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Access to Education for Rural Students

Tabled 3 April 2014

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Background

Rural students:

- 30 per cent of the school student population
- more likely to come from a disadvantaged background
- are less likely to:
 - complete Year 12
 - study at higher levels
 - attend university.

Socio-economic disadvantage in metropolitan and rural Victoria, 2006

Category	1 - Most disadvantage	2	3	4	5 - Least disadvantage
Metropolitan	12.9	6.5	9.7	29	41.9
Rural	24.5	28.6	26.5	14.3	6.1

Audit objective and scope

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To assess the effectiveness of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's (the department) activities to ensure that Victorians in rural areas have access to a high-quality education.

We sought to determine whether:

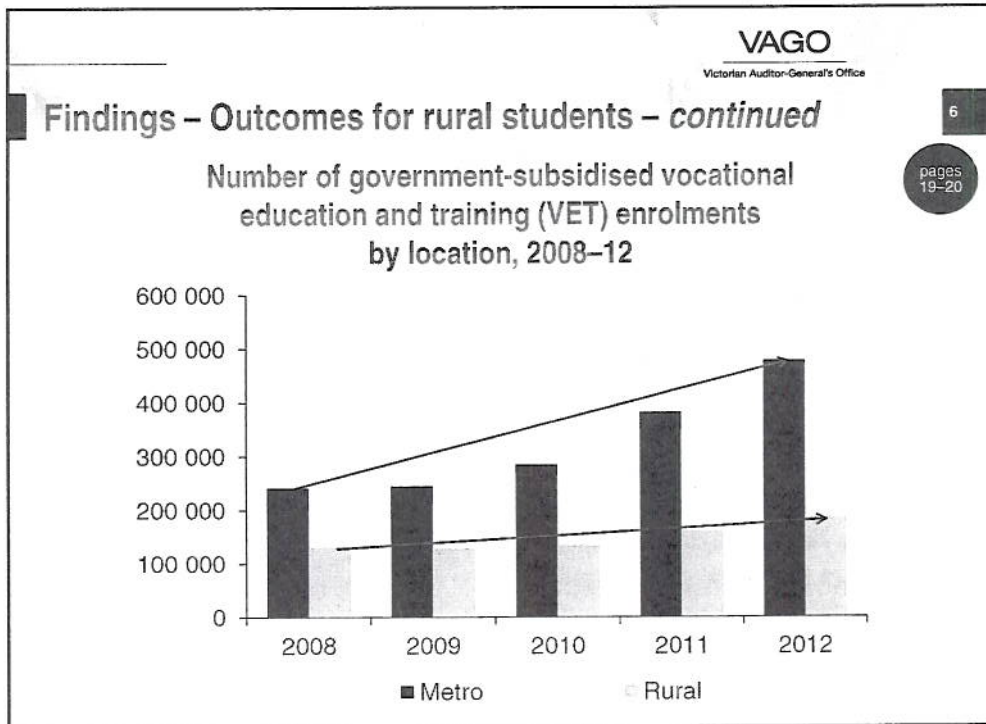
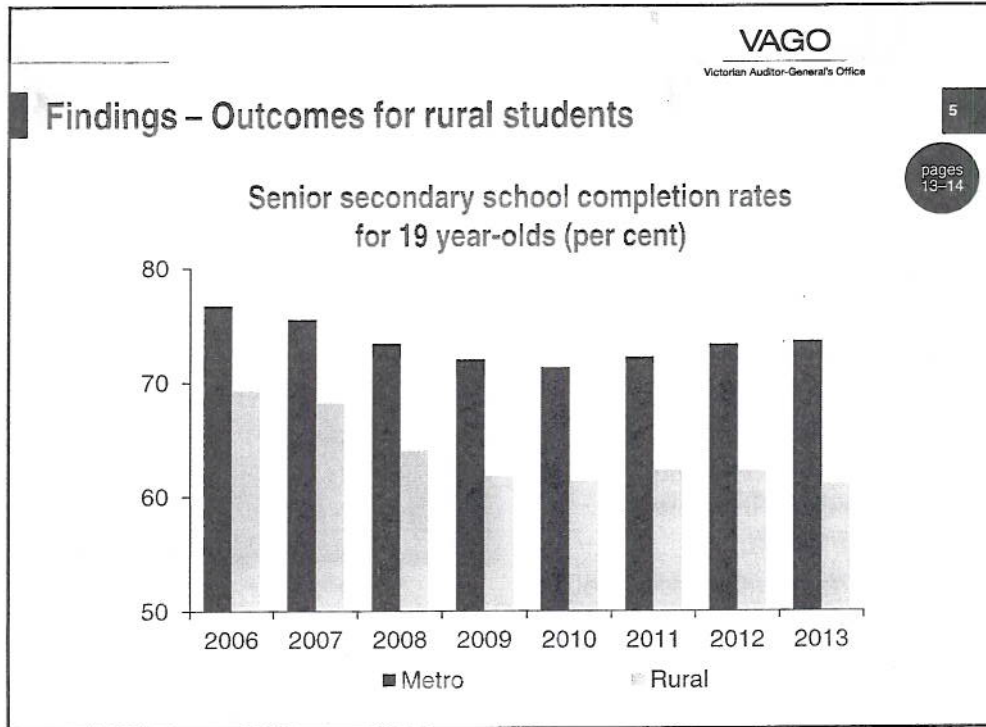
- the department understands the barriers facing rural students
- the department has adopted a comprehensive approach to providing education in rural areas
- rural students have access to a high-quality education, and their educational outcomes are improving.

Conclusions

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- The department has not provided access to high-quality education for all students.
- The gap in performance between rural and metropolitan students in Victoria has persisted.
- The department has a limited understanding of the impact of:
 - its activities in rural education
 - recent training reforms on rural training provision.
- The department's plan to address gaps in rural student performance is behind schedule.



Findings – Addressing the barriers to accessing a high-quality education

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- The department has commissioned research.
- Victorian and Commonwealth funding is provided to address disadvantage.
- There is some evidence of that Commonwealth funding is resulting in improved performance
- The department does not require schools to account for how funding is spent.

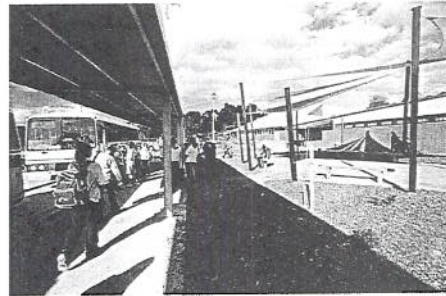


Photo courtesy of DEECD.

Findings – Addressing the barriers to accessing a high-quality education – *continued*

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- Significant VET reforms since 2009 have increased the share of private providers.
- Difficult to predict how providers will respond to subsidy changes.
- The department does not know how changes will impact on rural provision of training in future.



Photo courtesy of Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority .

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Findings – Addressing the barriers to accessing a high-quality education – *continued*

- The department is developing a Rural and Regional Plan.
- The plan needs to be:
 - based on research and comprehensive engagement
 - targeted with activities to achieve outcomes
 - measureable and contain periodic reviews.
- Currently the plan lacks specific actions and is behind schedule.

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Summary of recommendations

Accept

That the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development:

1. comprehensively evaluates the impact of its current activities to support rural students ✓
2. completes its Rural and Regional Plan ✓
3. systematically monitor performance of rural schools ✓
4. provides more targeted information on pathways into further education ✓
5. continues to closely monitor changes in the rural VET market. ✓

