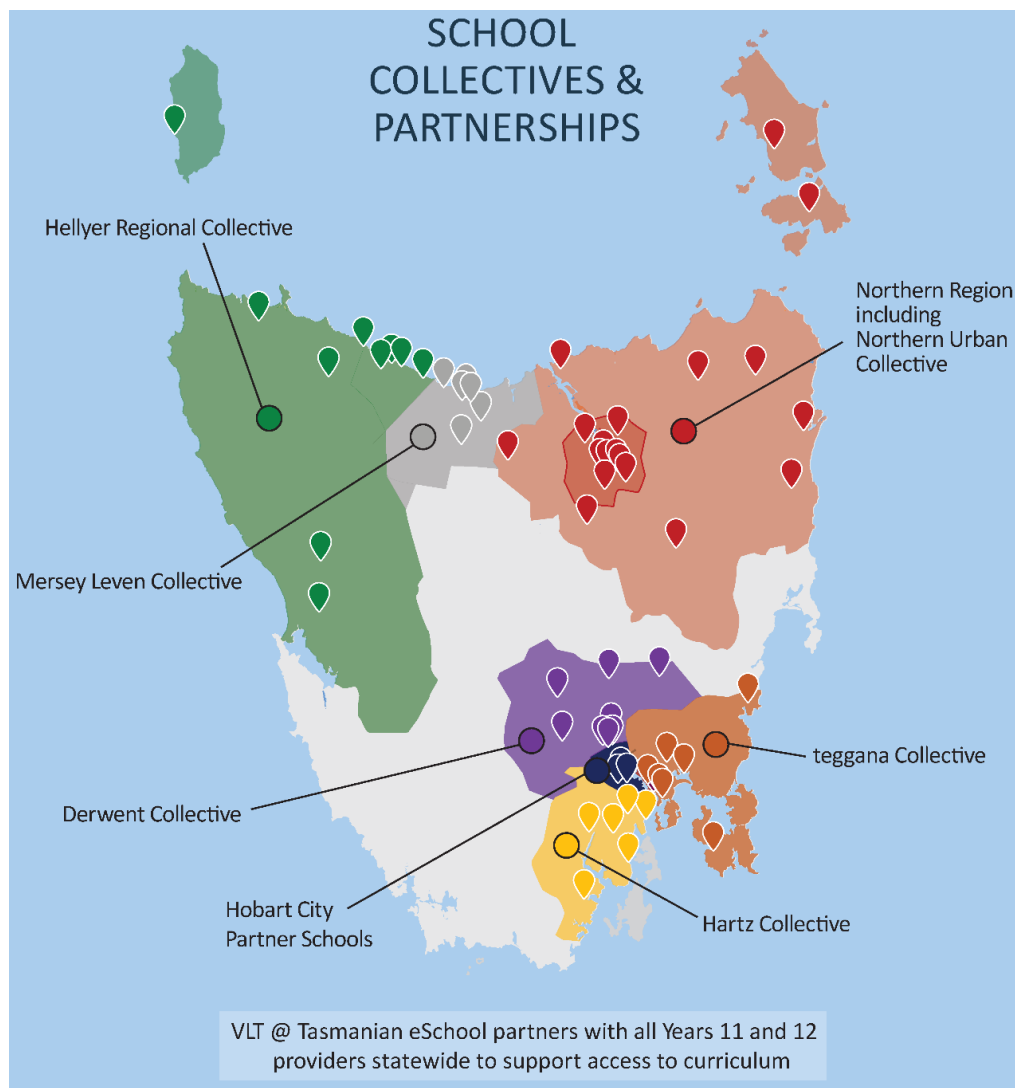
Figure 6: Enrolments numbers for State secondary schools in 2021



Source: TAO analysis of DoE data.

- 3.38 While a few secondary schools extended in partnership with other State secondary schools, the most significant event that increased cooperation in the system was the development of new extension models in 2015, which included the Collective approach. The Collective approach was first used in 2017 for 6 schools extending as part of the teggana Collective and 4 schools extending as part of the Devonport Coalition (now the Mersey Leven Collective). It involved a College and State secondary schools within the same geographical area working together to build a culture of school completion at the end of year 12.
- 3.39 As the Extension Program progressed, DoE encouraged schools and colleges in all regions to work together in Collectives with the support of the Extension Project team. As a result, the function of the Collectives grew organically, with some Collectives working more effectively than others. Overall effectiveness of Collectives increased over time with DoE noting:
- 24 of the 37 schools (64.9 per cent) that responded to the 2019 Progress Report survey agreed that inter-school collaboration had a positive impact on their students and teachers
 - 36 of the 42 schools (85.7 per cent) that responded to the 2020 Progress Report survey agreed that partnerships with other schools were an essential element of their program.
- 3.40 By December 2021, all State secondary schools belonged to one of the seven Collectives as shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Years 11 and 12 schools Collectives and partnerships



Source: DoE

Shared enrolments and online learning supported Extension Program implementation

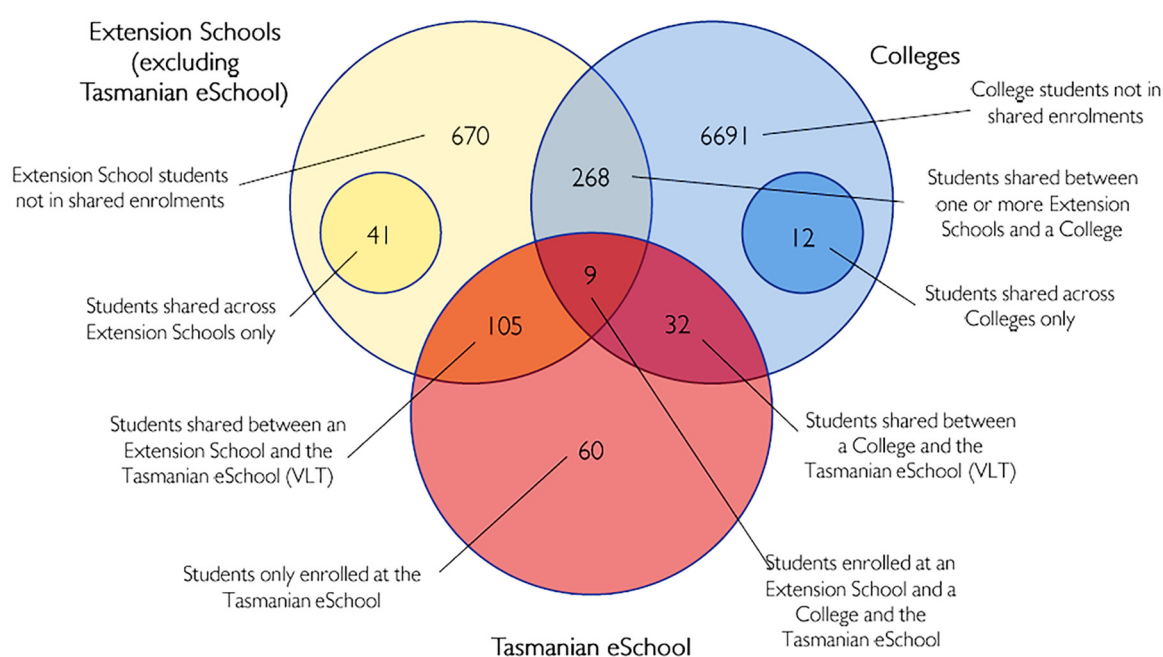
3.41 Shared enrolments were in place early in the implementation of the Extension Program and DoE's Flexible Learning Network, which evolved into the Online Learning Program in 2017 was used as a delivery method of Year 11 and 12 courses. DoE has continuously improved its online course service delivery to students. Changes to online learning over time included:

- developing policies for enrolment, attendance, assessment reporting to support online learning
- changing the student-to-teacher ratio, from 20:1 to 16:1, for which courses were considered viable
- improving policies and information provided to students prior to enrolment by analysing the reasons for enrolment cancellation

- advertising delivery times prior to the end of the school year
- transitioning the Online Learning Network into a fully online state-wide service for Years 11-12, VLT, in 2019.

3.42 As shown in Figure 8 in 2021, it was common for students to access courses not provided by their base school of enrolment through a shared enrolment or VLT. At Census 1 2021¹⁹, approximately 38 per cent of students enrolled in Years 11-13 at extended secondary schools were in shared enrolments. Many of the shared enrolments were due to enrolments through VLT, run by the Tasmanian eSchool. Enrolments in VLT courses increased from 237 in 2020 to 282 in 2021.

Figure 8: Senior secondary enrolments across Extension Schools, Colleges and the Tasmanian eSchool



Source: DoE

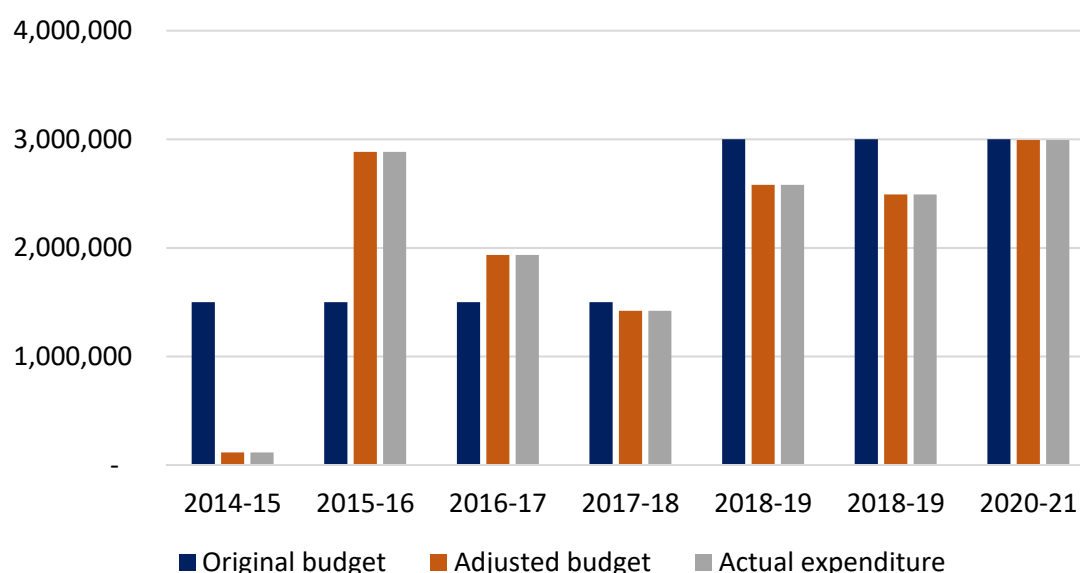
Capital works decisions to support the Extension Program focused on the needs of individual schools

3.43 DoE identified capital works needs of each of the extending secondary schools through the Expression of Interest Process. Assessing capital works needs on an individual basis was appropriate for the rural schools that extended in 2015 and 2016.

¹⁹ Information is collected at twice in a school year. These collection events are known as Census 1 and Census 2.

- 3.44 Capital works mostly involved refurbishment of general learning areas, break out spaces, staff areas, kitchenettes and other amenities. Some capital works involved building of new facilities, where refurbishment was not possible, or upgrading of Trade Training Centres to support VET course delivery.
- 3.45 There were limited instances of schools being provided with specialist facilities and this was determined in relation to proximity to similar specialist facilities including Colleges and Trade Training Centres. Specialist facilities (e.g. workshops) were only provided in locations where there was an identified need due to locational deficits and local curriculum provision needs.
- 3.46 Capital expenditure for the Extension Program to 30 June 2021 was \$14.4 million. Figure 9 provides the original and adjusted capital expenditure budgets and actual capital expenditure from the 2014-15 Financial Year to the 2020-21 Financial Year.

Figure 9: Capital expenditure budget, adjusted budget and actual expenditure



Source: TAO analysis of DoE data

Deliverables for the Years 9 to 12 Project were redefined, leading to an extension in the time needed to implement the Project

3.47 DoE originally planned to complete the Years 9 to 12 Project by 2025. As at January 2022, implementation of some initiatives was behind schedule, with delays being attributed to:

- a reprioritising of DoE's and sector partner efforts to COVID-19 responses, as discussed above
- the approach taken to implement the Project
- changes in project resourcing and personnel over time.

3.48 While DoE did not identify the exact approach it would use to implement the Years 9 to 12 Project, an adaptive approach was adopted. An adaptive project management approach involves a systematic and structured approach in which decisions and processes are gradually improved based on the outcomes of the decisions made in the earlier stages of the project. This approach is useful when a high level of uncertainty exists and needs are likely to change throughout the lifecycle of a project.

3.49 The adaptive approach to project implementation resulted in DoE redefining and, in some cases, refocussing work on certain deliverables to ensure timely realisation of outcomes. For example, DoE advised that it deliberately paused the implementation of projects under the Years 9 to 12 Project to ensure key stakeholders were ready to effectively engage in consultation and implement the key changes required. However, there was no documentation outlining this strategy. In another example, in March 2021, the Years 9-12 Planned Programs of Learning were planned to be developed and implemented in two tranches with implementation of the second tranche expected by Term 1 2023. By November 2021, DoE had divided that work across three tranches with implementation of the third tranche extending past Term 1 2023. Changes like this have resulted in an increase in the amount of time needed to implement the Years 9 to 12 Project.

3.50 In regards to its capacity and capability, the Years 9 to 12 Project Team initially had adequate experience in project management and delivering education to students. The Project Team included a project manager, project officer and a policy analyst. Representatives from TASC, IST and CET that were involved in the Project Team on a part-time basis. Officers from other areas of DoE were involved in the Working Groups, as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: Areas of DoE involved in working groups

Working Group	Area(s) of DoE involved in the working group
Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching	Curriculum Services Vocational Learning and Career Education
Accreditation Framework	Curriculum Services
Workforce Support	Curriculum Services Workforce Planning and Support Vocational Learning and Career Education Professional Learning Institute
Data	Marketing and Communications Education Performance and Review Vocational Learning and Career Education

Source: DoE

- 3.51 However, resourcing levels and project management expertise and experience changed over time. When the project manager role was vacant and unable to be filled:
- the Steering Committee and Working Groups took on some responsibilities of the Project Team
 - some standard project oversight tasks, such as risk review, were not performed.

The functionality of the Youth Participation Database remains an ongoing focus for DoE

- 3.52 The original project timeline anticipated the Youth Participation Database becoming operational in March 2020. While the system was piloted in 2020, DoE experienced delays and functionality of the Database remains an ongoing focus. Specifically:
- There was a delay in awarding the contract—the contract with the successful vendor was not in place until May 2020, 11 months later than planned.
 - There were changes in the levels of project resourcing—the Project was initially managed by the Education Act Implementation Team and the Information and Technology Services Unit. When funding for the Education Act Implementation Project ended on 30 June 2019, and ongoing tasks were allocated to business units for implementation, the management of the Youth Participation Database was transferred to DoE's Years 9-12 Learning Division and a dedicated Project Team was not in place.
 - There were issues in the ability of relevant data custodians being able to share data. DoE sought advice that confirmed it could request data under the Education Act so long as it related to youths' participation in Approved Learning Programs. Delays were also caused by the need to implement data sharing agreements between DoE and data providers.

- 3.53 At the time of go-live, the Database did not have the intended functionality, as education and training providers external to DoE had to provide data via spreadsheet which then had to be manually uploaded to the Database by DoE.

Consultation with stakeholders was effective

- 3.54 DoE worked in partnership with stakeholders during project implementation by including external and internal stakeholders in steering committees or working groups. While this approach was broadly effective, stakeholders identified opportunities to improve the consultation process.
- 3.55 Majority of external stakeholders involved in the Years 9 to 12 Project and Youth Participation Database advised it was the first time they had been involved in consultation from the planning phase of reform implementation. However, stakeholders occasionally felt there was a high volume of information to consider within a tight timeframe.
- 3.56 Internally, DoE communicated information about the Projects to stakeholders in Principals and Leaders Meetings, which were held 2 or 3 times a year. In addition:
- the Extension Program project team provided an information package for schools considering when to extend to Year 12
 - 2 workshops were held in May 2019 on the Youth Participation Database, which were attended by approximately 60 representatives from IST, CET, State secondary schools and the Office of the Education Registrar.
- 3.57 Stakeholders also provided feedback on project implementation through their involvement in the various working groups established for the Projects.
- 3.58 Table 4 shows the key actions included in the communication strategies for the Extension Program and Years 9 to 12 Project, which were carried out by DoE.

Table 4: Key actions in communication strategies

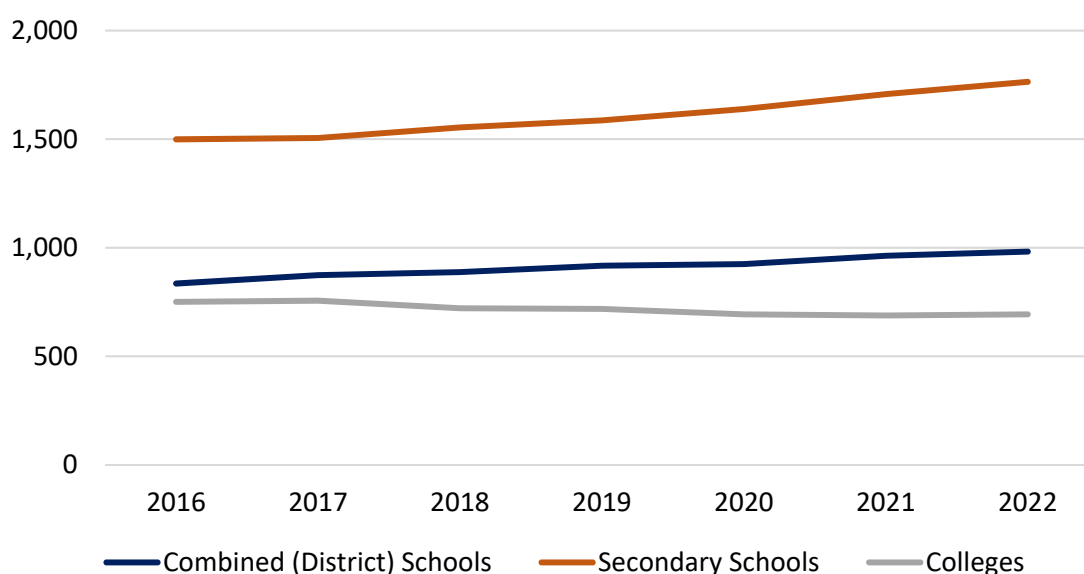
Project	Key actions
Extension Program	Developing an information package for schools considering participation, including materials to share with their school community. Updating the DoE website. Providing stories and case studies on the DoE Facebook page and in newsletters.
Years 9 to 12 Project	Developing a Years 9 to 12 Project website to publish discussion papers, case students and inspiring stories Developing a social media strategy Consulting with the target audience on the Curriculum Framework through face-to-face consultation, online surveys and meetings of Learning Area Groups prior to the public release of the framework.

Source: DoE

Sufficient support was provided to schools during implementation of the Projects

- 3.59 DoE largely provided schools with appropriate levels of guidance, funding for planning, operations and capital investment, access to ICT equipment, professional learning opportunities and support to interpret and respond to data on student outcomes.
- 3.60 In regard to workforce support, between 2016 and 2022, the number of teachers across schools delivering Years 11 and 12 courses to students increased by 11.5 per cent (355 teachers)²⁰, although this increase cannot be entirely attributed to the reforms. While some schools have teachers that only teach Years 11 and 12 courses, most schools have teachers that teach Year 7 through to Year 12.
- 3.61 The increase in teachers was not consistent across types of State schools. Figure 10 shows that the number of teachers in combined schools and secondary schools both increased by 17.6 per cent from 2016 to 2022, while the number of teachers in colleges decreased by 7.6 per cent over the same period. The decrease in college teachers was related to the reduction in college student enrolments, which decreased by 15.4 per cent from 2016 to 2022.

Figure 10: Change in full-time equivalent teachers by school type, 2016 to 2022



Source: TAO analysis of DoE data

²⁰ Represents the increase of teachers in combined (district) schools and extended secondary schools less the decrease of the number of teaches in colleges.

Schools received sufficient support before and after extending to Years 11 and 12

- 3.62 The Extension Program team provided support to schools preparing to deliver Years 11 and 12 courses and during the delivery of those courses. This supported included building the capacity of school leaders in interpreting and responding to data on student outcomes.
- 3.63 Schools advised funding was generally sufficient. This was delivered through a resource package which enabled the school to deliver subjects designed to support students to obtain the TCE. This initially included:
- a one off cash grant of \$10,000 to assist with teacher training and developing partnerships with local colleges
 - an additional 0.25 full-time equivalent staffing allocation to provide additional vocational education and training for their students
 - teaching resources based on student enrolment number in line with the formula used by Colleges and up to a maximum of 5 additional teachers
 - a permanent 0.5 full-time equivalent Advanced Skills Teacher
 - a 1.0 full-time equivalent teaching allocation to support the extension process
 - funding for facilities upgrades where required to support senior secondary education.
- 3.64 In 2015, other models of extending schools resulted in changes to the funding model, and in 2018, the funding model was reviewed by a Funding Working Group to ensure it was fit for purpose. The review resulted in the following recommendations which were applied from the 2019 school year:
- reduce a portion of the funding for those schools which do not have student enrolments by the end of Term 1
 - adopt a sliding scale of leadership funding, calculated on schools' enrolments
 - equally resource schools
 - allocate funding to the VET in Schools budget
 - continue to provide schools with \$10,000 cash allocation, with additional guidance provided about how this funding should be used
 - continue to provide Colleges with 1.0 FTE for the Extension School Liaison Coordinator and Tracking Coordinator roles.

Initial support to schools to implement the Years 9 to 12 Project was sufficient

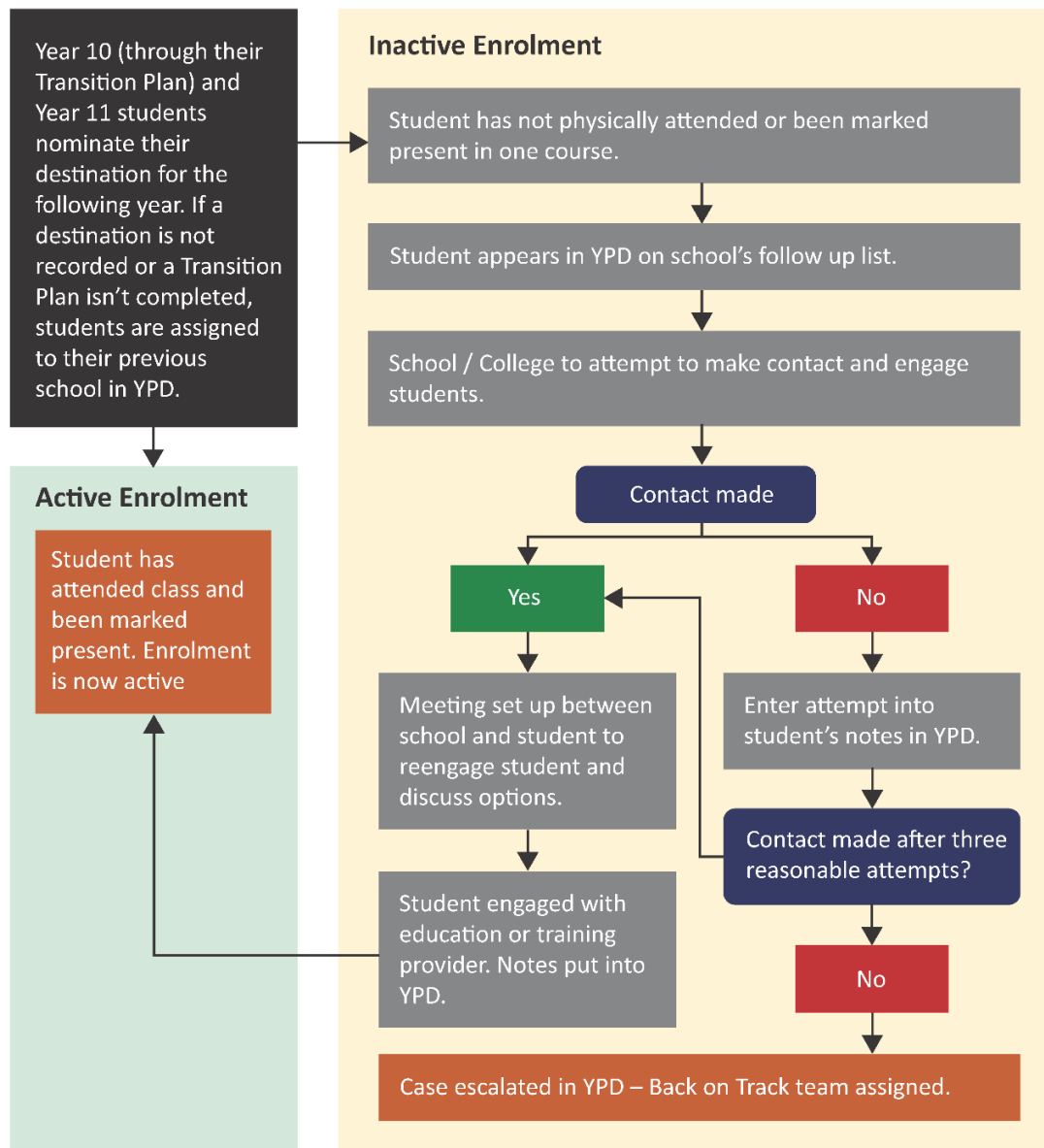
- 3.65 Although the Years 9 to 12 Project was in the early stages of implementation, schools advised the guidance material provided by DoE was informative.
- 3.66 Teachers were able to access professional learning through TAS Ed Talks, DoE's yearly professional learning provision to teachers, and other opportunities. The focus of TAS Ed Talks 2021 was Years 9-12 Learning. The outcomes of TAS Ed Talks 2021 were:
- understanding the case for change
 - gaining knowledge and deepened understanding of contemporary issues faced by educators and students in preparing for life and work after school
 - being supported to implement Tranche 1A courses in 2022
 - having increased clarity about the Tranche 1B course progress
 - being prepared to review curriculum offerings against the Vocational Learning Framework
 - identifying opportunities for customising school and system design through Planned Programs of Learning and General Capabilities Short Qualifications
 - having increased awareness of planned course provision
 - becoming familiar with the pathways from school to further education, training and work.

Schools received sufficient support in using the Youth Participation Database

- 3.67 DoE supported State schools in implementing the database. It prepared a guidance document to ensure Approved Learning Program providers understood their obligations under the Education Act in providing education and training after Year 10. Other documentation prepared included a Frequently Asked Questions document and User Guide with information on system functionality.
- 3.68 DoE also held introductory sessions on the Youth Participation Database every Wednesday and Thursday at 3:30pm between February 2022 and April 2022 so that users could readily access practical and technical support if required.
- 3.69 DoE supplemented the work by schools to reengage students with the Back on Track pilot, which focussed on reengaging students who had not successfully transitioned from grade 10 to 11. The pilot involved a multidisciplinary team using a case management approach with students that did not have an active enrolment with an approved training or education provider. The team consisted of an Advanced Skills Teacher, Social Worker and Youth Worker.
- 3.70 The pathway for students that did not have active enrolments, as depicted in Figure 11, shows schools were initially responsible for following up with students that had not recorded a destination or completed a transition plan. These students were assigned to their previous school in the Youth Participation Database. The previous school was required to attempt to contact, and engage with, students. If the school

successfully contacted the student, it set up a meeting with the student to discuss their options to reengage in education and training. If the school was unsuccessful in contacting the student, the school could refer the student to the Back on Track team.

Figure 11: Pathway for students that did not have active enrolments



Source: DoE

3.71 The Back on Track team worked from 2 pilot sites, a college in Southern Tasmania and a college in the North-West, to support the identified students to reengage in education and training. The case management approach included:

- assertive outreach
- assessment and planning
- assistance accessing therapeutic services, community providers and other agencies
- group conferences.

4. Was reporting on the progress and impact of reform implementation sufficient and appropriate?

In this Chapter, we assessed whether DoE:

- developed performance measures that supported decision-making
- used accurate and complete data to monitor reform implementation and impact
- identified and addressed gaps in the information needed to monitor reform implementation and impact.

We also assessed the impact of the Projects to date using the measures of access, attendance, retention, completion and attainment.

Chapter summary

Project monitoring

The Projects would have benefited from the development and use of a set of measures to evaluate progress and impact. A set of measures to evaluate progress and impact were established but not reported on for the Years 9 to 12 Project. Similar measures were not initially established for the Extension Program or Youth Participation Database.

Internal reporting on the Extension Program improved over time. DoE compiled its first progress report on the Extension Program in 2017, after 30 schools had already extended. Information requested in yearly progress reports was relevant, appropriate and improved in quality. This information was used to improve implementation of the Extension Program.

The framework used by DoE to ensure the quality of data used to inform decision-making regarding the Extension Program, assigned responsibility for data quality to school leaders. DoE's Educational Performance and Review unit reviewed data to ensure there were no obvious anomalies. However, monitoring and evaluation reports noted low levels of data literacy across some schools and errors in enrolment and contact information for students.

Shared use of data held by the relevant stakeholders and data custodians could have supported the development of more targeted and meaningful outcomes for the Years 9 to 12 Project to measure progress and impact.

Impact of the Projects

The range of education reforms implemented since 2014 makes it difficult to attribute the improvement in senior secondary student education outcomes to any individual reform initiative. Broadly, performance is heading in the right direction with improved:

- access to senior secondary courses since 2014
- State-level apparent retention rates²¹, which increased from 69.4 per cent in 2014 to 74.5 per cent in 2021
- State-level attainment rates, which increased from 48.8 per cent in 2014 to 59.0 per cent in 2021.

Attendance rates fell slightly from 2016 to 2021, which was consistent with the trend in attendance rates across Australia. This result may, in part, be due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While the attainment rate has improved since 2014, it has remained below the 2022 goal of 75 per cent of students to attain a TCE outlined in the Years 9 to 12 Project Education Framework.

The Projects would have benefited from developing measures to evaluate impact in the planning stage

4.1 Agreeing on measures to evaluate impact in the planning phase of reforms provides enough time to:

- establish a baseline for performance, measured through data analysis or data creation, such as a pre-intervention survey
- develop a standard approach to reporting that meets the needs of decision-makers
- support the adaptation of strategies and, through the project lifecycle, in response to new and changing conditions.

4.2 Establishment of measures for monitoring and evaluation was variable, with measures only established for the Years 9 to 12 Project.

DoE developed measures to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Extension Program over time

4.3 While DoE used many measures to oversee implementation of the Extension Program, there were no specific measures or targets identified in the Project Plan for monitoring and evaluation purposes. Measures also did not feature in reports to the Steering Committee in a consistent format.

4.4 Evaluation of the Extension Program at the end of each school year gradually improved the way that secondary schools extended and delivery of Year 11 and 12 courses in schools that had already extended.

²¹ An indicative measure of the number of full-time school students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. For example, the apparent retention rate for Year 10 – Year 12, 2021, is the number of students in Year 12 2021 as a percentage of the number of students in that cohort in Year 10 in 2019 (the base year), two years earlier. Part-time and ungraded students are not included in calculations of apparent retention rates.

- 4.5 In 2015, DoE entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with UTAS to evaluate the project. The aim of this evaluation was to demonstrate any improvement in retention and successful completion rates and influence policy. Reports were provided by UTAS in April 2016, December 2016, November 2017 and April 2018. The reports contained recommendations for improvement, but Steering Committee decisions on the recommendations made in the reports were not documented in meeting minutes. However, minutes from a Steering Committee meeting in:
- April 2017 noted that future UTAS research needed to be qualitative with a focus on:
 - the nature of those students who choose to attend extension schools
 - the quality of the experience at extension schools, including outcomes
 - how the extension program has been implemented in schools, including barriers and enablers to success, and how it has affected those extension schools
 - conversations between students, teachers, principals and the local community
 - blended/online learning experiences
 - November 2017 identified that DoE would develop an appropriate measurement tool that could be used to assess the success of the Extension Program, noting that data from measures had a lag time of 2 years per school extension to understand impact on retention and attainment.
- 4.6 DoE compiled the first progress report on the Extension Program in December 2017.
- 4.7 The qualitative and quantitative information requested through progress reports was relevant, appropriate and informed decision-makers. Schools provided information on:
- their program
 - self-assessment of progress
 - financial arrangements and governance
 - options for students
 - sustainability of their program
 - predicted attainment and completion
 - other outcomes achieved.
- 4.8 Progress reporting helped identify and respond to challenges experienced by secondary schools providing Year 11 and 12 courses. In 2018, for example, the progress report identified that schools had difficulty in recruiting teachers for Years 11 and 12, with the response being to work with the DoE's Workforce Strategy Division to understand current initiatives and provide input into the types of skills needed in

schools experiencing this challenge. The 2018 progress report also identified a lower than expected uptake of online learning programs. The response to this finding was to support State secondary schools in providing shared enrolments and better communicate the role of online learning within their local educational provision.

- 4.9 The approach to documenting changes linked to progress report findings improved over time. Prior to 2019, the Steering Committee considered progress reports, but did not record acceptance of recommendations in progress reports or identify the area responsible for implementation of each recommendation in the Steering Committee minutes. The approach improved in 2019 when recommendations were allocated to individuals or teams within DoE for implementation. The 2021 Progress Report further improved the approach by documenting the progress made in implementing each recommendation made in the 2020 Progress Report.
- 4.10 In addition to the yearly progress report, DoE developed a data wall to monitor attendance and TCE attainment across extension schools and colleges. Use of the data wall aimed to improve retention and attainment outcomes in schools by identifying the schools that needed more support from Principal Education Officers. The Principal Education Officers met regularly to discuss the Data Wall and the resources needed to support schools with identified areas for improvement.

Qualitative measures and a single quantitative measure were established to monitor and evaluate implementation of the Years 9 to 12 Project

- 4.11 The Years 9 to 12 Project Plan stated that increased attendance, engagement and completion was important. However, the only specific measure identified in the project plan, and corresponding target, was 75 per cent of students to attain a TCE by 2022 outlined in the Years 9 to 12 Project Education Framework.
- 4.12 Additional performance measures were established when the *Years 9 to 12 Framework 2018-2022* was finalised. This Framework included the following success measures:
- from 2020, all students will participate in education and training until they complete Year 12, attain a Certificate III, or they turn 18 years of age (Education Act)
 - by the end of 2022, attendance rates for our Year 9 and Year 10 students will be at or above the national average
 - by the end of 2022:
 - 95 per cent of Year 10 students will continue into Year 11 on an Approved Learning Program
 - 85 per cent of Year 11 students will continue into Year 12 on an Approved Learning Program.
- 4.13 Success against the above measures was not reported regularly to the Steering Committee. In addition, the ability to track progress against the measures related to

Approved Learning Programs was dependant on successfully implementing the Youth Participation Database.

- 4.14 In 2019, the Steering Committee established a Data Working Group. This Working Group had a deliverable, in its work plan, of publishing progress against the Years 9 to 12 Headline Measures by April 2021. The Working Group agreed in-principle to publish existing headline measures on the Years 9-12 Webpage in September 2021, but DoE had not publicly reported progress against the headline measures as at 30 June 2022.

The Youth Participation Database would have benefited from the establishment of measures at the planning stage, to monitor and evaluate implementation

- 4.15 DoE did not establish any measures to monitor the impact of the Youth Participation Database. Evaluation of the Back on Track Project went some way to addressing the lack of performance measures. The Back on Track Project used the Youth Participation Database to identify young people not currently enrolled in education or training and assisted them in reengaging with those people.
- 4.16 DoE viewed the timing of the Back on Track pilot as complicated. The Youth Participation Database did not roll out to all schools until 2021. In addition, the pilot ran from Term 3 in 2020 to Term 1 in 2021. It was therefore difficult to understand the extent to which students re-engaged with education or training due to the break in the school year.
- 4.17 An evaluation by DoE of the Back on Track pilot noted that the Back on Track team interacted with 154 students who appeared to be not meeting the enrolment or training requirements during the pilot, with:
- 42 per cent of students identified as meeting the Education Act requirements, but had incorrect or incomplete paperwork/administrative data
 - 48 per cent being case managed at the end of Term 1 2021
 - 10 per cent successfully reengaged with education or training providers.

Data custodians across the sector need to work together to drive better outcomes and measure the impact of the Years 9 to 12 Project

- 4.18 Timely information is vital to effective decision-making. Initially, it can help frame the approach to implementing reforms and effectively allocate resources. Once in implementation, timely information improves the effectiveness of implementation by supporting decisions to change the approach or reallocate resources.
- 4.19 A number of stakeholders in the Years 9 to 12 space are data custodians. There would have been benefit in addressing data access issues, including legislative barriers, to create an environment of data sharing to drive better project outcomes.

Improving data literacy of school leaders will support data quality and the ability to measure outcomes of the Extension Program

- 4.20 High quality data supports good decision-making. A framework was in place to assure the quality of data collected for census. The framework clearly outlined the responsibilities of schools and DoE's Educational Performance and Review unit for assuring census data, with principals responsible for the quality of data for their school and the Educational Performance and Review unit reviewing overall data to ensure there were no obvious anomalies.
- 4.21 Extension Program progress reports from 2019 onwards identified a need to provide ongoing, intensive support to improve the data literacy of school leaders.

The education reforms have produced variable results, which have also been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

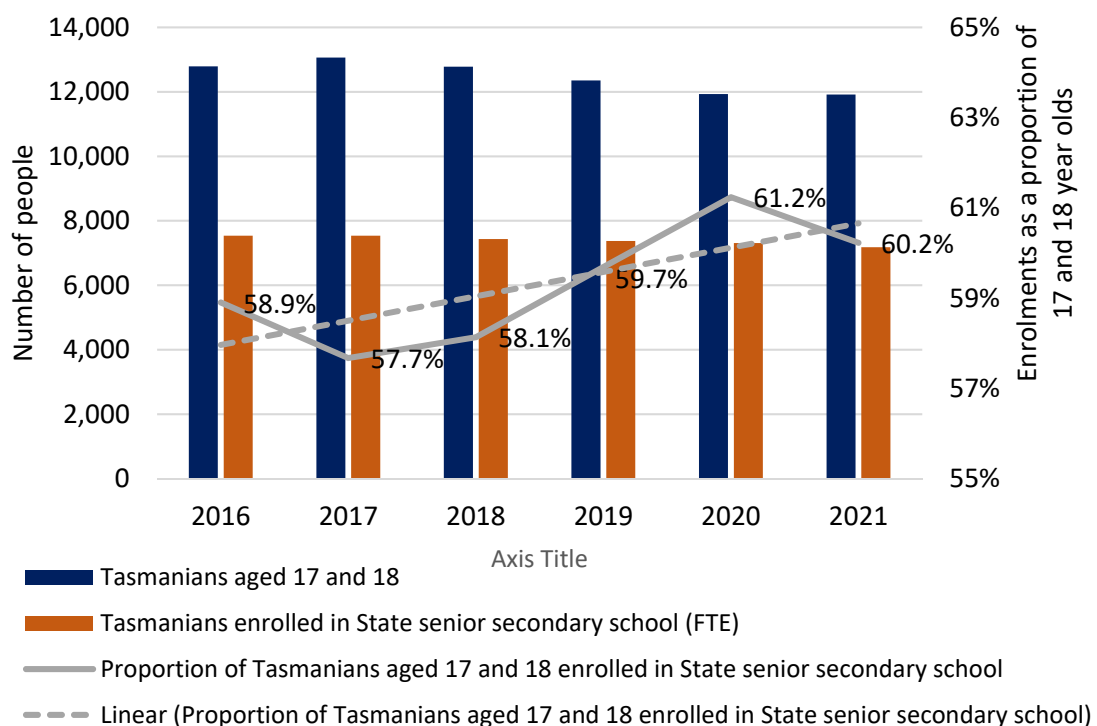
- 4.22 The range of education reforms implemented since 2014 makes it difficult to attribute the improvement in senior secondary student education outcomes to any individual reform initiative. Broadly, performance is heading in the right direction with improved:
- access to senior secondary courses since 2014
 - State-level apparent retention rates²², which increased from 69.4 per cent in 2014 to 74.5 per cent in 2021
 - State-level attainment rates, which increased from 48.8 per cent in 2014 to 59.0 per cent in 2021.
- 4.23 Attendance rates fell slightly from 2016 to 2021, which was consistent with the trend in attendance rates across Australia. This result may, in part, be due to the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.24 While the attainment rate has improved since 2014, it has remained below the goal of 75 per cent of students to attain a TCE outlined in the Years 9 to 12 Project Education Framework.

²² An indicative measure of the number of full-time school students in a designated year level of schooling as a percentage of their respective cohort group in a base year. For example, the apparent retention rate for Year 10 – Year 12, 2021, is the number of students in Year 12 2021 as a percentage of the number of students in that cohort in Year 10 in 2019 (the base year), two years earlier. Part-time and ungraded students are not included in calculations of apparent retention rates.

Enrolments in State senior secondary schools as a proportion of Tasmanians aged between 17-18 is increasing

4.25 FTE enrolments in State senior secondary schools between 2016 and 2021 as a proportion of Tasmanians aged between 17 and 18 is shown in Figure 12. The linear trend from 2016 to 2021 shows an upward progression in the proportion of FTE enrolments in State senior secondary schools as a proportion of Tasmanians aged between 17 and 18.

Figure 12: FTE enrolments in State senior secondary schools as a proportion of Tasmanians aged between 17 and 18



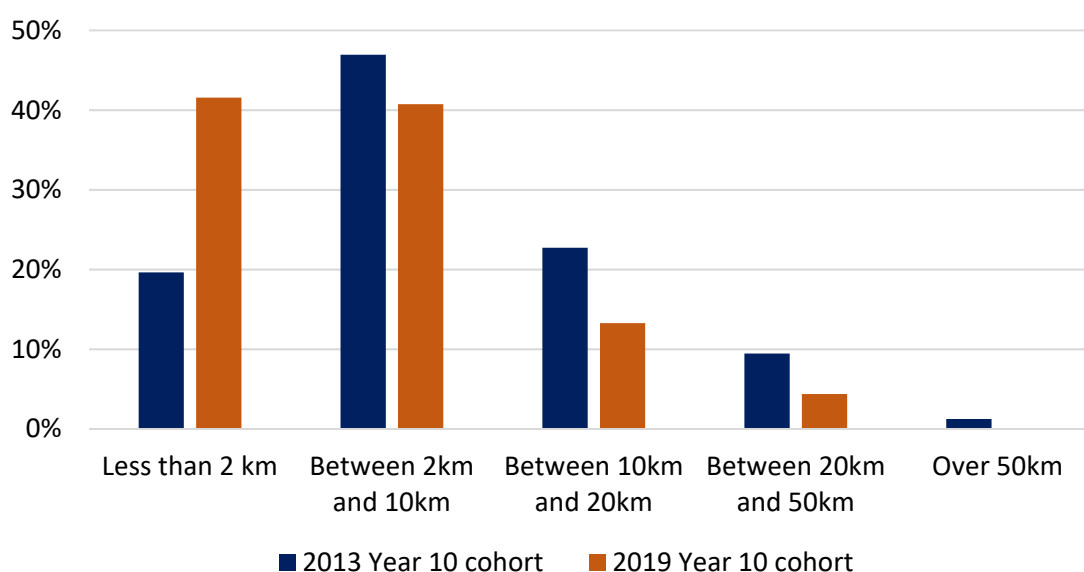
Source: TAO analysis of DoE and Australian Bureau of Statistics data

Access to senior secondary courses improved

4.26 Access, defined by DoE as the distance students need to travel to school, has improved. The Extension Program reduced the median direct distance from a Year 10 student's recorded home address to the nearest senior secondary school halving from 5.1km in 2014 to 2.5km in 2020. For the 20 per cent of students who had to travel the furthest, the average distance dropped from 25.4km in 2014 to 16.1km in 2020.

4.27 Figure 13 shows the distance, as the crow flies, to the nearest senior secondary school in 2014 compared to 2020.

Figure 13: Distance to the nearest Year 11 and 12 provider in 2014 and 2020⁽¹⁾



Note 1: Distances are Euclidean and do not account for the path taken to school.

Source: DoE

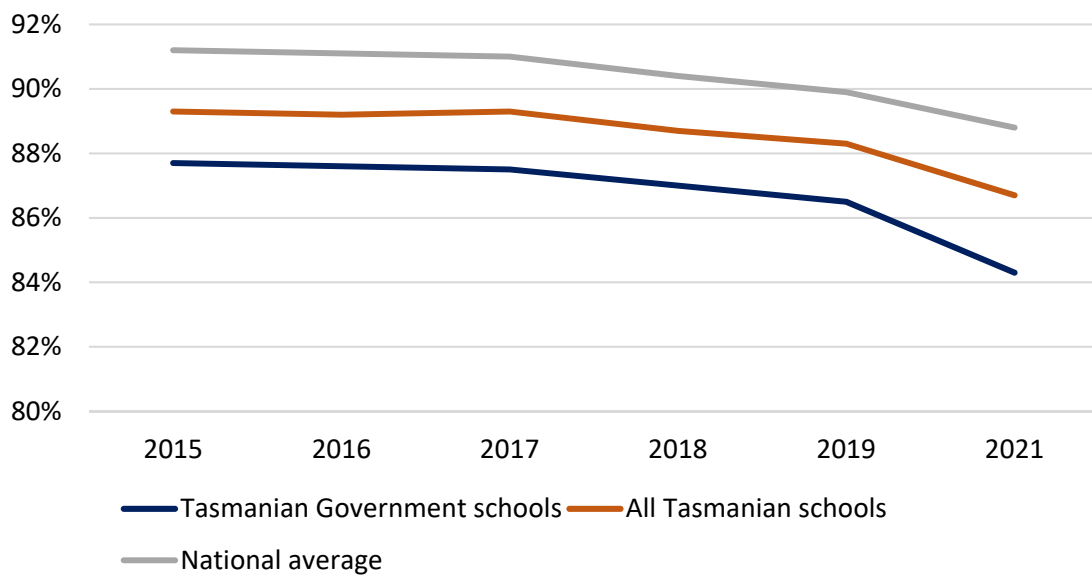
Attendance rates have fallen slightly

- 4.28 Early attendance and declining attendance habits from primary to secondary school have important ramifications for later years of schooling and student outcomes.²³ Non-attendance has a cumulative effect on academic achievement and attendance in future years of schooling.²⁴
- 4.29 The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services (RoGS) series reports on attendance rates for Years 7 to 10. The 2022 RoGS report identified a general downward trend in Years 7 to 10 attendance rates nationally and noted that COVID-19 has had an impact on the data. Figure 14 shows the change in Tasmanian attendance rates for Years 7 to 10 was consistent with the national trend.

²³ Australia Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, *Spotlight – attendance matters*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/>

²⁴ Hancock, K. J., Shepherd, C. C. J., Lawrence, D., & Zubrick, S. R. (2013). *Student attendance and educational outcomes: Every day counts*. Report for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra.

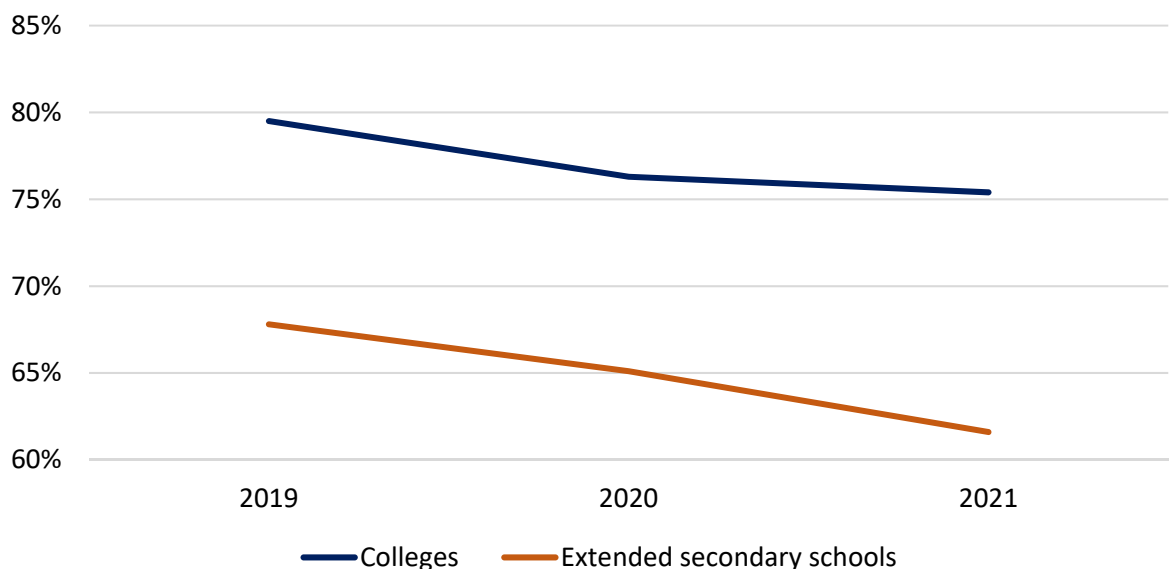
Figure 14: Tasmanian attendance rates for Years 7 to 10 compared with the national average



Source: TAO analysis of Productivity Commission data

- 4.30 DoE has publicly reported attendance rates of Years 11 and 12 students by school since 2019. Figure 15 shows a decline in attendance rates in the last 3 years, which is consistent with the trend in the national average.

Figure 15: Year 11 and 12 attendance rates by State school type, 2019 to 2021



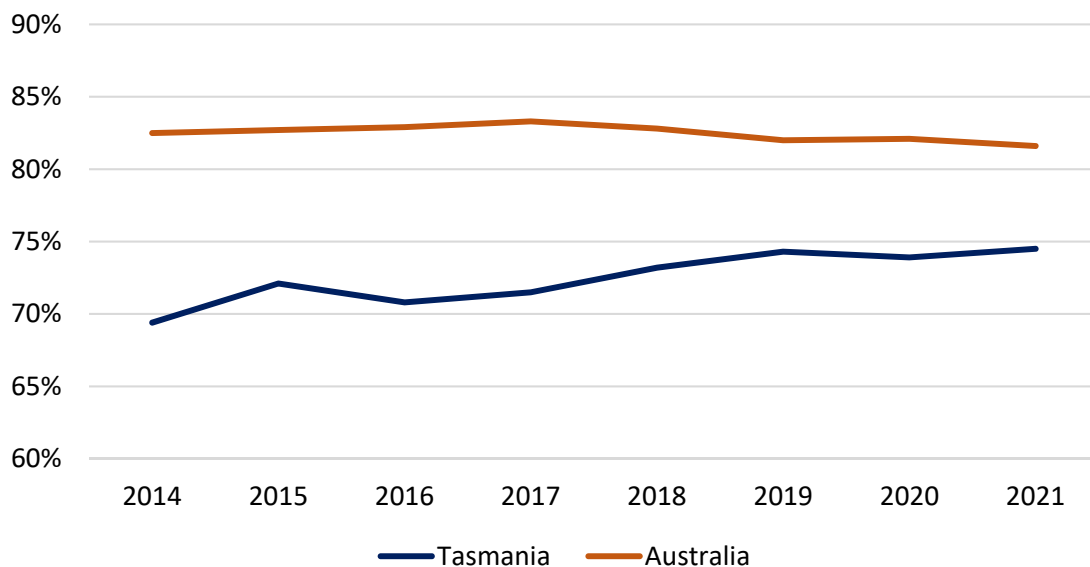
Source: TAO analysis of DoE data

- 4.31 Figure 15 also shows that attendance rates of students in colleges are significantly different from attendance rates of students in extended secondary schools. DoE identified those students who enrol at extended secondary schools in Year 11 often have a history of lower attendance rates than those who enrol at colleges.

Apparent retention rates have improved

- 4.32 Apparent retention estimates the progress of students from Year 10 to Year 12. Figure 16 shows that apparent retention rates have gradually improved. The gap between Tasmanian apparent retention rates and national apparent retention rates has closed.

Figure 16: Apparent retention rates for Tasmania and Australia, 2014 to 2021

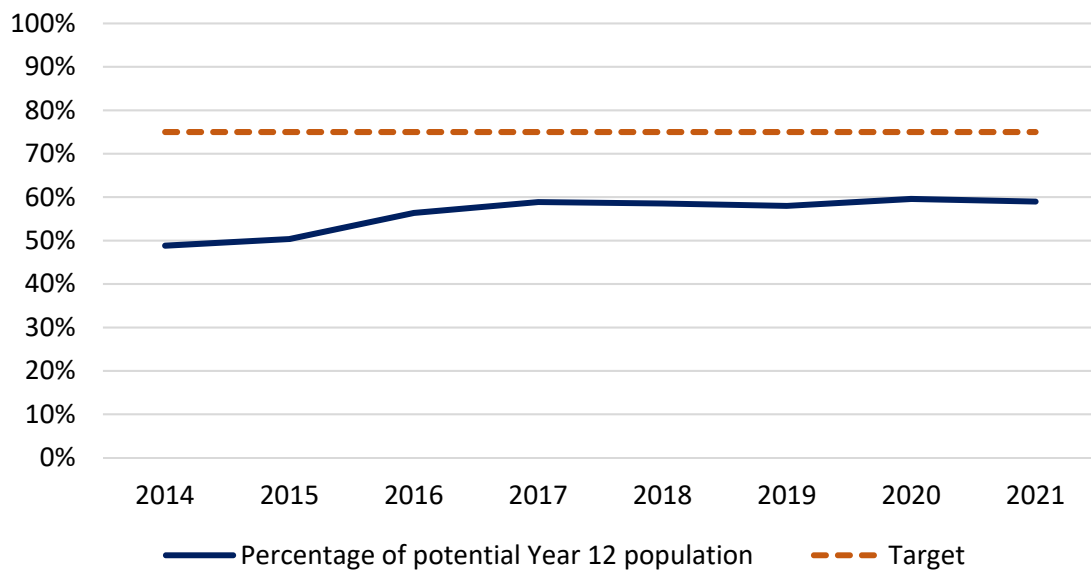


Source: Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

Attainment has improved, but remains below target

- 4.33 The only target set to measure success of the Years 9 to 12 Project was 75 per cent of students to attain a TCE by 2022, outlined in the Years 9 to 12 Project Education Framework, and has therefore been used as a reference to evaluate impact of the reform to date.
- 4.34 Figure 17 shows that the attainment had gradually increased, up from 48.8 per cent in 2014 to 59.0 per cent in 2021.

Figure 17: Percentage of the potential Year 12 population that achieved a TCE, 2014 to 2021

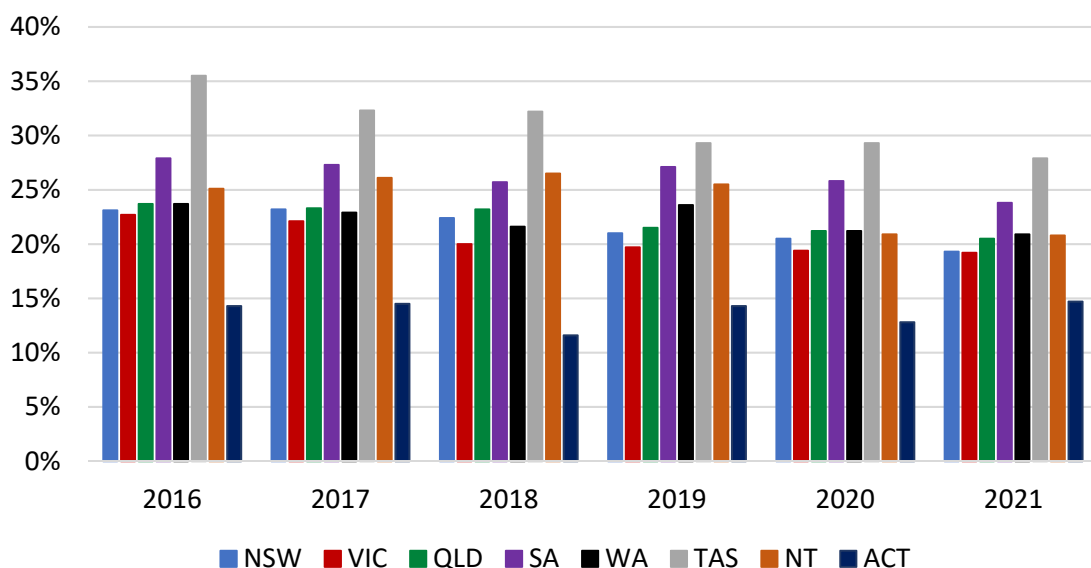


Note 1: TASC bases the potential Year 12 population on an age-weighted value using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates for rate number of persons aged 15-19 in Tasmanian in the given year.

Source: TAO analysis of TASC data

- 4.35 Although still behind other states and territories, attainment has improved over the period of the reforms. Figure 1 showed the years 2007 to 2013. Figure 18 shows the same dataset from 2016 to 2021.

Figure 18: Proportion of Tasmanians that have not completed Year 12 or its equivalent 2016 to 2021



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
Audit Act	<i>Audit Act 2008</i>
Education Act	<i>Education Act 2016</i>
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACER review	2016 review by the Australian Council for Educational Research
CET	Catholic Education Tasmania
DoE	Department of Education
Extension Program	Years 11 and 12 Extension Program
Extended secondary school	A State school that formerly delivered education up to year 10, but now senior secondary education (years 11 and 12) as a result of the Extension Program
FTE	Full time equivalent
IST	Independent Schools Tasmania
Non-government school	A school, other than a State school, that provides educational instruction at any level up to and including the final year of secondary education
RoGS	Report on Government Services
Secondary school	A school providing education from the school year commonly known as Year 7 to Year 12.
Senior secondary education	Education at a school for the school years commonly known as Year 11 and Year 12
State school	A school, including a college for senior secondary education, established, or formed by the amalgamation of schools, under the Education Act or any other enactment that provided for the establishment of schools by the Crown
TASC	Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification
TCE	Tasmanian Certificate of Education
UTAS	University of Tasmania
VEL	Vocational education learning
VET	Vocational education and training
VLT	Virtual Learning Tasmania

Audit Mandate and Standards Applied

Mandate

Section 23 of the *Audit Act 2008* states that:

- (1) The Auditor-General may at any time carry out an examination or investigation for one or more of the following purposes:
 - (a) examining the accounting and financial management information systems of the Treasurer, a State entity or a subsidiary of a State entity to determine their effectiveness in achieving or monitoring program results;
 - (b) investigating any matter relating to the accounts of the Treasurer, a State entity or a subsidiary of a State entity;
 - (c) investigating any matter relating to public money or other money, or to public property or other property;
 - (d) examining the compliance of a State entity or a subsidiary of a State entity with written laws or its own internal policies;
 - (e) examining the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of a State entity, a number of State entities, a part of a State entity or a subsidiary of a State entity;
 - (f) examining the efficiency, effectiveness and economy with which a related entity of a State entity performs functions –
 - (i) on behalf of the State entity; or
 - (ii) in partnership or jointly with the State entity; or
 - (iii) as the delegate or agent of the State entity;
 - (g) examining the performance and exercise of the Employer's functions and powers under the *State Service Act 2000*.
- (2) Any examination or investigation carried out by the Auditor-General under subsection (1) is to be carried out in accordance with the powers of this Act

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; and
- (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.

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