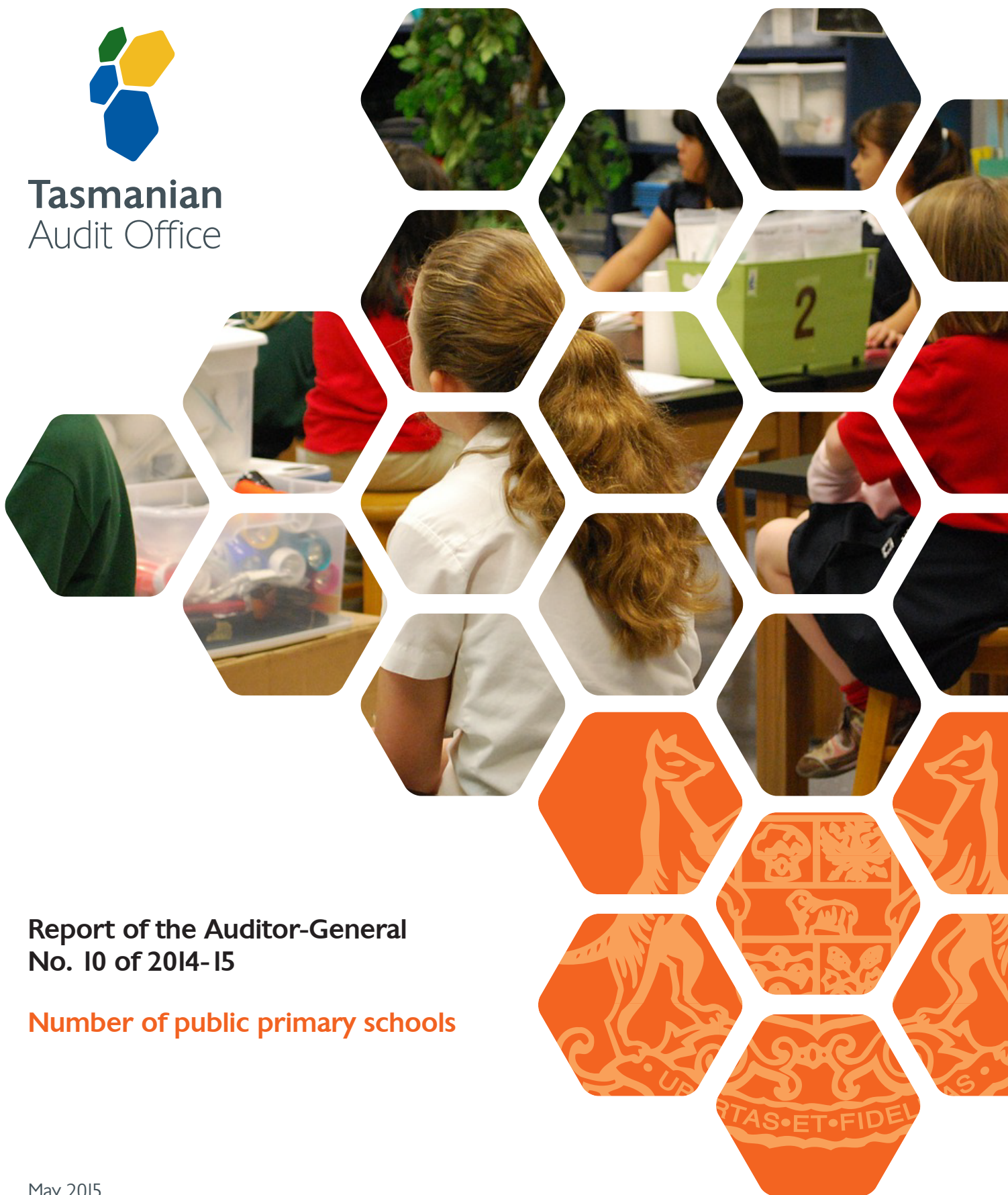




Tasmanian
Audit Office



**Report of the Auditor-General
No. 10 of 2014-15**

Number of public primary schools

May 2015

THE ROLE OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL

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

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

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

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

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

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

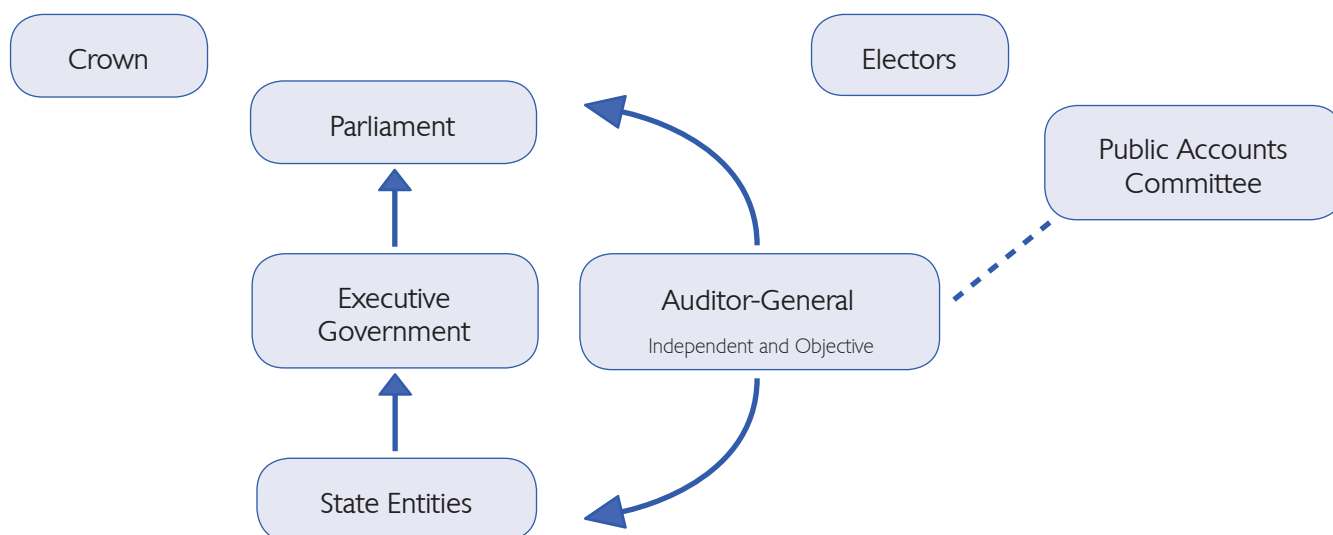
We can also carry out investigations but only relating to public money or to public property. In addition, the Auditor-General is now responsible for state service employer investigations.

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

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

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

The Auditor-General's role as Parliament's auditor is unique.





2015

PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

**REPORT OF THE
AUDITOR-GENERAL
No. 10 of 2014–15**

Number of public primary schools

May 2015

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26 May 2015

President
Legislative Council
HOBART

Speaker
House of Assembly
HOBART

Dear Mr President
Dear Madam Speaker

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL
No. 10 of 2014–15: Number of public primary schools

This report has been prepared consequent to examinations conducted under section 23 of *the Audit Act 2008*. The objective of the audit was to form an opinion on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

Yours sincerely



H M Blake
AUDITOR-GENERAL

Contents

Foreword	vii
List of acronyms and abbreviations.....	viii
Executive summary.....	2
Background	2
Detailed audit conclusions.....	3
Recommendations made.....	5
<i>Audit Act 2008</i> section 30 — Submissions and comments received	8
Introduction	12
1 Macro view: did DoE have the right number of primary schools and were they in the right locations?	16
1.1 Background.....	16
1.2 Was cost per student in Tasmania excessive because of too many primary schools?.....	16
1.3 Were primary school enrolments levels reasonable?	20
1.4 Did Tasmanian small primary schools provide an inadequate range of educational experiences?	23
1.5 Did Tasmanian small primary schools perform poorly with respect to NAPLAN scores?.....	24
1.6 Was the occupancy level of schools reasonable?	26
1.7 Was school capacity reflective of current demographics?	28
1.8 Conclusion.....	29
2 Micro view: were there individual primary schools that were relatively inefficient or ineffective?.....	32
2.1 Background.....	32
2.2 Enrolment numbers	33
2.3 Low enrolments compared to capacity.....	34
2.4 Difficulty attracting and retaining skilled staff.....	35
2.5 Capacity to provide a range of educational experiences.....	36
2.6 Performance measures — NAPLAN.....	37
2.7 Community satisfaction	39
2.8 Cost per student.....	40
2.9 Existence of practical alternatives.....	41
2.10 Summary.....	42
2.11 Conclusion.....	49

3 Process: did DoE regularly review whether marginal primary schools should be retained?	52
3.1 Background.....	52
3.2 Regularity and adequacy of reviews	52
3.3 Actions taken in response to the School Viability Report.....	54
3.4 Conclusion	55
Independent auditor's conclusion.....	58
Recent reports	62
Current projects	64
Appendix 1 Demerit point summary	66

List of figures

Figure 1: Tasmanian primary school costs and cost factors compared to Australian schools	17
Figure 2: Cost per school plotted against enrolments in 2012	19
Figure 3: Average students per school by jurisdiction 2012	20
Figure 4: Average enrolment plotted against urbanisation	21
Figure 5: Occupancy of public primary schools by municipality	29

List of tables

Table 1: Staff per student for enrolment-based groups of schools	18
Table 2: Distribution of public primary school sizes in 2012.....	22
Table 3: Possible negative impacts on students' school experiences from small schools.....	23
Table 4: Year 5 NAPLAN results compared to like schools — by school enrolment size	25
Table 5: Demerit points – low and declining enrolments	34
Table 6: Demerit points – low occupancy	35
Table 7: Demerit points - high separation rates	36
Table 8: Teacher turnover for enrolment-based groups of schools	36
Table 9: Demerit points – NAPLAN results.....	38
Table 10: Demerit points – community satisfaction	40
Table 11: Demerit points – cost per student.....	41
Table 12: Alternative schools.....	42
Table 13: Schools recommended for further consideration	43
Table 14: Demerit points summary	66

Foreword

At the commencement of this audit my intentions were not to conclude whether or not Tasmania has too many or too few public primary schools although, bearing in mind the audit's objective that was always a possibility. My interest was more about understanding how the Department of Education, when considering the number and location of our primary schools, dealt with various factors impacting Tasmania in recent years, including declining student numbers, changing service delivery models, student outcomes, difficult economic times and changing demographic trends.

These and other factors, such as community expectations, whilst sometimes difficult, should not be ignored in designing service models needed for current and emerging circumstances. In my view, this applies to all services provided by governments, not just teaching.

While 17 schools were identified for which either strong or moderate cases existed for closure to be considered, I have not recommended closure. Even if I did, Government is not obliged to take up any such recommendation. However, my audit has highlighted, based on the criteria used and questions posed, that, in my view, decisions about the number and location of our primary schools is needed.

An option open to me was to report without naming the 17 schools referred to and to exclude Appendix 1 from this Report. Instead, my Report could simply have identified criteria the Department should take into account when determining its location and number of primary schools. I decided this option was unhelpful and might lead to inaction.

In conclusion, I thank the Department of Education for their assistance in carrying out this audit. The Secretary allocated a very senior member of his staff and relevant policy personnel which aided data collection and our analysis and understanding.

H M Blake

Auditor-General

26 May 2015

List of acronyms and abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
DoE	Department of Education
EDI	Educational Information System
MoE	Margin of error
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPSK	Population per square kilometre
ROGS	Report on Government Services
School Viability Report	Ministerial Report — School Viability Reference Group Report to the Minister for Education and Skills
STF	School Transition Fund
TAO	Tasmanian Audit Office

Executive summary

Executive summary

Background

With declining rural populations, the tough decision on whether or not to close schools has been an issue across Australia. Tasmania is no exception, with the number of publicly funded schools of concern to governments.

From 1996 to 2010, there was a seven per cent reduction in the number of full-time students enrolled at Tasmanian primary schools and an 11.7 per cent reduction at public primary schools down from 36 770 to 32 485¹. In 2011, then Treasurer Lara Giddings stated in her budget speech² that:

Many [schools] also have under-utilised classrooms as school populations have fallen. If we do not act now, Tasmanian schools will be filled to less than 60 per cent of their capacity by 2013.

Subsequently, the government identified 20 schools for closure as part of budget savings measures for the 2011 state budget. However, following community backlash to that process, the decision was made not to close any of the schools.

Instead, the Minister for Education and Skills established the School Viability Reference Group in August 2011 to consult widely and to provide recommendations on the provision of a viable public school system in Tasmania. The resulting *Ministerial Report — School Viability Reference Group Report to the Minister for Education and Skills* (School Viability Report) was provided to the Minister in January 2012 and was a significant input into this audit.

Audit objective

To form an opinion on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, Schools*, Series 4221.0, ABS, Canberra, 2010.

² L Giddings, *2011–12 Budget Speech, 'Strong decisions Better future'*, delivered in the House of Assembly on 16 June 2011 on the Second Reading of the Consolidated Fund Appropriation Bill (No 1) 2011.

Audit scope

The audit was limited to primary schools as at January 2014, on the basis that there were considerably fewer secondary schools (28) than primary or combined schools (151).

Audit approach

Our approach to determining, which if any, schools may be less efficient and effective than others was to allocate 'demerit points'³ against the following factors:

- Small and declining enrolment numbers.
- Low enrolment of schools compared with capacity.
- Indications of difficulty retaining staff, measured using separations over five years.
- Inability to provide a full range of educational experiences.
- Significantly lower NAPLAN results compared to 'like' schools.
- Indications of low community satisfaction with school, measured using percentage of students in a school's area not enrolled at that school.
- Excessive average cost per student.
- Availability of alternative schools.

No conclusions were reached on the basis of individual criteria. Instead, 'demerit' points were collectively considered.

Detailed audit conclusions

Macro view: did the Department of Education (DoE) have the right number of primary schools and were they in the right locations?

There were some counter-intuitive results that suggested that Tasmania's average enrolments per school and proportion of small schools was not unreasonable, when Tasmania's low urbanisation was considered. There was also no evidence that small schools were disadvantaged in terms of educational performance.

³ The use of the term 'demerit points' is not intended to imply fault of any kind. Our meaning is only that where points are allocated we think there may be an argument for consideration to be given to school closure.

On the other hand, Tasmania had:

- a high cost per student compared to the Australian average. The difference was due to higher staff to student ratios, particularly in smaller schools
- high levels of unused capacity
- only a small proportion of schools with enrolments in the 300 to 500 range favoured by experts.

With each closed school potentially saving the government \$433 000 per year, we concluded that DoE had too many primary schools, particularly in rural areas.

Micro view: did DoE have individual primary schools that were not efficient or effective?

We identified six schools for which a strong case existed for closure to be considered:

- Edith Creek Primary School
- Geeveston Primary School
- Clarendon Vale Primary School
- Avoca Primary School
- Risdon Vale Primary School
- Sprent Primary School.

We also identified another 11 schools for which a moderate case for closure existed:

- Redpa Primary School
- Warrane Primary School
- Collinsvale Primary School
- Natone Primary School
- Zeehan Primary School
- Riana Primary School
- Hillcrest Primary School
- Kempton Primary School
- Sandy Bay Infant School
- Sassafras Primary School
- Springfield Gardens Primary School.

Process view: did DoE regularly review whether marginal primary schools should be retained?

Despite the lack of a systematic review process, there had been a satisfactory level of review over the past five years. In addition the recommendations of the School Viability Report had been receiving a reasonable level of attention.

Recommendations made

The Report contains the following recommendations:

Rec	Section	We recommend that DoE ...
1	1.2	... reviews whether it needs to have more staff per student than other Australian jurisdictions.
2	1.3	... continues to encourage mergers and closures of schools, where students would not be disadvantaged by long travel times.
3	1.6	... regularly review the need for additional capacity where occupancy exceeds 90 per cent.
4	2.5	... and individual schools perform annual assessments of the adequacy of the range of educational experiences offered at each school.
5	2.10	... further analyse and consult on the viability of listed schools and where appropriate actively encourage closures or mergers.
6	3.2	... introduce an annual review of the viability of all of its schools.
7	3.2	... actively targets and encourages school communities to consider mergers and closures, based on an annual review of school viability.

Audit Act 2008 section 30 — Submissions and comments received

Audit Act 2008 section 30 — Submissions and comments received

Introduction

In accordance with section 30(2) of the *Audit Act 2008*, a copy of this Report was provided to DoE.

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

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

Section 30(3) of the *Audit Act 2008* requires that this Report include any submissions or comments made under section 30(2) or a fair summary of them. Submissions received are included in full below.

Department of Education

Thank you for providing me with the draft report to Parliament for the performance audit: *Number of public primary schools*. I welcome the opportunity to comment on the draft report and I would firstly like to thank the Tasmanian Audit Office for their work.

Maintaining efficient and effective schools is certainly a key aspect in achieving the Department's vision of developing successful, skilled and innovative Tasmanians as described in our Learners First Strategy 2014-2017.

As the report notes, declining school enrolments continue to place pressure on our government school system. This is not isolated to Tasmania, but perhaps magnified to some extent. As a response to these changing demographics, it is pleasing that the Report notes the support provided by the School Transition Fund in assisting school communities to voluntarily review education delivery in their local region.

The Department is committed to a process of continuous improvement. What this report does is reinforce the need to continue to monitor and review our schools, and the overall system, to ensure we are providing the best possible learning environments for our children now and into the future.

The recommendations contained within the Report are noted and the Department will take these into consideration for future planning, where it assists in the delivery of government policy.

Colin Pettit
Secretary

Introduction

Introduction

Background

With declining rural populations, the tough decision on whether or not to close schools has been an issue across Australia. Tasmania is no exception, with the number of publicly funded schools of concern to governments.

From 1996 to 2010, there was a seven per cent reduction in the number of full-time students enrolled at Tasmanian primary schools and an 11.7 per cent reduction at public primary schools down from 36 770 to 32 485⁴. In 2011, then Treasurer Lara Giddings stated in her budget speech⁵ that:

Many [schools] also have under-utilised classrooms as school populations have fallen. If we do not act now, Tasmanian schools will be filled to less than 60 per cent of their capacity by 2013.

Subsequently, the government identified 20 schools for closure as part of budget savings measures for the 2011 State Budget. However, following community backlash to that process, the decision was made not to close any of the schools.

Instead, the Minister for Education and Skills established the School Viability Reference Group in August 2011 to consult widely and to provide recommendations on the provision of a viable public school system in Tasmania. The resulting School Viability Report⁶ was provided to the Minister in January 2012 and has been a significant input into this audit.

Audit objective

To form an opinion on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

Audit criteria

The audit criteria that we developed for this audit addressed the following aspects of efficiency and effectiveness:

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Population Growth, Australia, Schools*, Series 4221.0, ABS, Canberra, 2010.

⁵ L Giddings, *2011–12 Budget Speech, 'Strong decisions Better future'*, delivered in the House of Assembly on 16 June 2011 on the Second Reading of the Consolidated Fund Appropriation Bill (No 1) 2011.

⁶ School Viability Reference Group, *Ministerial Report — School Viability, Report to the Minister for Education and Skills*, 31, Hobart, January 2012.

- Macro view: did the Department of Education (DoE) have the right number of schools and were they in the right locations?
- Micro view: were there individual primary schools that were relatively inefficient or ineffective?
- Process: did DoE regularly review whether marginal schools should be retained?

Audit scope

The audit was limited to primary and combined schools as at January 2014, on the basis that there were considerably fewer secondary schools (28) than primary and combined schools (151).

Audit approach

Our approach to determining, which if any, schools may be less efficient and effective than others was to allocate ‘demerit points’⁷ against the following factors:

- Small and declining enrolment numbers.
- Low enrolment of schools compared with capacity.
- Indications of difficulty retaining staff, measured using separations over five years.
- Inability to provide a full range of educational experiences.
- Significantly lower NAPLAN results compared to ‘like’ schools.
- Indications of low community satisfaction with school, measured using percentage of students in a school’s area not enrolled at that school.
- Excessive average cost per student.
- Availability of alternative schools.

No conclusions were reached on the basis of individual criteria. Instead, ‘demerit’ points were collectively considered.

⁷ The use of the term ‘demerit points’ is not intended to imply fault of any kind. Our meaning is only that where points are allocated we think there may be an argument for consideration to be given to school closure.

Internal audit

The internal audit section of DoE advised that other than compliance audits of schools, it had not recently performed work relevant to this audit.

Timing

Planning for this audit began in September 2014. Fieldwork was completed in February 2015 and the report was finalised in April 2015.

Resources

The audit plan recommended 800 hours and a budget, excluding production costs, of \$126 845. Total hours were 738 and actual costs, excluding production, were \$148 343, which was within our time budget, but exceeded our dollar budget.

We acknowledge the excellent co-operation provided by DoE throughout the audit.

Why we did this audit

This topic was considered because the number of schools was considered an important factor in the effectiveness and efficiency of education. It was initially included in the *Annual Plan of Work 2011–12*, but was deferred in the wake of the government identification of 20 schools for closure in 2011 and the subsequent community backlash. The topic was subsequently included in the *Annual Plan of Work 2014–15*.

1 Macro view: did DoE have the right number of primary schools and were they in the right locations?

1 Macro view: did DoE have the right number of primary schools and were they in the right locations?

1.1 Background

This Chapter asks a number of questions related to whether DoE had the right number of schools and whether they were in the right locations:

- Was cost per student in Tasmania excessive because of too many primary schools? [Section 1.2]
- Were primary school enrolments levels reasonable? [Section 1.3]
- Did Tasmanian small primary schools provide an inadequate range of educational experiences? [Section 1.4]
- Did Tasmanian small primary schools perform poorly with respect to NAPLAN⁸ scores? [Section 1.5]
- Was the occupancy level of schools reasonable? [Section 1.6]
- Was school capacity reflective of current demographics? [Section 1.7]

1.2 *Was cost per student in Tasmania excessive because of too many primary schools?*

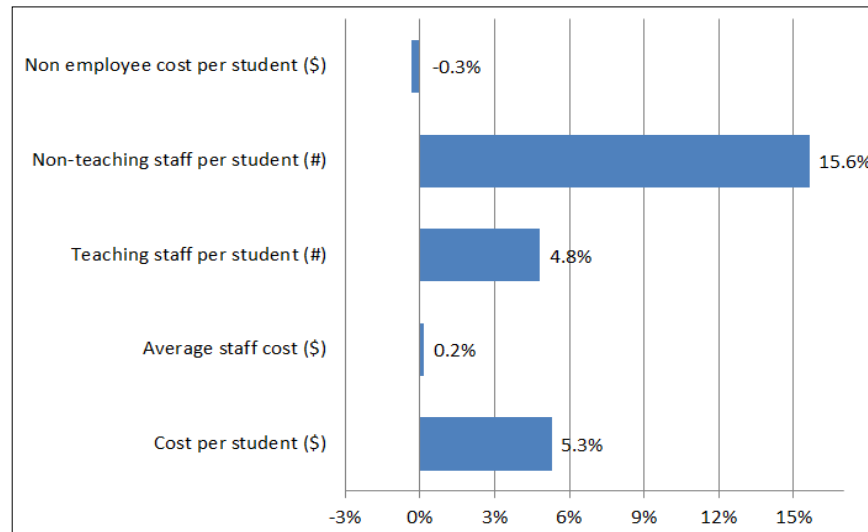
1.2.1 Cost per student analysis

In this Section, we compare costs per student with other jurisdictions and examine whether any differences are related to Tasmania's lower enrolment average.

Our comparison of Tasmanian and Australian costs per student was based on Report on Government Services (ROGS) 2014, which included school data up to 2012. The results are shown in Figure 1, with bars to the left of 0% indicating Tasmanian averages that were less than Australian averages and *vice versa*.

⁸ The National Assessment Program — Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual national assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It has been an everyday part of the school calendar since 2008. NAPLAN tests the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy.

Figure 1: Tasmanian primary school costs and cost factors compared to Australian schools⁹



Source: Tasmanian Audit Office (TAO) analysis based on Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services 2014*, Tables 4A.1 and 4A.10.

Figure 1 shows that Tasmanian cost per student was 5.3 per cent higher than the Australian per-student cost, despite the average staff cost (wage) and non-employee costs being similar. The higher cost was primarily due to more teaching staff per student (4.8 per cent) and more non-teaching staff per student (15.6 per cent).

We also reviewed the number of teachers and non-teaching staff per student for enrolment-based groupings of schools, to determine whether there was a relationship between enrolment and numbers of staff per student. The results are shown in Table 1.

⁹ DoE advised that its relatively high level of non-teaching staff per student partly reflects its decision to allocate DoE staff for specialised services (such as disability, psychology and social services) to in-school staff.

Table 1: Staff per student for enrolment-based groups of schools

School enrolment ranges	Tasmanian enrolment distribution	Teachers per student	Other staff per student
1–35	4%	0.113	0.091
36–100	20%	0.082	0.058
101–200	20%	0.073	0.048
201–300	29%	0.071	0.037
301+	27%	0.063	0.032
Tasmanian averages		0.0730	0.0443

Source: TAO analysis, based on MySchool data provided by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for 2013 which is publicly available on the MySchool website: <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

Table 1 shows that there is a clear relationship with more teaching and non-teaching staff per student in smaller schools. It follows, that reducing the proportion of schools in the 1 to 35 and 36 to 100 categories has the potential to reduce average staff per student and hence reduce costs.

In summary, Tasmania had higher costs per student than the rest of Australia, due to having more teachers and non-teaching staff per student. This disparity could be reduced or eliminated by closing small schools or merging them with other primary schools.

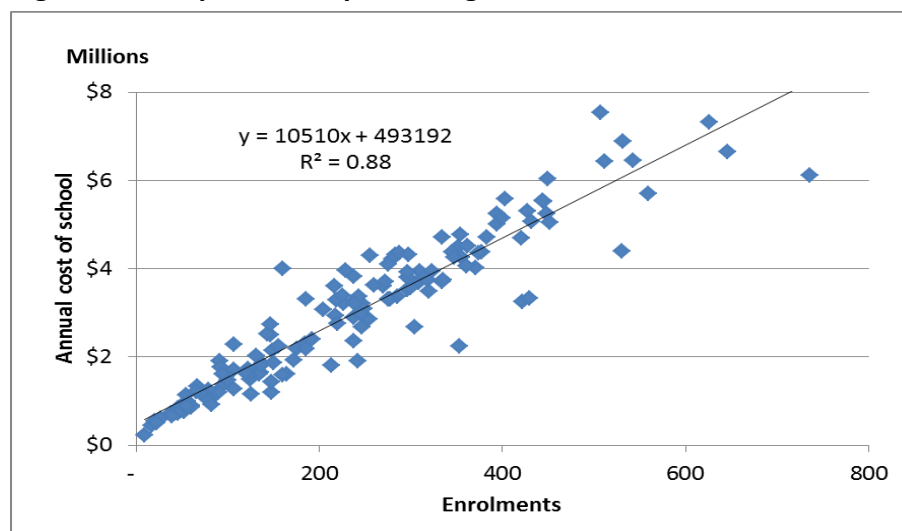
Recommendation 1

We recommend that DoE reviews whether it needs to have more staff per student than other Australian jurisdictions.

1.2.2 Cost per school analysis

To determine the cost impact of each additional school, we plotted the full annual cost¹⁰ of schools against each school's 2014 enrolment. The results are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Cost per school plotted against enrolments in 2012



Source: TAO analysis, based on cost and enrolment data for 2012 provided by DoE and ROGS 2014, Table 4A.10 (which provided data for 2012)

Figure 2 shows an approximately linear relationship between cost per school and number of enrolments. Using regression analysis we determined that the relationship was a good approximation to:

Annual full cost of a school = \$493 192 + \$10 510 for each student.

It follows that each school closed would save approximately \$493 000 in annual long-term school costs, less any costs of providing buses to alternative schools.

The Department of State Growth was committed to providing buses for students and would establish or extend a bus route as necessary. A senior officer of the department provided a 'ball park' estimate that the cost to the department of each bus user was \$12 per day and that bus usage may be as low as 25 per cent of a primary school community. On that basis, additional

¹⁰ Our full annual cost includes both recurrent and capital costs. For recurrent cost we used 2012 DoE school expenditure data which we checked against summary data provided in ROGS. For capital cost we included annual depreciation and annual cost of capital at eight per cent, which collectively represent the full long-term cost of capital, as well as smoothing out the irregular nature of capital investment.

annual bussing cost of closing a school of 100 students was estimated at \$60 000 ($25\% \times \12×200 school days $\times 100$ students) and the estimated annual saving from closing a school was accordingly reduced to \$433 000.

1.3 Were primary school enrolments levels reasonable?

We examined the reasonableness of average enrolments from three perspectives:

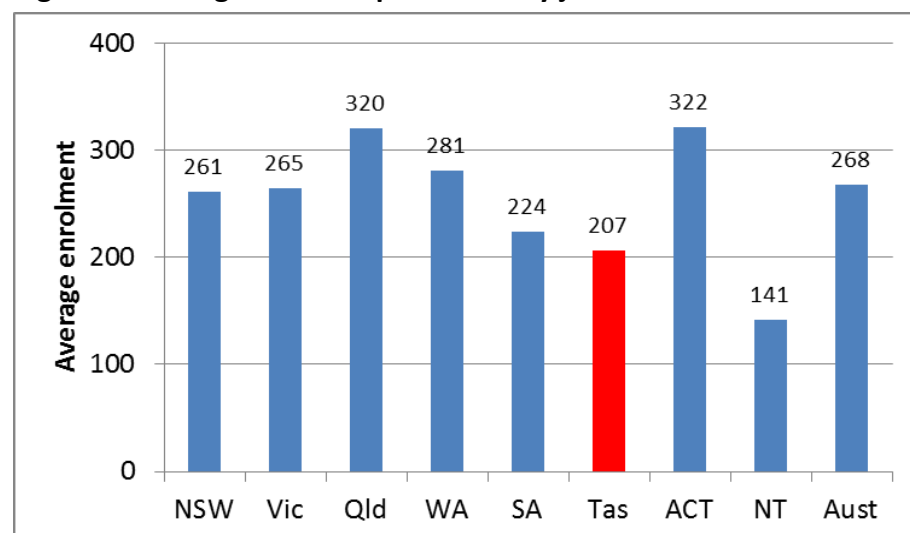
- comparison of average enrolments with other jurisdictions
- proportion of small primary schools compared to other jurisdictions
- expert opinion.

1.3.1 Comparison of average enrolments with other jurisdictions

Schools with low enrolments are more expensive per student, because of the impact of fixed costs. There are also arguments that very small schools may be less able to offer the same range of educational experiences as larger schools.

Figure 3 compares Tasmania's average public primary school enrolment with other jurisdictions.

Figure 3: Average students per school by jurisdiction 2012

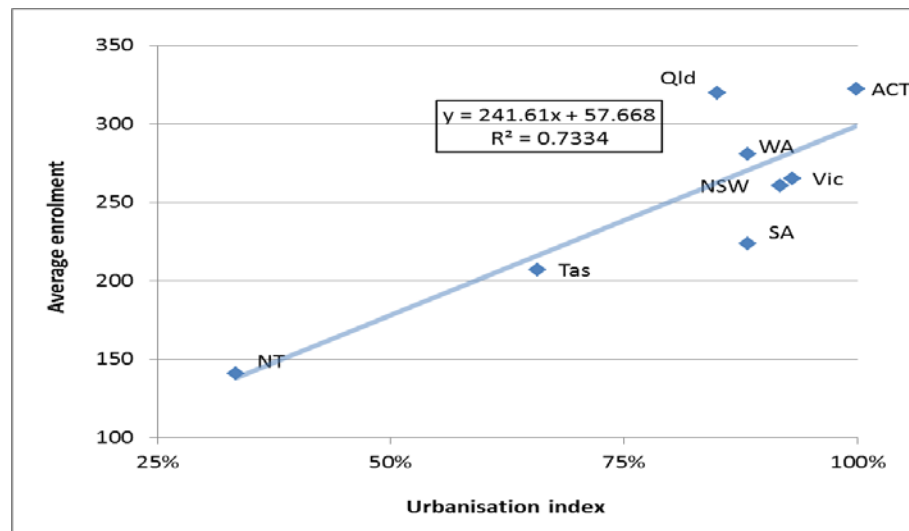


Source: Productivity Commission *ROGS, 2014*, Table 4A.1 (which provided data for 2012)

Figure 3 shows Tasmania's average enrolment was significantly below all states and the ACT (it was only 77 per cent of the Australian average).

However, this comparison is simplistic in that it fails to take into account Tasmania's relatively low level of urbanisation. In our view, it is to be expected that schools will tend to be smaller where a higher proportion of students live outside urban areas. To test this we calculated an urbanisation index based on Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data¹¹ and plotted the index against average enrolment. The result is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Average enrolment plotted against urbanisation



Source: TAO analysis based on ROGS 2014, Table 4A.1 and ABS, 3218.0 - *Regional Population Growth*, Australia, 2012-13

While it was not possible from the limited data to derive a reliable regression equation from just eight data points, Figure 4 provided some support for the proposition that jurisdictions with higher levels of urbanisation tend to have higher average enrolments and that Tasmania's average enrolment was not unreasonably low.

1.3.2 *Proportion of small primary schools compared to other jurisdictions*

Looking only at average enrolment per school, can potentially convey a misleading impression, where a small number of unusually small or large schools can skew the results and have a substantial effect on the average.

¹¹ The index was derived using data from 'Estimated Resident Population by Remoteness Structure' from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Series 3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2012-13*, ABS, Canberra, 2014.

To examine this, we used publicly available data from all jurisdictions to compare proportions of schools in various enrolment ranges. The results are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Distribution of public primary school sizes in 2012

Enrolment size	Tasmania	Australia
1–35	3.9%	14.5%
36–100	20.3%	15.0%
101–300	49.2%	31.0%
301–600	26.6%	30.2%
601+	0.0%	9.2%

Source: ROGS 2014, Table 4A.24 (which provided data for 2012)

Table 2 shows that Tasmania actually had a significantly lower proportion of small schools (those with enrolments less than 100) than the Australian average. Tasmania also had a substantially lower proportion for schools with enrolments less than 35 (lower in fact than all jurisdictions other than the ACT).

On the other hand, the ROGS data showed that Tasmania had fewer schools with enrolments greater than 300 and none greater than 600, which explained Tasmania's lower average enrolment per school. That is hardly a surprise given Tasmania's smaller cities and lower level of urbanisation.

On that basis, there was no evidence that Tasmania had too many small schools relative to other jurisdictions; in fact quite the contrary.

1.3.3 Expert opinion

We noted that an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) literature update, which reviewed 39 professional papers in the area of empirical research on economies of school size¹² found:

... evidence that moderately sized [primary] schools (300–500 students) ... may optimally balance economies of size with the potential negative effects of large schools.

¹² M Ares Abalde, *School Size Policies: A Literature Review*, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 106, OECD Publishing, p. 37, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5jxt472ddkjl-en>.

First term enrolments in Tasmania for 2014 indicated that only 32 per cent of public primary schools were in the 300 to 500 range.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that DoE continues to encourage mergers and closures of schools, where students would not be disadvantaged by long travel times.¹³

1.4 *Did Tasmanian small primary schools provide an inadequate range of educational experiences?*

We also considered the possibility that smaller schools would not be able to provide the same range of educational experiences as larger schools. Table 3 shows our findings from research outlined in an OECD summary of research¹⁴.

Table 3: Possible negative impacts on students' school experiences from small schools

Possible areas of negative impact	Research findings
Quality and the breadth of the academic curriculum offered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ No reliable relationship existed between school size and curriculum quality.▪ Focus on a few core courses can lead to high student outcomes.▪ Broader curriculums only benefit a small number of students.▪ Small schools can also incorporate specialised material in regular classes.
Multi-grade classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Empirical evidence comparing outcomes of multi-grade and single grade classes was inconclusive or showed little difference.▪ Some studies have suggested positive implications of multi-grade classes for student attitudes and social behaviour.
Extra-curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Larger schools offer a broader and more varied set of extracurricular courses.

¹³ We have purposely left it for DoE to define 'long' travel times. We note that the School Viability Report suggested a 45 minute limit of bus travel each way for primary school students, and that benchmark appears reasonable to us.

¹⁴ Ares Abalde *Op. cit.*, Sections 4.1 and 4.2.

Possible areas of negative impact	Research findings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> However, smaller schools were found to provide greater and more equitable participation in extra-curricular activities and in leadership roles.
Teacher and student satisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers perform more administrative tasks in small schools which may negatively impact on teacher satisfaction. However, students were found to have more positive attitudes (lower dropout rates, higher attendance rates, less bullying). Teachers were better able to respond to the needs of individual students. <p>Also, our own analysis in section 2.4 found no indication in separation rates that teachers in small schools have less job satisfaction.</p>

Based on Table 3, we were not persuaded that any of the possible negative impacts of small schools were supported by research. An important qualification to our findings is that much of the research referred to considers a small school to be one with enrolment less than 300. It seems likely to us that very small schools (less than 35 enrolled students) would struggle to provide the same range of educational experiences; however, we do not feel confident to say in respect of any particular school that students are not getting an adequate educational experience.

In summary, we have not seen persuasive evidence that small schools — with the possible exception of schools with enrolments less than 35 — are not able to provide the same range of educational experiences as larger schools.

1.5 *Did Tasmanian small primary schools perform poorly with respect to NAPLAN scores?*

We were interested in the extent to which school size might impact on teaching of literacy and numeracy as measured by NAPLAN. The NAPLAN website¹⁵ notes that:

¹⁵ <http://www.nap.edu.au/naplan/naplan.html>

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual [national] assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. It has been an everyday part of the school calendar since 2008. NAPLAN tests the sorts of skills that are essential for every child to progress through school and life, such as reading, writing, spelling and numeracy.

We based our analysis on average Year 5 NAPLAN results for each school divided by the like-school¹⁶ average for each primary school (Yr5/Sim). We then calculated average Y5/Sim for ranges of school sizes as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Year 5 NAPLAN results compared to like schools — by school enrolment size

Range of school enrolments	Yr5/Sim
Less than 51	1.020
51 – 100	1.013
101 – 150	0.992
151 – 300	0.995
More than 300	1.003
All public primary schools	1.001

Source: TAO analysis, based on MySchool data provided by ACARA for 2013 which is publicly available on the MySchool website: <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

Table 4 shows no significant relationship between school enrolments and NAPLAN results on a ‘like-schools’ basis; although there was slender evidence that very small schools may do slightly better than larger schools. We also noted that Tasmanian public primary schools perform at the Australian average on a ‘like-school’ basis.

We concluded that there was no evidence that small schools perform poorly with respect to NAPLAN, compared to either Tasmanian or Australian averages.

¹⁶ Rather than use the simple average, we divided each school’s average score for the school by the average result for schools with similar levels of socio-educational advantage (like schools), which we considered a fairer basis for comparison. We refer to that measure as Yr5/Sim. A score greater than 1 indicates students at the school scored higher than the Australian average for like schools.

1.6 *Was the occupancy level of schools reasonable?*

1.6.1 *Low occupancy*

Schools with low occupancy tend to be more expensive per student and difficult to maintain since state funding is largely based on enrolments. They may also be subject to increased professional isolation, reduced access to resources and poor morale, associated with doubts regarding ongoing viability, empty classrooms and maintenance concerns.

We calculated school occupancy as school enrolments divided by school capacity¹⁷. At the individual school level, we considered 90 per cent to represent full occupancy on the basis that there needs to be some allowance for demographic and cyclical changes. However, that percentage is difficult to achieve given that many schools were built at a time when they served larger populations and that changes are difficult to make in the short term.

We also sought information on average occupancy of primary schools in other jurisdictions and were advised that the occupancy rate was 90 per cent in New South Wales, 83 per cent in South Australia and 78 per cent in Queensland.

We chose the lowest rate, Queensland's 78 per cent, as our benchmark given that we saw 90 per cent as full occupancy and considered full occupancy as particularly difficult to average in Tasmania with its many small towns and low level of urbanisation.

We found that in 2014, the average occupancy of public primary schools was only 70 per cent — well below our benchmark of 78 per cent.

We also noted that:

- 51 per cent of schools were below 70 per cent occupied and 23 per cent were below 50 per cent occupied
- there was little difference between regions (North West: 65 per cent, North: 74 per cent, South: 70 per cent).

¹⁷ School capacity is measured by DoE on the basis of fully enclosed covered areas of a school. It is calculated as 25 students for each room capable of being used as a classroom, including music rooms, specialist facilities and other dedicated uses of rooms.

Achievement of the Queensland rate would require closure of 20 schools. Our calculation of cost per additional school in Section 1.2 suggested that the long-term annual savings from closure of 20 schools would be approximately \$8.66m.

1.6.2 High occupancy

We also examined whether there was evidence of excessive occupancy levels at individual schools or locations. As noted in Section 1.6.1, we considered 90 per cent to represent full occupancy on the basis that there needs to be some allowance for demographic and cyclical changes.

We found that there were 25 schools with occupancy greater than 90 per cent in 2014, including 12 schools nominally at greater than 100 per cent. However of those, 22 schools were close to clusters of schools with spare capacity. The remaining three schools with greater than 90 per cent occupancy were:

- Bicheno Primary School at 104 per cent
- Richmond Primary School at 97 per cent
- Evandale Primary School at 93 per cent.

We also noted that on the trend of the past decade the public primary schools in the Hobart and Kingborough municipalities are likely to collectively exceed 90 per cent by 2018.

Nonetheless, our overall conclusion regarding occupancy is that there is excess capacity in Tasmanian public primary schools and that significant savings could be achieved by closures and mergers.

We restate Recommendation 2:

We recommend that DoE continues to encourage mergers and closures of schools, where students would not be disadvantaged by long travel times.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that DoE regularly review the need for additional capacity where occupancy exceeds 90 per cent.

1.7 Was school capacity reflective of current demographics?

Our expectation was there would be reasonable equity in provision of school capacity with respect to regions, municipalities and between urban, rural and regional areas¹⁸.

We found:

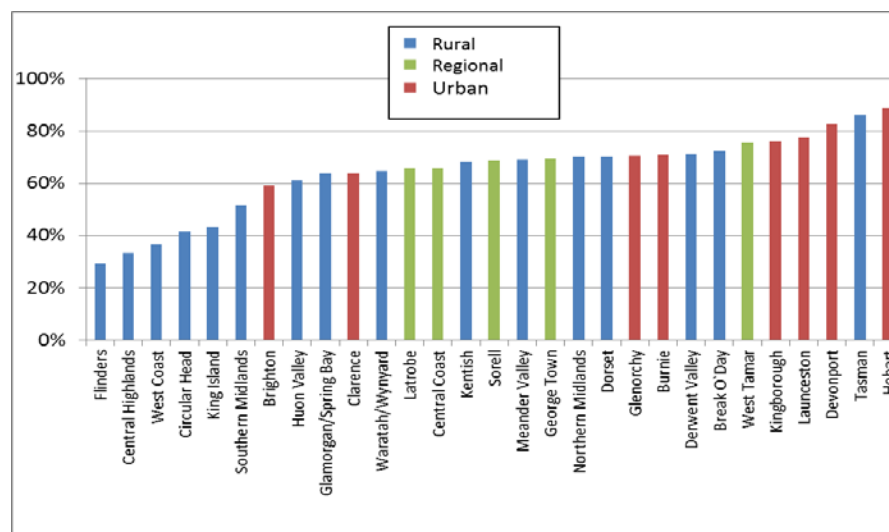
- differences in school capacity per thousand population, by region were reasonably small (North: 107, North West: 128, South: 99)¹⁹
- considerably more capacity per thousand population in rural areas than in urban²⁰ (Urban 96, Rural: 131). However, when adjustment was made for students in private schools the difference no longer existed (Urban: 151, Rural: 151).
- at the municipality level, there were large disparities in percentage of capacity used (for example, Central Highlands: 33 per cent, West Coast: 37 per cent compared to Hobart: 89 per cent and Devonport: 83 per cent). This is shown in Figure 5, below.

¹⁸ We categorised municipalities as urban, regional or rural based on population per kilometre² using ABS 2012 data.

¹⁹ From TAO analysis based on Australian Bureau of Statistics *3218.0 - Regional Population Growth*, Australia, ABS, Canberra, 2012-13 and school capacity data for 2014 provided by DoE.

²⁰ We categorised each municipality as urban, regional or rural based on population in 2013 per square km of area (PPSK). We categorised municipalities as urban where PPSK was greater than 40 and as rural where PPSK was less than 10. The analysis was also based on data from Australian Bureau of Statistics, *3218.0 - Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2012-13*, ABS, Canberra.

Figure 5: Occupancy of public primary schools by municipality



Source: DoE school-based data 2014

Our conclusion is that school capacity has been provided equitably between regions and between rural and urban areas. However, there are large disparities in provision of capacity between municipalities.

We restate Recommendation 2:

We recommend that DoE continues to encourage mergers and closures of schools, where students would not be disadvantaged by long travel times.

1.8 Conclusion

There were some counter-intuitive results that suggested that Tasmania's average enrolments per school and proportion of small schools was not unreasonable, when Tasmania's low urbanisation was considered. There was also no evidence that small schools were disadvantaged in terms of educational performance.

On the other hand, Tasmania had:

- a high cost per student compared to the Australian average. The difference was due to higher staff to student ratios, particularly in smaller schools
- high levels of unused capacity
- only a small proportion of schools with enrolments in the 300 to 500 range favoured by experts.

With each closed school potentially saving the government \$433 000 per year, we concluded that DoE had too many primary schools, particularly in rural areas.

2 Micro view: were there individual primary schools that were relatively inefficient or ineffective?

2 Micro view: were there individual primary schools that were relatively inefficient or ineffective?

2.1 Background

In this Section, we considered which, if any, schools may be less efficient and effective than others.

The School Viability Report²¹ noted that:

... literature searches at an international and national level provided no universally agreed process or common approach to school viability. While this research was useful, it clearly showed that there was no ‘one way’ of approaching this issue.

Our approach was to allocate ‘demerit points’²² against the following factors:

- Small and declining enrolment numbers (Section 2.2).
- Low enrolment of schools compared with capacity (Section 2.3).
- Indications of difficulty retaining staff, measured using separations over five years (Section 2.4).
- Inability to provide a full range of educational experiences (Section 2.5).
- Significantly lower NAPLAN results compared to ‘like’ schools (Section 2.6).
- Indications of low community satisfaction with school, measured using percentage of students in a school’s area not enrolled at that school (Section 2.7).
- Excessive average cost per student (Section 2.8).
- Availability of alternative schools (Section 2.9).

No conclusions were reached on the basis of individual criteria. Instead, the ‘demerit’ points are collectively considered in Section 2.10.

²¹ School Viability Reference Group, *Ministerial Report — School Viability, Report to the Minister for Education and Skills*, 31 January 2012, p. 13.

²² The use of the term ‘demerit points’ is not intended to imply fault of any kind. Our meaning is only that where points are allocated we think there may be an argument for consideration to be given to school closure.

2.2 Enrolment numbers

One indicator of a school's long-term effectiveness and efficiency is low enrolment, which we have defined to be enrolment of less than 100²³. Our basis for this assertion is that low enrolment:

- raises doubts as to the ongoing viability of a school
- is inefficient because of under-use of infrastructure and excessive maintenance requirements per student
- can lead to infrastructure being poorly maintained and not optimised for service delivery (since funding is largely based on enrolment numbers)
- makes measurement of school performance much less meaningful because of the large margins of error implicit in the NAPLAN scores of smaller populations
- makes it difficult to provide the same richness and diversity of learning activities in very small schools because of smaller pools of teachers, specialist staff and students to lead and engage in activities
- is not in the 300–500 range recommended by some academic researchers²⁴.

Using 2014 enrolment data provided by DoE, we calculated demerit points as shown in Table 5.

²³ The Reference Group for the School Viability Report proposed that benchmarks be set as a starting point at 100 students for urban schools and 150 for rural schools with respect to student enrolment numbers. We modified that to a simple benchmark of 100 for all primary schools.

²⁴ M Andrews, W Duncombe and J Yinger, *Revisiting economies of size in American education: are we any closer to a consensus?*, *Economics of Education Review* 21, 2002, pp.245–262 noted that 'there is some evidence that moderately sized elementary schools (300–500 students) ... may optimally balance economies of size with the potential negative effects of large schools'.

Table 5: Demerit points – low and declining enrolments

Enrolment in 2014	Demerit points
More than 90 ²⁵	0 points
61 - 90	1 point
31 - 60	2 points
Less than or equal to 30	3 points
An extra point if enrolment was less than 90 and had declined in both of the two previous years	

Most of the 151 schools had enrolments in excess of 90 students with points allocated as follows:

- 1 point: 6 schools
- 2 points 7 schools
- 3 points: 11 schools
- 4 points: 2 schools

Points awarded to individual schools are shown in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10.

2.3 *Low enrolments compared to capacity*

One indicator of a school's long-term effectiveness and efficiency is enrolment compared to school capacity (occupancy). Our basis for this assertion is that low occupancy:

- is inefficient because of under-use of infrastructure and excessive maintenance requirements per student
- can lead to infrastructure being poorly maintained and not optimised for service delivery
- raises doubts as to the ongoing viability of the school
- can lead to low morale of students and teachers in an 'empty' school.

We calculated occupancy percentage using 2014 enrolments and school capacity provided by DoE. We used 90 per cent as our benchmark for full occupancy on the basis that there needs to be some allowance for demographic and cyclical changes.

²⁵ Although we defined low enrolment as less than 100, we have taken the conservative approach of only allocating points where enrolments were less than or equal to 90 to allow for possible fluctuations or inaccuracies in the data.

However we only allocated low enrolment points for occupancy levels below or equal to 80 per cent.

We calculated demerit points as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Demerit points – low occupancy

Occupancy per cent (enrolments / Capacity in 2014)	Demerit points	Schools
More than 80%	0 points	49
61 - 80%	1 point	48
41 - 60%	2 points	36
21 - 40%	3 points	14
Less than or equal to 20%	4 points	4
Total		151

Points awarded to individual schools are shown in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10

2.4 *Difficulty attracting and retaining skilled staff*

This criterion was included because skilled and experienced teachers have an obvious impact on the capacity of schools to effectively educate students. Initially, we had hoped to consider a range of measures in relation to individual school's difficulties in attracting and retaining staff. However, no evidence was available to assess whether schools found it difficult to recruit new staff. Instead, we relied on separation data from 2010 to 2014²⁶.

We recognise that a high proportion of staff separations was not necessarily an indication that a school was 'ineffective' and might have been only a temporary situation or due to chance or other factors. Nonetheless, a school that is consistently unable to retain staff will struggle to effectively educate its students. We believe the staff separations was worthy of inclusion, given that we were only attempting to identify a list of schools that should be considered for closure or merger. No single indicator was sufficient to place a school on our list.

Demerit points have been calculated in regard to high separation rates over five years relative to the number of

²⁶ Data provided by DoE

teachers at each school, as shown in Table 7. We based the points on how separation rates at each primary school compared with the average separation rate for all primary schools (9.9 per cent). We also made a small adjustment so that a single separation did not produce an unreasonably high rate for very small schools.

Table 7: Demerit points - high separation rates

Five-year staff separation rates	Demerit points	Schools
Less than 10% above Tasmanian primary school average	0 points	119
11–20% above average	1 point	22
21–30% above average	2 points	9
31–40% above average	3 points	1
More than 40% above average	4 points	0
Total		151

We also calculated average separation rates for ranges of school sizes as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Teacher turnover for enrolment-based groups of schools

Range of school enrolments	5Y teacher turnover
Less than 51	13.4%
51 – 100	20.2%
101 – 150	9.9%
151 – 300	14.4%
More than 300	17.4%
All public primary schools	15.5%

Source: TAO analysis based on DoE data

Table 8 showed no relationship between school enrolments and teacher separations. In fact, there was evidence that very small schools do slightly better than average at retaining teachers.

Points awarded to individual schools are provided in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10.

2.5 *Capacity to provide a range of educational experiences*

The intention of this criterion was to identify and allocate demerit points to schools that had provided a lesser range of

educational experiences. By doing so, the intention was to take into account aspects of education not covered by NAPLAN testing.

However, DoE was unable to provide evidence that individual schools were or were not providing an adequate educational experience, although newsletters were provided for some larger schools that illustrated the diversity of interesting programs run by at least some schools.

Accordingly, no demerit points have been awarded against this criterion.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that both DoE and individual schools perform annual assessments of the adequacy of the range of educational experiences offered at each school.

2.6 Performance measures — NAPLAN

The intention of this criterion was to measure schools effectiveness in the area of teaching core skills, including literacy and numeracy.

We based our analysis on the following:

- Average Year 5 NAPLAN results divided by the like-school²⁷ average for each primary school (Yr5/Sim)
- Average Year 7 NAPLAN results divided by the like-school average for each 'source'²⁸ primary school (Y7/Sim). We included Year 7 (first year high school results) since even though measured at high school they largely reflected primary school teaching and covered the full primary school experience to the end of Year 6.

²⁷ Rather than use the simple average, we divided each school's average score for the school by the average result for 'similar schools' - that is, those with similar levels of socio-educational advantage - which we considered a fairer basis for comparison. We refer to that measure as 'Yr5/Sim' for Year 5 results and 'Yr7/Sim' for Year 7 results. A score greater than 1 indicates students at the school scored higher than the Australian average for 'like' schools.

²⁸ The last primary school attended by each Year 7 student.

Our NAPLAN summary measure²⁹ also took into account estimated margins of error (MoE) at 80 per cent confidence levels in order to reduce the likelihood of unfairly evaluating schools' performance on the basis of unrepresentative populations of students.

Demerit points were assigned as follows:

Table 9: Demerit points – NAPLAN results

NAPLAN summary measure	Demerit points	Schools
Not rated: data not available or number of students tested too small to be meaningful	0 points	8
More than 0.98	0 points	118
.961 to .98	1 point	19
.941 to .96	2 point	5
.921 to .94	3 points	0
Less than .92	4 points	1
Total		151

Source: TAO analysis, based on MySchool data provided by ACARA for 2013 which is publicly available on the MySchool website: <http://www.myschool.edu.au/>

For various reasons data was not available for Andrews Creek Primary School, East Tamar Primary School, Penguin District School and Sandy Bay Infant School. In addition, numbers of students tested for Avoca Primary School, Cape Barren Island School, Collinsvale Primary School and Redpa Primary School were considered too low to be meaningful. Zero demerit points were assigned to the above schools for this criterion.

We were concerned DoE may be unable to meaningfully assess the performance of very small schools because average scores for small populations can have too large a margin of error to be reliable.

In response, DoE advised that it had implemented an educational information system (EDI) in June 2014. EDI provided constantly updated NAPLAN data, curriculum

²⁹ Our NAPLAN summary measure was the average of Yr5/Sim, Y5/Sim + MoE, Y7/Sim and Y7/Sim + MoE for each school.

performance, attendance records, personal information, financial information, and other key student personal and performance information from a wide range of DoE systems. EDI had quickly become embedded in school practice and in review of the performance of schools and students by principle network officers, principals, teachers and students.

Examples of useful information provided by EDI include:

- detecting significant changes in the performance of a student over time
- detecting abnormal results for a student compared to other test results
- relating performance to attendance
- relating performance to a student's personal difficulties.

Because the system provides reports and alerts at the individual student level and uses a variety of performance and attitude information, it largely circumvents the difficulty of trying to assess school performance using NAPLAN averages.

Accordingly, we were satisfied that DoE had put in place reasonable measures to partially address the difficulties in assessing the performance of very small schools.

Points awarded to individual schools are shown in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10.

2.7 *Community satisfaction*

This criterion attempts to measure community satisfaction with the local school.

A possible approach was to consider the results of parental satisfaction surveys. The difficulty with this approach, as discussed in our 2014 report, *Teaching Quality in Tasmanian public high schools*, was low response rates, which raises doubts over whether survey responses are sufficiently representative. Instead, we have used observed satisfaction; that is the percentage of students within a school's area who attend that public primary school. We set 80 per cent as a conservative benchmark for the percentage of eligible students attending the public primary school in their area.

In using this measure we recognise the difficulty that in many areas there is little or no choice of school and that as a consequence community dissatisfaction may not be reflected in all cases. There are also other reasons that parents may choose to bypass their local school such as proximity to work.

Nonetheless, schools with low percentages of students choosing the local school is an indicator of lack of community satisfaction with the school, and in our view is reasonably included in our list of criteria to assess ineffectiveness of schools. Again we point out that we are only attempting to identify schools worthy of further consideration for possible merger/closure.

Demerit points were assigned as follows:

Table 10: Demerit points – community satisfaction

Eligible students attending local public primary school (%)	Demerit points	Schools
More than 80%	0 points	82
71–80%	1 point	31
61–70%	2 points	23
51–60%	3 points	9
Less than 50%	4 points	6
Total		151

Source: TAO analysis based on DoE reviews of home school areas for its eleven learning service networks. That data was in turn based on 2011 and 2012 Census Data.

Points awarded to individual schools are shown in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10

2.8 *Cost per student*

This criterion was included because funding is a scarce resource, and excessive funding on students in some schools is necessarily to the detriment of students at other schools.

For our analysis we calculated for each school³⁰ a total annual cost that takes into account both recurrent funding and capital funding.

Demerit points were assigned as follows:

³⁰ Data was not provided for Austin's Ferry Primary School, Andrews Creek Primary School, East Tamar Primary School, Port Dalrymple School, Port Sorell Primary School and Windermere Primary School. Zero demerit points were assigned to those schools for this criterion.

Table 11: Demerit points – cost per student

Each school's cost per student compared to cost per average Tasmanian cost per student	Demerit points	Schools
Not rated: data not available or number of students tested too small to be meaningful	0 points	6
Less than 20% more than school average	0 points	92
21–40% more than school average	1 point	26
41–60% more than school average	2 point	12
61–80% more than school average	3 points	8
More than 80% above school average	4 points	7
Total		151

Source: TAO analysis, based on DoE school data, reconciled to Productivity Commission *Report on Government Services 2014*, Table 4A.10

Points awarded to individual schools are shown in Appendix 1, and are incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10.

2.9 *Existence of practical alternatives*

This criterion is the most crucial since a school cannot be closed or merged if there are no practical alternative schools for enrolled students.

We considered a school to have an alternative where there was a school or cluster within 30 minutes by motor vehicle³¹ with sufficient spare capacity that the school closure would not cause greater than 90 per cent occupancy of the school or cluster that takes on the new students.

Table 12 summarises the results of our review.

³¹ The benchmark of 30 minutes from a school to an 'alternative' is loosely based on the School Viability Report's limit of 45 minutes for a primary school student to travel to school each way. The difference is that we are setting a limit for the extra travel that a student might have to undergo to get to an alternative school rather than total travelling time.

Table 12: Alternative schools

Alternative status	Schools
Alternative exists	50
Cluster has insufficient spare capacity	42
No close school with capacity	56
No school within 30 minutes	3
Total	151

Source: TAO analysis, using Google maps data

This analysis effectively puts an upper limit on the number of schools that could reasonably be closed while still providing students with schools within reasonable proximity and allowing reasonable scope for changing demographics in the future.

Information as to the existence of alternatives for individual schools is provided in Appendix 1, and is incorporated in the analysis in Section 2.10.

2.10 Summary

In Sections 2.2 to 2.9, we discussed indicators of relative efficiency and effectiveness applied in this audit. Demerit points allocated to individual schools are disclosed in Appendix 1.

Based on those points we identified the schools noted in Table 13 as being possibly less efficient and/or effective than others and for which alternative schools exist within reasonable distance with spare capacity to enrol additional students.

The methodology we have used is just one of many possible approaches and we concede that each of our indicators has the capacity to throw up misleading results.

While there is no particular demerit point total which in itself determines inefficient or ineffective schools, we believe the schools listed in Table 13 should be considered for possible closure.

Of course, any such consideration would require consultation with schools, communities and further careful consideration by DoE and the school communities.

Table 13: Schools recommended for further consideration

Total demerit points	Strength of case	Schools recommended for further consideration of closure or merger	
10 or more	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Edith Creek Primary School ▪ Geeveston Primary School (pre district school) ▪ Clarendon Vale Primary School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Avoca Primary School ▪ Risdon Vale Primary School ▪ Sprent Primary School
6 to 9	Moderate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Redpa Primary School ▪ Warrane Primary School ▪ Collinsvale Primary School ▪ Natone Primary School ▪ Zeehan Primary School ▪ Meander Primary School³² ▪ Riana Primary School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hillcrest Primary School ▪ Kempton Primary School ▪ Sandy Bay Infant School ▪ Sassafras Primary School ▪ Springfield Gardens Primary School

A brief summary of reasons that schools have been included in Table 13 follows:

2.10.1 Schools with strong case for closure to be considered

Edith Creek Primary School (13 points)

- 39 students and declining in a school with capacity for 200.
- Only 47 per cent of eligible students in area attend the school.
- Costs per student 35 per cent above Tasmanian average.

³² Meander Primary School was closed in 2014 at a time outside the audit scope.

- Students could attend Smithton Primary School, 18 minutes away.

Geeveston Primary School (13 points)

- 68 students and declining in a school with capacity for 350.
- Only 55 per cent of eligible students in the area attend the school.
- Costs per student 77 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Huonville Primary, 21 minutes away.

Clarendon Vale Primary School (11 points)

- 103 students in a school with capacity for 400.
- NAPLAN scores below the average for similar schools.
- Only 41 per cent of eligible students in area attend the school.
- Costs per student 53 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Rokeby Primary School, seven minutes away.

Avoca Primary School (10 points)

- 25 students and declining in a school with capacity for 75.
- NAPLAN data not meaningful because of small sample.
- Costs per student 61 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Campbell Town District High School (combined school), 26 minutes away.

Risdon Vale Primary School (10 points)

- 160 students in a school with capacity for 475.
- Only 58 per cent of eligible students in area attend the school.
- Costs per student 86 per cent above Tasmanian average.

- Students could attend one of the other Eastern Shore schools including Lindisfarne North Primary School, seven minutes away and Bellerive Primary School, 13 minutes away.

Sprent Primary School (10 points)

- 41 students and declining in a school with capacity for 175.
- Two staff separations out of 4.8 (42 per cent).
- Only 66 per cent of eligible students in area attend school.
- Costs per student 21 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend one of the primary schools in Ulverstone, 14 minutes away.

2.10.2 Schools with moderate case for closure to be considered

Redpa Primary School (9 points)

- 27 students in a school with capacity for 100.
- NAPLAN data not meaningful because of small sample.
- Costs per student 61 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Smithton Primary School, 33 minutes away. Note: this is just outside our guideline of 30 minutes, but in our view should still be considered because of the extremely low enrolment.

Warrane Primary School (9 points)

- 185 students in a school with capacity for 425.
- 4.8 staff separations out of 12.5 (38 per cent).
- Only 40 per cent of eligible students in area attend the school.
- Costs per student 28 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend one of the primary schools on the Eastern shore including Bellerive Primary School, three minutes away and Howrah Primary School, four minutes away.

Collinsvale Primary School (8 points)

- 50 students in a school with capacity for 100.
- NAPLAN data not meaningful because of small sample.
- Only 56 per cent of eligible students in area attend school.
- Costs per student 13 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend one of the primary schools in the Northern suburbs including Rosetta Primary School, ten minutes away, Glenorchy Primary School, 13 minutes away and Bowen Road Primary School, 16 minutes away.

Natone Primary School (8 points)

- 44 students and declining in a school with capacity for 175.
- Costs per student 33 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Riana Primary School 17 minutes away if that school was not to close or Romaine Park Primary School, 19 minutes away.

Zeehan Primary School (8 points)

- 48 students and declining in a school with capacity for 225.
- Costs per student 34 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Rosebery District High School (combined school), 23 minutes away.

Riana Primary School (7 points)

- 92 students and declining in a school with capacity for 225.
- NAPLAN scores below the average for similar schools.
- Three staff separations out of 7.3 (41 per cent).
- Costs per student 17 per cent above Tasmanian average.

- Students could attend Penguin District School, 15 minutes away or West Ulverstone primary school, 19 minutes away.

Hillcrest Primary School (6 points)

- 211 students and declining in a school with capacity for 412.
- Only 44 per cent of eligible students in area attend the school.
- Costs per student ten per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend any of the other Devonport primary schools.

Kempton Primary School (6 points)

- 39 students and declining in a school with capacity for 96.
- 2.3 staff separations out of 5.2 (44 per cent).
- Costs were not identified as a factor based on the 2012 data that we used, but would be on the basis of 2014 data, because of sharply declining enrolments.
- Students could attend Bagdad Primary School, ten minutes away or Brighton Primary School, 19 minutes away.

Sandy Bay Infant School (6 points)

- 57 students and declining in a school with capacity for 105.
- Costs per student 15 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend Goulburn Street Primary School, seven minutes away or Mount Nelson Primary School, nine minutes away.

Sassafras Primary School (6 points)

- 52 students in a school with capacity for 75.
- Only 32 per cent of eligible students in area attend school.
- Costs per student 23 per cent above Tasmanian average.

- Students could attend East Devonport Primary School, 14 minutes away or Andrews Creek Primary School, 17 minutes away.

Springfield Gardens Primary School (6 points)

- 287 students in a school with capacity for 475.
- 6.1 staff separations out of 22.7 (27 per cent).
- NAPLAN scores below the average for similar schools.
- Only 41 per cent of eligible students in area attend school.
- Costs per student 11 per cent above Tasmanian average.
- Students could attend other Northern Suburbs schools such as Bowen Road Primary School, seven minutes away, Glenorchy Primary School, five minutes away or Rosetta Primary School, eight minutes away.

Others

Rokeby Primary School was allocated seven points; however, it would not be possible to close it as well as Clarendon Vale Primary School (11 points).

Dover District High School (combined school) was allocated 6 points, but it is both a primary and high school and could not be closed in addition to Geeveston Primary School (13 points).

Rosebery District High School (combined school) was allocated six points, but it is both a primary and high school and could not be closed in addition to Zeehan Primary School (eight points).

The East Derwent campus was allocated six points but most of its points were related to cost. Since additional funds had been deliberately allocated to help disadvantaged children, we chose not to include the school in our list.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that DoE further analyse and consult on the viability of listed schools and where appropriate actively encourage closures or mergers.

2.11 Conclusion

We identified six schools for which a strong case existed for closure to be considered and another eleven for which a moderate case existed.

3 Process: did DoE regularly review whether marginal primary schools should be retained?

3 Process: did DoE regularly review whether marginal primary schools should be retained?

3.1 Background

With increasing pressure on Tasmania's budget in recent years, there is a need for all departments, in particular the larger ones such as DoE, to seek to reduce costs without a decline in services.

One of the areas where DoE can do this is by ensuring that it only keeps open primary schools that make a contribution to the overall effectiveness and efficiency of education in Tasmania.

In this Chapter, we examine whether DoE has:

- regularly and adequately reviewed the viability of primary schools in recent years
- implemented the recommendations of the School Viability Report.

3.2 Regularity and adequacy of reviews

Our expectation was that DoE would have performed reviews over the past five years and would also have a systematic process to ensure that schools are regularly reviewed.

We noted that the School Viability Report was the result of a previous attempt to close a number of schools across the state due to declining enrolments. The report included consideration of criteria that might be used as well as discussion of benefits and difficulties and necessary consultative processes. The review process met our criterion of recent and adequate review.

Since then, the current government has adopted a 'no forced school closure' policy. DoE advised that the policy had reduced the necessity for it to undertake regular reviews of school numbers and mix. We do not accept that position and continue to believe it necessary for DoE to monitor the viability of schools and to provide 'frank and fearless' advice to its Minister.

On the other hand:

- Following the failed attempt by the then government at reducing the number of schools, DoE developed a package of incentives for school communities to voluntarily review their own viability. Funding of \$1.2 million in 2012–13 and \$2.3 million in 2013–14 was provided from the *School Transition Fund* (STF)

and led to the following primary school mergers or closures:

- Levendale Primary School closure
 - Maydena Primary School merged with Westerway Primary School
 - Penguin Primary School merged with Penguin High School
 - Railton Primary merged with Sheffield School
 - Rocherlea Primary School and Mayfield Primary School merged into East Tamar Primary School
 - Wesley Vale and Moriarty Primary Schools merged into Andrews Creek Primary School
- We also noted that DoE also regularly monitors demographic trends and the impact of student enrolment demand and incorporates the results of its analysis in planning processes including consideration of refurbishment or new construction works.
 - Comparison of the number of schools from 2005 to 2014 shows a reduction in primary schools from 140 to 127, secondary schools from 31 to 28, combined schools from 26 to 25, highlighting a continual change in the number of schools across the state.
 - In 2013, a demographic study into the provision of primary and secondary education services was performed. The focus was on redefining boundaries for school areas, but it was nonetheless a thorough demographic review.
 - The Commonwealth Government’s economic stimulus package *Building the Education Revolution*, allowed funding to be directed to undertake significant changes to education in Hobart’s northern suburb schools where a number of schools were closed or amalgamated and additional schools built.

We concluded that there have been regular and thorough reviews over the past five years, however there was no systemised review process.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that DoE introduce an annual review of the viability of all of its schools.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that DoE actively targets and encourages school communities to consider mergers and closures, based on an annual review of school viability.

3.3 *Actions taken in response to the School Viability Report*

As noted in the Introduction, the Minister for Education and Skills established the School Viability Reference Group in August 2011 to consult widely and to provide recommendations on the provision of a viable public school system in Tasmania.

The group included representatives of the DoE, parents and friends, school principals, academia, unions, local government and other bodies with an interest in education. Its terms of reference included the process that should be undertaken to assess a school's ongoing viability, including criteria, consultation process and transition arrangements.

The resulting School Viability Report was provided to the Minister in January 2012 and included eight recommendations. We reviewed the extent to which the recommendations had been implemented. We should first explain that there is no obligation on DoE to implement all recommendations. Our expectation is only that all recommendations receive due consideration and are either implemented, or reasoned decisions made and documented not to do so. It is also of course entirely proper for the government of the day to instruct DoE not to proceed with a recommendation.

We found in respect of the eight recommendation made in the report that:

- three had been fully implemented and one was underway
- two had been put on hold or abandoned due to government decision
- one was not applicable to DoE (required action from the government, not DoE).

In addition, DoE advised that it had chosen not to implement the recommendation that specific criteria be adopted to assess the ongoing viability of schools. DoE argued that the government's 'no forced school closure' policy removed the necessity for DoE to undertake regular reviews of school viability. As discussed in Section 3.2, we do not accept that view and continue to believe that regular departmental assessments of school viability should be performed, notwithstanding current government policy.

On the other hand, DoE's STF incentives have led to many school communities considering the viability of schools, which has led to the above-listed mergers. The STF process was voluntary and community driven, although factors listed in the School Viability Report were considered when schools expressed interest in accessing the incentives.

Despite DoE's assessment that it had chosen not to implement the recommendation, we regard the use of the STF incentives to be partial implementation. We would however also like to see viability assessed by DoE and relevant school communities actively encouraged or urged to consider mergers or closures where schools have been assessed as non-viable.

Overall, DoE had demonstrated reasonable commitment to implementing the recommendations, given the 'no closure' policy of the new government, and abandonment or deferral of some recommendations on instructions from the previous or current government.

3.4 Conclusion

Despite the lack of a systematic review process, there had been a satisfactory level of review over the past five years. In addition, the recommendations of the School Viability Report had been receiving a reasonable level of attention.

Independent auditor's conclusion

Independent auditor's conclusion

This independent conclusion is addressed to the President of the Legislative Council and to the Speaker of the House of Assembly. It relates to my performance audit on assessing the number of public primary schools in Tasmania.

Audit objective

The objective was to form an opinion on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

Audit scope

The audit was limited to primary and combined schools as at January 2014, on the basis that there were considerably fewer secondary schools (28) than primary and combined schools (151).

Responsibility of the Secretary of the Department of Education

The Secretary is responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

Auditor-General's responsibility

In the context of this performance audit, my responsibility was to express a conclusion on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number of public primary schools in Tasmania.

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standard ASAE 3500 *Performance engagements*, which required me to comply with relevant ethical requirements relating to audit engagements. I planned and performed the audit to obtain reasonable assurance on the efficiency and effectiveness of the number and location of public primary schools in Tasmania.

My approach to determining, which if any, schools may be less efficient and effective than others was to allocate 'demerit points'³³ against the following factors:

- Small and declining enrolment numbers.
- Low enrolment of schools compared with capacity.

³³ The use of the term 'demerit points' is not intended to imply fault of any kind. Our meaning is only that where points are allocated we think there may be an argument for consideration to be given to school closure.

- Indications of difficulty retaining staff, measured using separations over five years.
- Inability to provide a full range of educational experiences.
- Significantly lower NAPLAN results compared to 'like' schools.
- Indications of low community satisfaction with school, measured using percentage of students in a school's area not enrolled at that school.
- Excessive average cost per student.
- Availability of alternative schools.

No conclusions were reached on the basis of individual criteria. Instead, 'demerit' points were collectively considered.

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

Auditor-General's conclusion

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

- Tasmania's average enrolments per school and proportion of small schools was not unreasonable, when Tasmania's low urbanisation was considered. There was also no evidence that small schools were disadvantaged in terms of educational performance. However Tasmania had:
 - a high cost per student compared to the Australian average
 - high levels of unused capacity
 - only a small proportion of schools with enrolments in the 300 to 500 range favoured by experts
- DoE had too many primary schools, particularly in rural areas. I identified six schools for which a strong case existed and another 11 with a moderate case for closure.
- despite the lack of a systematic review process, there had been a satisfactory level of review over the past five years. The School Viability Report's recommendations had received reasonable attention.

My report contains seven recommendations aimed at addressing my conclusions.

H M Blake
Auditor-General
26 May 2015

Recent reports

Recent reports

Tabled	No.	Title
Feb	No. 7 of 2013–14	Police responses to serious crime
Feb	No. 8 of 2013–14	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 4 — Analysis of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2012–13
May	No. 9 of 2013–14	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 5 — State entities 30 June and 31 December 2013, matters relating to 2012–13 audits and key performance indicators
May	No. 10 of 2013–14	Government radio communications
May	No. 11 of 2013–14	Compliance with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Plan 2008–13
June	No. 12 of 2013–14	Quality of Metro services
June	No. 13 of 2013–14	Teaching quality in public high schools
Aug	No. 1 of 2014–15	Recruitment practices in the Tasmanian State Service
Sep	No. 2 of 2014–15	Follow up of selected Auditor-General reports: October 2009 to September 2011
Sep	No. 3 of 2014–15	Motor vehicle fleet management in government departments
Nov	No. 4 of 2014–15	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 3 — Government Businesses 2013–14
Nov	No. 5 of 2014–15	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 2 — General Government and Other State entities 2013–14
Dec	No. 6 of 2014–15	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 1 — Analysis of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report 2013–14
Feb	No. 7 of 2014–15	Financial Statements of State entities, Volume 4 — Local Government Authorities, Joint Authorities and Tasmanian Water and Sewerage Corporation Pty Ltd 2013–14
Mar	No. 8 of 2014–15	Security of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure
Mar	No. 9 of 2014–15	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery: compliance with the National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries

Current projects

Current projects

The table below contains details performance and compliance audits that the Auditor-General was conducting and relates them to the *Annual Plan of Work 2014–15* that is available on our website.

Title	Audit objective is to...	<i>Annual Plan of Work 2014–15</i> reference
Vehicle fleet usage and management in government businesses	... review the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of motor vehicles, and testing compliance with applicable guidelines by: government businesses, University of Tasmania and the Retirement Benefits Fund. In addition, it will include the management of vehicle workshops.	Page 20 Topic No. 5
Capital works programming and management	... assess the effectiveness of the state's capital works and ICT budgeting program and departmental asset, including ICT assets, management processes.	Page 18 Topic No. 6
Provision of social housing	... form conclusions as to the effectiveness, efficiency and economy of the provision of social housing and other government assistance provided by Housing Tasmania and non-government organisations to Tasmanians in housing stress	Page 21 Topic No. 7
Follow up audit	... ascertain the extent to which recommendations contained in the <i>2013 Tasmanian Bushfires Inquiry</i> have been implemented. In addition, follow up the implementation of recommendations contained in <i>Special Report 99 Bushfire management</i> and those recommendations contained in <i>Financial Audit Services Report No. 11 of 2012–13</i> that relate to the Department of Health and Human Services and the three Tasmanian Health Organisations.	Page 22 Topic No. 9

Appendix 1 Demerit point summary

Appendix 1 Demerit point summary

The demerits point table includes demerit points on the bases described in Chapter 2 of this Report. The table is sorted firstly according to whether an alternative school exists with capacity to take the students and secondly by total points.

Table 14: Demerit points summary

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Edith Creek Primary School	3	4	0	0	4	2	Y	13
Geeveston Primary School (pre district school)	2	4	0	0	3	4	Y	13
Clarendon Vale Primary School	0	3	0	1	4	3	Y	11
Avoca Primary School	4	3	0	Not rated	0	3	Y	10
Risdon Vale Primary School	0	3	0	0	3	4	Y	10
Sprent Primary School	3	3	1	0	2	1	Y	10
Redpa Primary School	3	3	0	Not rated	0	3	Y	9
Warrane Primary School	0	2	2	0	4	1	Y	9
Collinsvale Primary School	2	2	0	Not rated	3	1	Y	8
Natone Primary School	3	3	0	0	0	2	Y	8

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Zeehan Primary School	3	3	0	0	0	2	Y	8
Meander Primary School	3	3	0	0	1	0	Y	7
Riana Primary School	0	2	1	1	2	1	Y	7
Rokeby Primary School	0	3	0	0	3	1	Y	7
Dover District High School	0	2	0	0	1	3	Y	6
Hillcrest Primary School	0	2	0	0	3	1	Y	6
Jordan River Learning Federation — East Derwent Campus	0	1	0	0	1	4	Y	6
Kempton Primary School	3	2	1	0	0	0	Y	6
Rosebery District High School	0	3	0	0	0	3	Y	6
Sandy Bay Infant School	3	2	0	Not rated	0	1	Y	6
Sassafras Primary School	2	1	0	0	2	1	Y	6
Springfield Gardens Primary School	0	1	1	1	2	1	Y	6
East Devonport Primary School	0	1	1	0	2	1	Y	5

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Stanley Primary School	2	2	0	0	0	1	Y	5
Wilmot Primary School	2	2	0	0	0	1	Y	5
Goodwood Primary School	0	0	1	1	0	2	Y	4
Orford Primary School	1	1	2	0	0	0	Y	4
Andrews Creek Primary School (previously Wesley Vale)	0	3	0	Not rated	0	0	Y	3
Austins Ferry Primary School	0	1	1	0	1	0	Y	3
Franklin Primary School	0	1	0	0	2	0	Y	3
Lindisfarne North Primary School	0	1	0	0	2	0	Y	3
Montagu Bay Primary School	0	0	2	1	0	0	Y	3
Bagdad Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	Y	2
Boat Harbour Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	Y	2
Exeter Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	Y	2
Lindisfarne Primary School	0	0	2	0	0	0	Y	2

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Moonah Primary School	0	0	0	1	0	1	Y	2
Rosetta Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	Y	2
Westerway Primary School	1	0	0	0	0	1	Y	2
Cygnets Primary School	0	0	1	0	0	0	Y	1
Forest Primary School	0	1	0	0	0	0	Y	1
Port Sorell Primary School	0	1	0	0	0	0	Y	1
Richmond Primary School	0	0	0	1	0	0	Y	1
Spreyton Primary School	0	0	0	1	0	0	Y	1
Cambridge Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0
Forth Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0
Latrobe Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0
Molesworth Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0
New Town Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0
Windermere Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	Y	0

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Ouse District High School	3	4	0	0	3	3	N	13
Cape Barren Island School	4	4	0	Not rated	0	4	N	12
Bothwell District High School	2	2	0	4	0	3	N	11
Bowen Road Primary School	0	2	3	0	4	1	N	10
JRLF - Gagebrook Campus	0	3	0	0	2	4	N	9
Woodbridge School	0	3	0	0	4	2	N	9
Flinders Island District High School	1	3	0	0	0	4	N	8
Jordan River Learning Federation - Herdsmans Cove Campus	0	2	0	0	2	4	N	8
Strahan Primary School	3	2	0	0	0	3	N	8
Bruny Island District School	3	2	0	0	0	2	N	7
Campania District High School	0	2	0	0	4	1	N	7
Glenora District High School	0	2	0	0	3	2	N	7
Goulburn Street Primary School	0	1	2	2	2	0	N	7

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Waverley Primary School	0	2	0	0	3	2	N	7
Glen Dhu Primary School	0	2	1	0	3	0	N	6
Triabunna District High School	0	2	0	0	2	2	N	6
West Ulverstone Primary School	0	2	0	1	2	1	N	6
Bellerive Primary School	0	1	1	1	2	0	N	5
Bracknell Primary School	1	1	1	0	2	0	N	5
Fairview Primary School	0	1	0	2	1	1	N	5
King Island District High School	0	2	0	1	0	2	N	5
Mole Creek Primary School	1	2	0	0	2	0	N	5
Ringarooma Primary School	2	2	0	0	1	0	N	5
Swansea Primary School	1	2	0	1	0	1	N	5
Blackmans Bay Primary School	0	1	0	1	2	0	N	4
East Ulverstone Primary School	0	2	0	0	2	0	N	4
Glen Huon Primary School	0	1	0	2	1	0	N	4

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Huonville Primary School	0	1	2	0	1	0	N	4
Kingston Primary School	0	1	2	0	1	0	N	4
Mount Nelson Primary School	0	2	0	0	2	0	N	4
Mountain Heights School	0	2	0	0	0	2	N	4
Smithton Primary School	0	2	1	0	0	1	N	4
St Marys District High School	0	2	0	0	0	2	N	4
Table Cape Primary School	0	2	1	0	1	0	N	4
Westbury Primary School	0	2	0	0	2	0	N	4
Yolla District High School	0	2	0	0	1	1	N	4
Brighton Primary School	0	1	1	0	1	0	N	3
Dunalley Primary School	0	2	0	1	0	0	N	3
Glenorchy Primary School	0	1	0	0	2	0	N	3
Howrah Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	1	N	3
Invermay Primary School	0	1	1	0	1	0	N	3

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Lilydale District School	0	1	0	2	0	0	N	3
New Norfolk Primary School	0	1	0	0	2	0	N	3
Nixon Street Primary School	0	1	1	0	1	0	N	3
Perth Primary School	0	1	0	1	1	0	N	3
Ravenswood Heights Primary School	0	1	0	0	2	0	N	3
Sorell School	0	1	0	0	2	0	N	3
Summerdale Primary School	0	1	1	0	1	0	N	3
Ulverstone Primary School	0	1	0	1	1	0	N	3
Winnaleah District High School	0	1	0	0	1	1	N	3
Beaconsfield Primary School	0	2	0	0	0	0	N	2
Bridport Primary School	0	1	0	0	0	1	N	2
Campbell Town District High School	0	2	0	0	0	0	N	2
Cressy District High School	0	1	0	1	0	0	N	2
Havenview Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Lenah Valley Primary School	0	0	1	1	0	0	N	2
Margate Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
Mount Stuart Primary School	0	0	2	0	0	0	N	2
Mowbray Heights Primary School	0	0	2	0	0	0	N	2
Oatlands District High School	0	2	0	0	0	0	N	2
Port Dalrymple School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
Ridgley Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
Romaine Park Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
South Arm Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
St Leonards Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
Taroona Primary School	0	0	0	2	0	0	N	2
West Launceston Primary School	0	1	0	0	1	0	N	2
Hagley Farm Primary School	0	0	1	0	0	0	N	1
Lauderdale Primary School	0	0	1	0	0	0	N	1

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
Penguin District School (formerly primary)	0	1	0	Not rated	0	0	N	1
Princes Street Primary School	0	0	1	0	0	0	N	1
Riverside Primary School	0	0	1	0	0	0	N	1
Scottsdale Primary School	0	0	0	1	0	0	N	1
Sheffield School	0	1	0	0	0	0	N	1
Tasman District School	0	0	0	0	0	1	N	1
Albuera Street Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Bicheno Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Burnie Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Campbell Street Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Cooee Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Deloraine Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Devonport Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Dodges Ferry Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
East Launceston Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
East Tamar (merger of Mayfield and Rocherlea)	0	1	0	Not rated	0	0	N	0
Evandale Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Illawarra Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Lansdowne Crescent Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Longford Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Miandetta Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Montello Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Norwood Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Punchbowl Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Snug Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Somerset Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
South George Town Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
South Hobart Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0

Public Primary or Combined Schools	Enrolment	Occupancy	Turnover	NAPLAN -based rating	Community satisfaction	Cost per student	Alternate school exists?	Demerit point total
Report section	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.10
St Helens District High School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Trevallyn Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Waimea Heights Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0
Youngtown Primary School	0	0	0	0	0	0	N	0

AUDIT MANDATE AND STANDARDS APPLIED

Mandate

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standards Applied

Section 31 specifies that:

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

- (a) the character and effectiveness of the internal control and internal audit of the relevant State entity or audited subsidiary of a State entity; 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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