



# **Tasmanian** Audit Office

Student attendance and engagement:

Years 7 to 10

Report of the Auditor-General

No.8 of 2018-19

## Objective and scope of the audit

**Objective:** To form an opinion on the effectiveness of the Department of Education's (DoE) management of student attendance and engagement in Years 7 to 10

**Scope:** Full-time and part-time students in Years 7 to 10 at Tasmanian Government high schools - 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2017

Together with evidence obtained during visits to seven high schools during 2018

The audit covered:

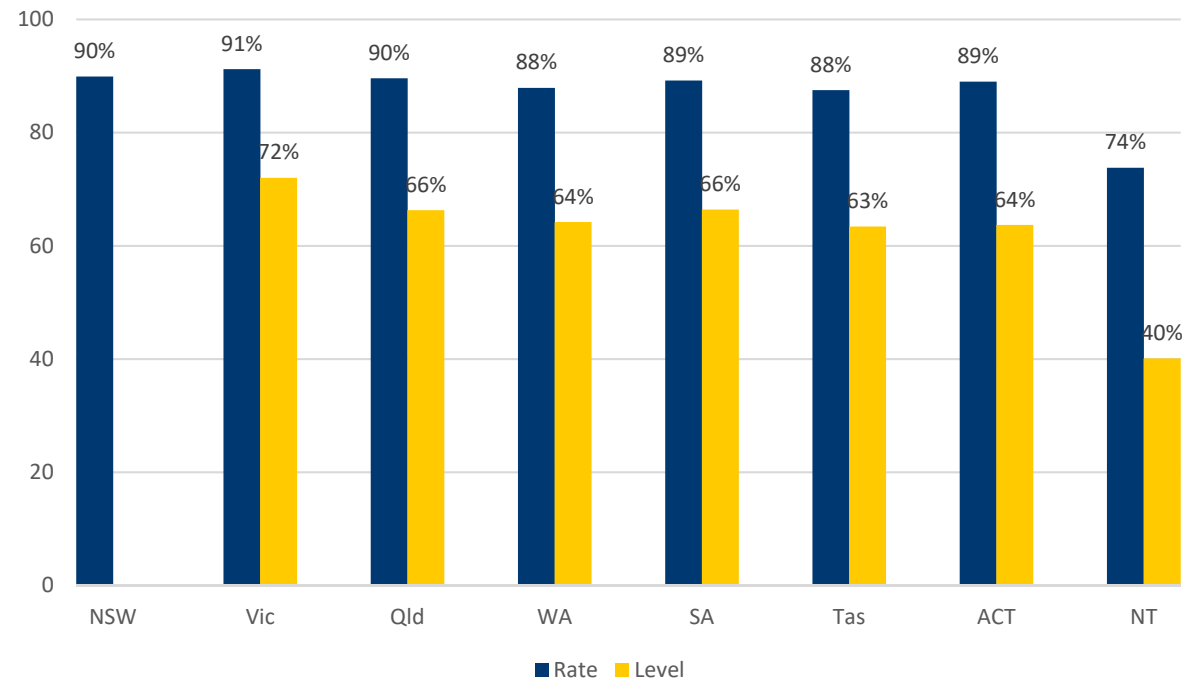
- What does the attendance and engagement data show?
- Is student attendance managed effectively?
- Is student engagement managed effectively?

1.



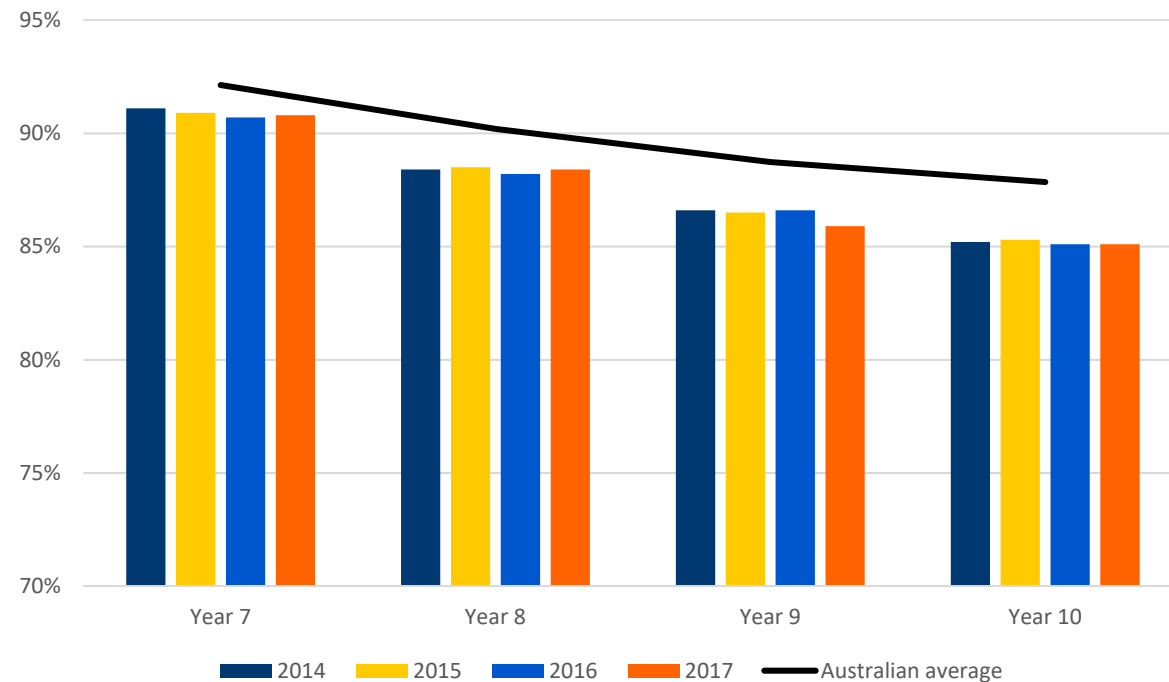
# What does the attendance data show?

## National Average attendance rates and levels – Years 7 to 10 – Government schools 2017



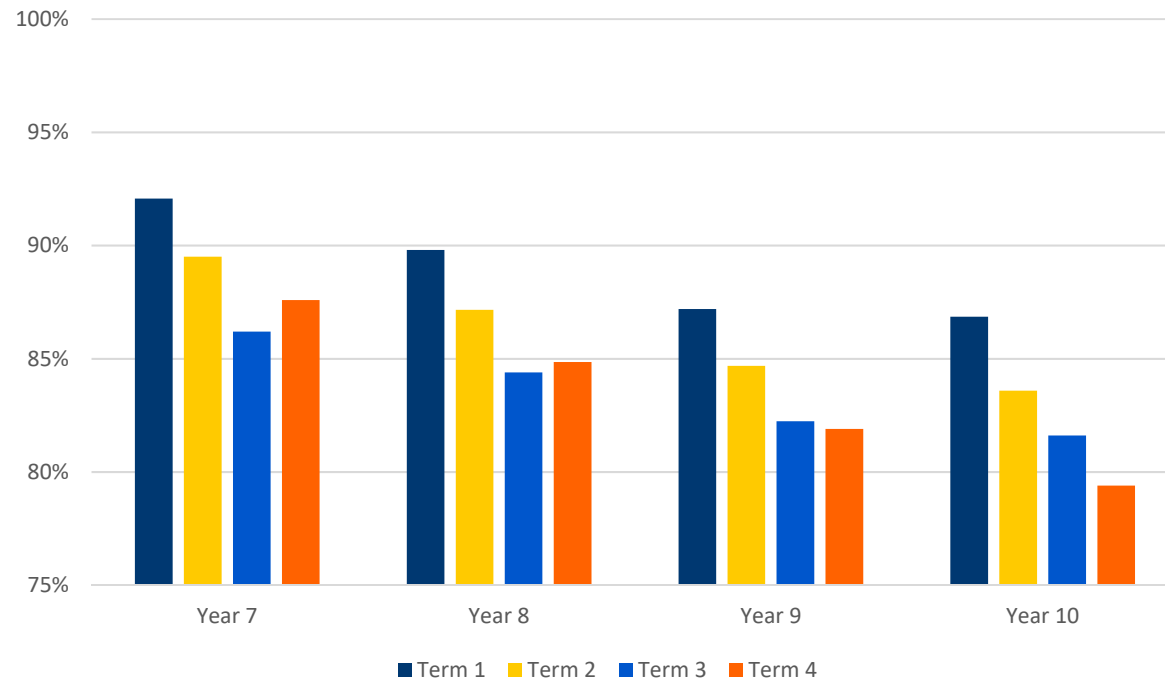
# What does the attendance data show?

Average attendance rates Years 7 to 10 –  
Tasmania and Australia - 2014 to 2017



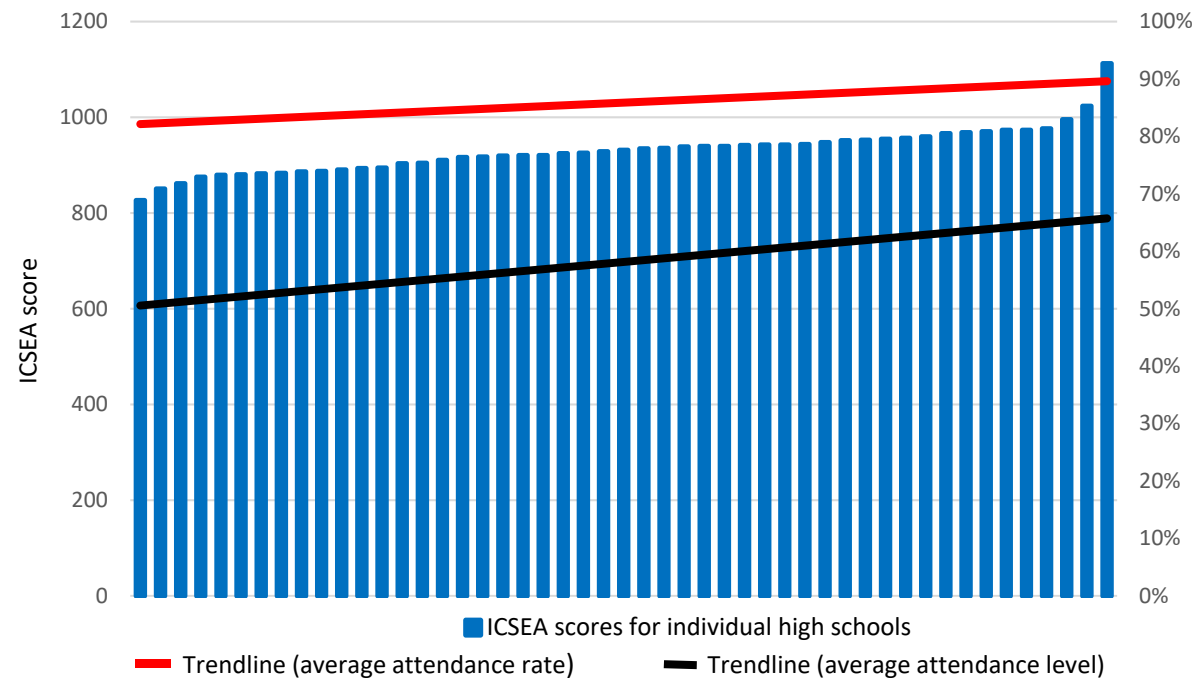
# What does the attendance data show?

## Tasmanian average daily attendance rate by Year group Years 7 to 10 - 2017



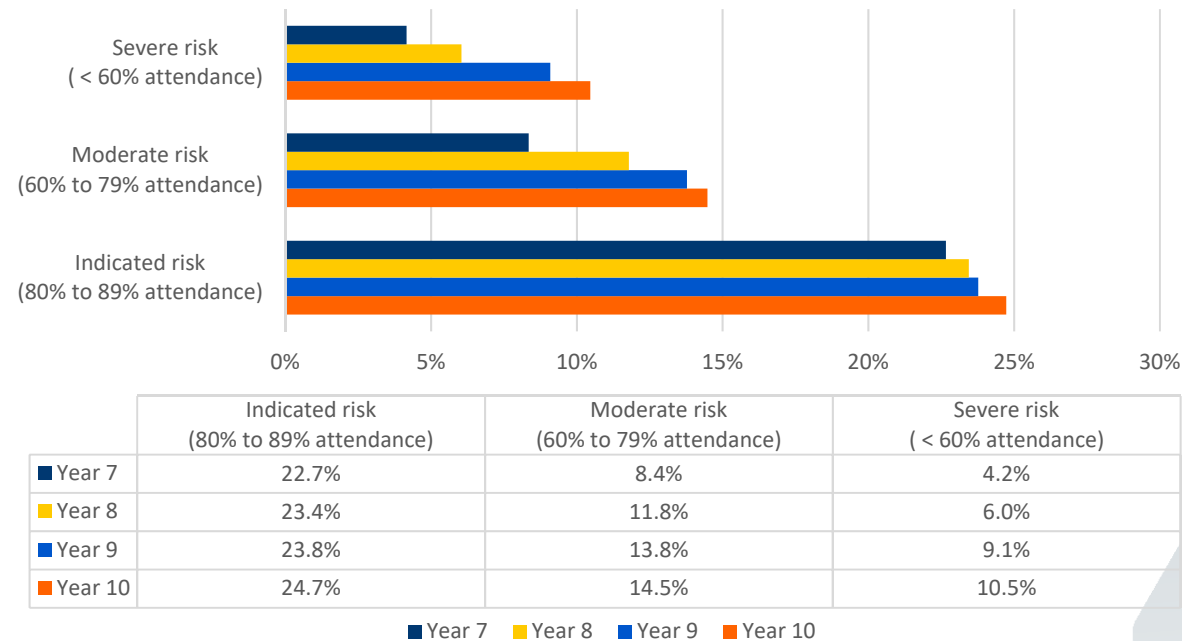
# What does the attendance data show?

## Tasmanian schools attendance rates, levels and ICSEA scores - 2017



# What does the attendance data show?

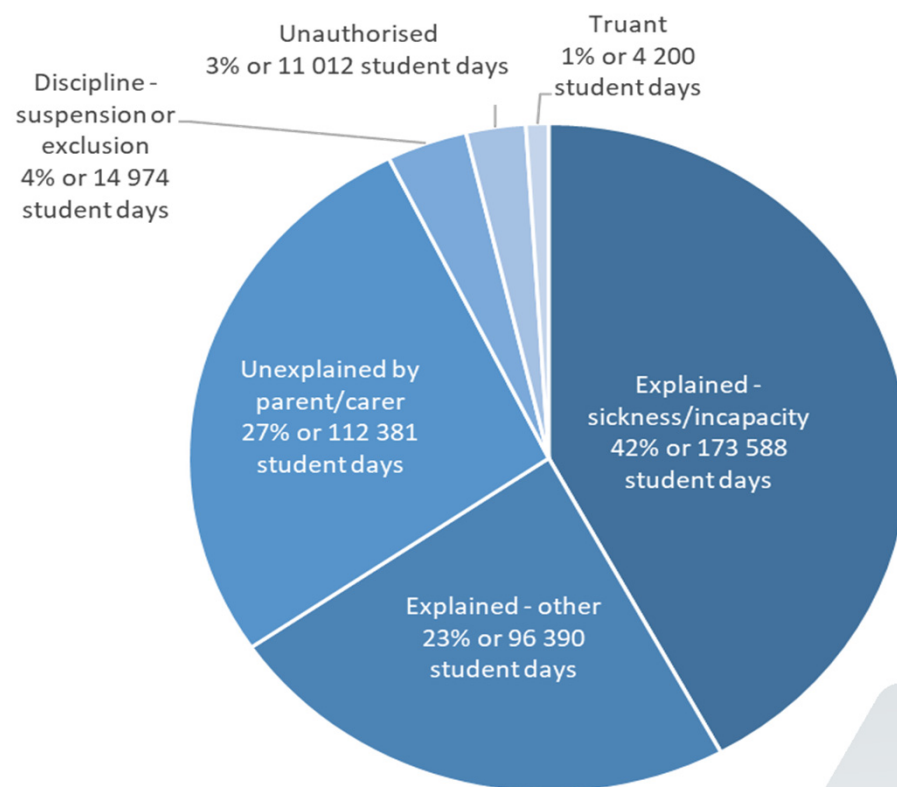
## Percentage of students in Year 7 to 10 by category of educational risk - 2017





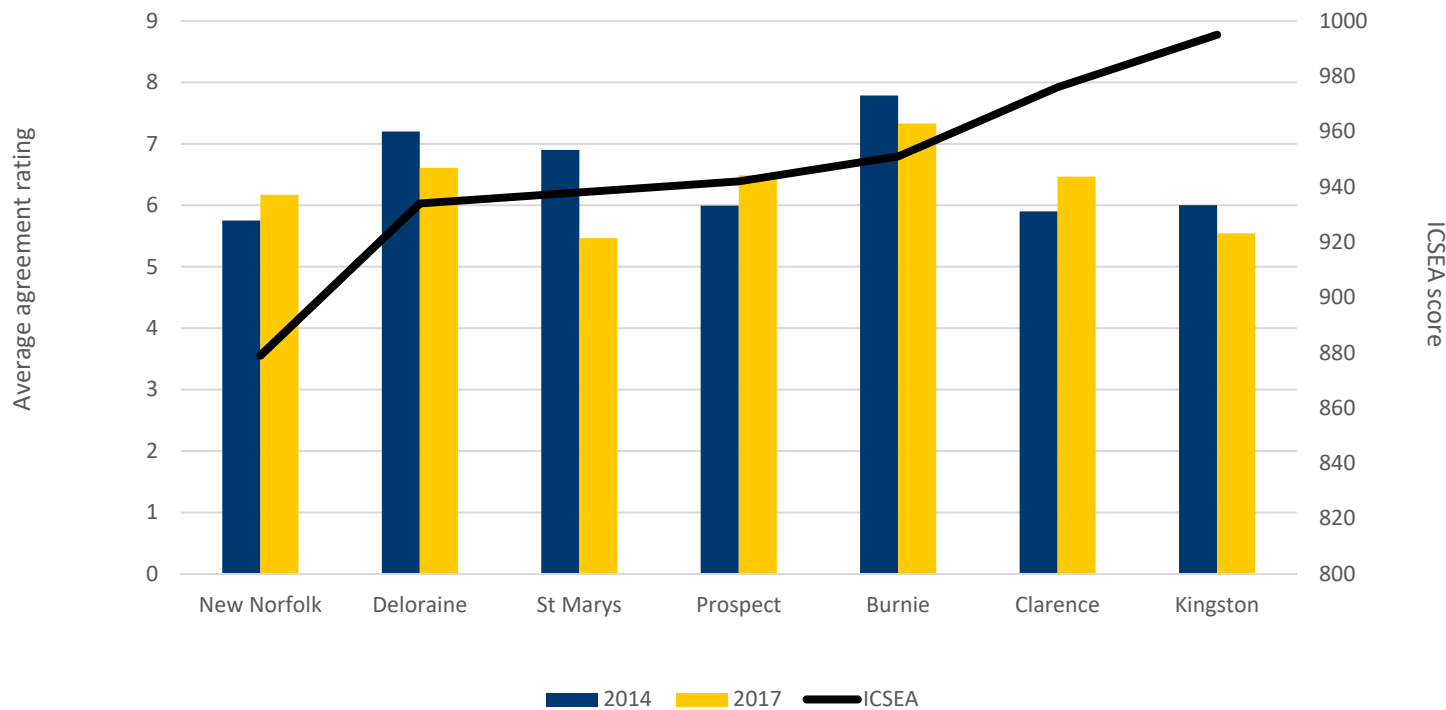
# Is student attendance recorded, monitored, reported and analysed?

Percentage of absences by reason in schools for the 2017 school year



# Does DoE support and measure improvement in student engagement?

Responses to DoE surveys in 2014 and 2017  
sorted by ICSEA score



# Main findings

- Average attendance rate of 88% for high schools had not substantially changed between 2014 and 2017
- Attendance lower than the Australian average – Tasmanian students attending fewer days
- 2017, 91% Year 7 students with an acceptable attendance rate but dropped to 85% for Year 10
- DoE has attendance policies and procedures and had established appropriate systems and processes to record and monitor student attendance
- No evidence student data used to effectively monitor trends or establish improvement targets for students at educational risk

# Main findings

- Student engagement data held by DoE was student centric
- Annual satisfaction surveys provide broad indicators of changes in student engagement but no targets specific to student engagement
- DoE had a structure of interventions to minimise student disengagement but we could not find information detailing the benefits of these programs over time

# Auditor-General conclusion

- Key elements are in place within policies, processes and systems to support DoE's effective management of student attendance and engagement for Years 7 to 10
- Whilst the framework is effective, it could be enhanced by further investment in:
  - improving student attendance data quality
  - better defining and capturing student engagement data
  - enhancing monitoring and reporting systems
  - establishing and monitoring performance targets for acceptable attendance and engagement

# Recommendations

We made 23 recommendations aimed at improving DoE's management of government high school attendance and engagement. In summary we recommended DoE:

- Provide additional training to teachers to improve documentation and teacher performance
- Better define, use and report performance measures and targets
- Continue to improve its internal reporting mechanisms
- Improve its analysis of attendance and engagement information



# Tasmanian Audit Office

Performance Management in  
the Tasmanian State Service:  
A focus on quality conversations

Report of the Auditor-General  
No. 7 of 2018-19





## Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of the performance management in the Tasmanian State Service with a specific focus on the ***effectiveness of performance and development conversations between managers*** (including supervisors) ***and employees*** that form the basis for providing and receiving feedback.





# Scope

- Selected agencies:
  - Communities Tasmania
  - Education
  - Health
  - Justice
  - Premier and Cabinet
- About half of State Service employees.



# Framework

- Existing model – Employment Direction 26 - *Managing Performance in the State Service* (ED 26).
- **Not** a compliance audit against ED 26 (which is currently under review).
- We formed an opinion through seeking feedback on quality of conversations, as well as the broader framework through a staged approach.

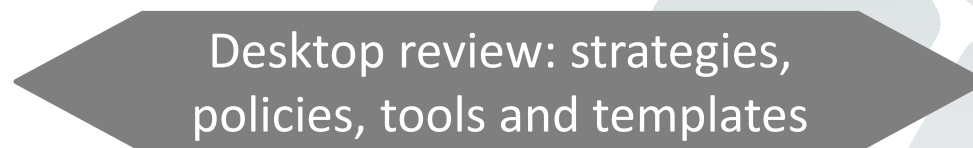
# Audit Approach



Mix of agencies, business units, managers/supervisors, regions. In-depth discussion on issues raised in survey.

Based on audit sub-criteria.  
21% response rate.

Initial assessment from experts on the ground.



# Audit Criteria

Is there a shared understanding between managers and employees on the purpose of performance and development conversations?

Are managers and employees equipped to engage in performance and development conversations?

Is there shared ownership and accountability for the performance management process?

Do employees and managers engage in quality performance and development conversations?

Are the principles and foundational elements of the broader performance management framework effective?





# Findings

- Managing performance and managing development seen as distinct exercises.
- Perception by employees that performance management means managing underperformance.
- Disconnect between managers and employees over the emphasis on either **how** outcomes are achieved, or **what** outcomes are achieved.

# Findings

- Employees' motivations:

What motivates you to go the 'extra mile'?

***Least motivating:***

- Public recognition
- Private recognition
- Monetary reward

***Most motivating:***

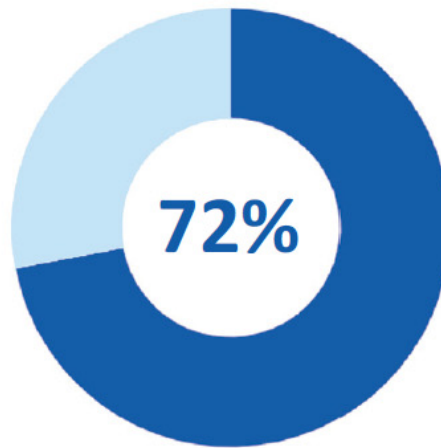
- Ownership of tasks
- Help my team
- Serving my community
- Learning something new

- Agencies generally not assessing the effectiveness of conversations - focus is on whether they took place.

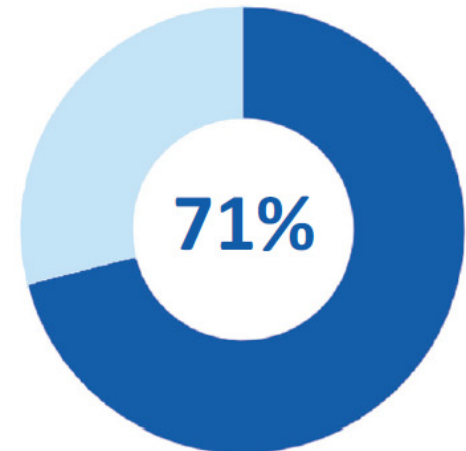
# Findings

- Two key foundational elements are in place:

Percentage of employees who agree:  
**'I am responsible for my performance management'**



Percentage of employees who agree:  
**'I consider my performance objectives in my day to day work'**



Percentage of **employees** that agree:  
**'I feel comfortable asking for feedback'**

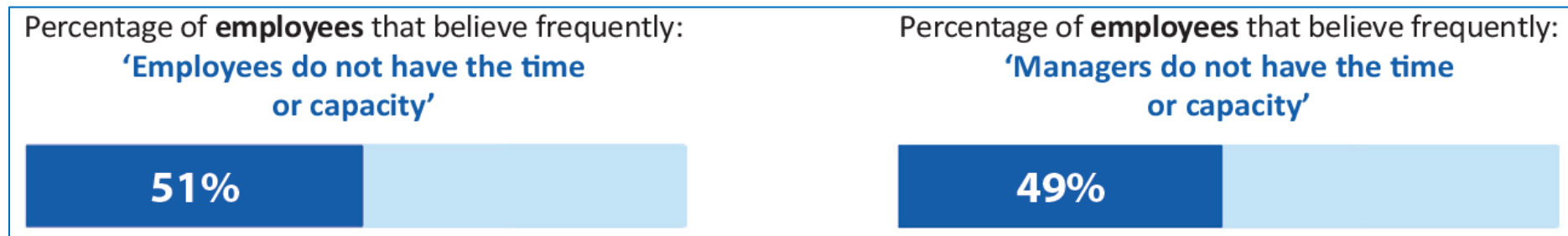


Percentage of **managers** that agree:  
**'My team feels comfortable asking for feedback'**



# Findings

- Generally found conversations do result in agreed actions but follow up of actions not considered effective.
- Time and capacity also impact on conversation effectiveness:

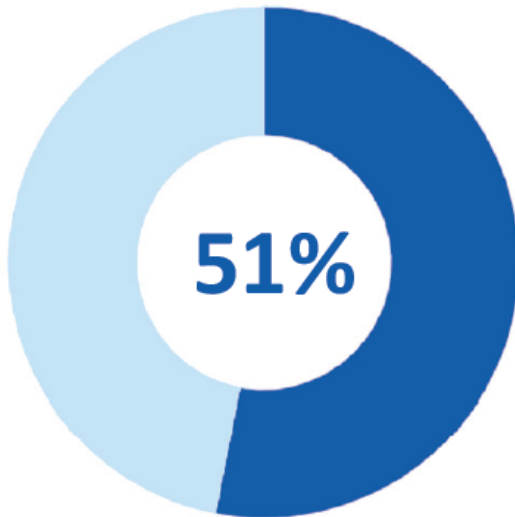




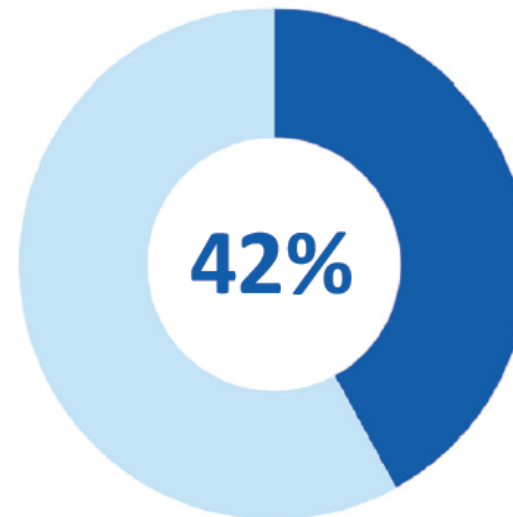
# Findings

- Focus on compliance rather than employee development:

When asked to best describe performance management at their agency the percentage of employees who chose the phrase:  
**'A compliance exercise'**



When asked to describe the biggest barrier to performance management the percentage of employees who chose the phrase:  
**'The focus is on compliance rather than employee development'**





# Findings

- Managers believe performance and development conversations are occurring more frequently than employees do.
- Difference in perception between managers and employees in what constitutes a performance and development conversation.



# Audit Conclusion

**Foundational elements** in place for agencies to conduct conversations.

Framework **partially effective** - need greater investment in policies, training, technology and quality review to remove current barriers to achieving more effective conversations.



# Recommendation

Each agency:

- undertake a **self-assessment** against possible agency responses listed in Report
- agencies develop a **plan for implementation.**