

MEDIA RELEASE

21 March 2019 - Auditor-General assesses government student attendance and engagement for Years 7 to 10

Today, the Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead tabled a report in Parliament presenting his findings on the effectiveness of the Department of Education's management of student attendance and engagement in Years 7 to 10. He made 23 recommendations aimed at improving the Department's management of government high school attendance and engagement.

Overall, Mr Whitehead concluded elements were in place within policies, processes and systems to support the Department's effective management of student attendance and engagement for Years 7 to 10, although further investment in the following areas would enhance the management of student attendance and engagement:

- 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.

Mr Whitehead noted the average attendance rate of 88% for high schools had not substantively changed between 2014 and 2017. Attendance was 2% lower than the Australian average. This means Tasmanian students were attending fewer days.

He also noted 91% of Tasmanian students in government high schools began Year 7 in 2017 with an acceptable attendance rate but for Year 10 this had dropped to 85%.

Mr Whitehead found the Department had developed attendance policies and procedures. It had also established appropriate systems and processes to record and monitor student attendance and absences in accordance with the *Education Act 2016*. However, Mr Whitehead noted there was no evidence to show that student data was used to effectively monitor trends or establish improvement targets for students at educational risk.

Mr Whitehead identified student engagement data held by the Department was largely student centric. Annual satisfaction surveys provide broad indicators of changes in student engagement, but there were no targets specific to student engagement.

The Department did have a structure of interventions to minimise the impacts of student disengagement but Mr Whitehead did not find information detailing the benefits of these programs over time.

The complete Report can be downloaded from www.audit.tas.gov.au.

Ends

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