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## MEDIA RELEASE

### AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT State of literacy and numeracy in NSW

The Auditor-General, Mr Peter Achterstraat, today stated that more needs to be done to improve the literacy and numeracy of NSW school students.

"NSW students perform well overall, when compared to the rest of Australia. In some areas, however, one in five students are at or below the minimum level needed. Students in regional and rural areas achieve lower test results than students in metropolitan areas; and the gap is increasing", said Mr Achterstraat.

"Compared to 10 years ago, the NSW Government has spent over three times more money on improving literacy and numeracy yet there has been little real improvement with our children", said Mr Achterstraat. "The problem is that children that are at risk are not being adequately identified and are difficult to track through the education system", he added.

While the state of literacy in NSW needs improvement, Mr Achterstraat outlined solutions for providing a better, brighter future for the children of NSW.

"The Department of Education already has a strong focus on this area, an extensive range of resources, and a dedicated group of teachers. Having said that, this support needs to be better targeted to those most in need. The Department now needs:

1. A greater focus on the child at risk, not the school they are enrolled in,
2. Better training for the teachers of those children most in need, and
3. Partnerships with preschools and with parents, to have children ready for school".

These were some of the findings that were released today by the NSW Audit Office with a report on 'Improving Literacy and Numeracy in NSW Public Schools'. The report looks at numeracy and literacy in NSW Public Schools from 1994 until 2008.

Mr Achterstraat summarised the report by stating:

"Our children are the most important asset that our society has, and if we don't focus more closely on them now as individuals, then we are failing in our responsibility to the next generation. Just as importantly, we have a responsibility to the community in planning a better future for NSW".

#### Further Information

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The full report is available on the Audit Office's website [www.audit.nsw.gov.au](http://www.audit.nsw.gov.au)

## Background information

There are, however, significant differences between NSW state regions.

Year 3: Percentage of students <u>below minimum</u> in 2005 and 2007				
Region	Literacy 2005	Literacy 2007	Numeracy 2005	Numeracy 2007
Sydney	4.6	4.3	5.4	5.6
Northern Sydney	1.7	1.4	2.3	2.0
South Western Sydney	10.5	10.8	13.5	11.4
Western Sydney	8.5	8.7	9.8	9.3
Hunter / Central Coast	7.8	9.2	8.5	9.0
North Coast	9.9	11.4	9.6	9.8
New England	9.4	12.2	9.2	11.7
Riverina	11.1	11.4	11.1	10.0
Illawarra / South East	8.4	9.1	9.1	8.4
Western NSW	16.7	14.0	15.8	13.5

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training

The gap between students in metropolitan and regional or rural areas is increasing.

Differences in mean test scores: metropolitan vs regional and rural						
	2001			2007		
	Metropolitan	Regional and rural	Difference	Metropolitan	Regional and rural	Difference
Literacy - Year 3	50.9	49.7	1.2	51.8	49.6	2.2
Literacy - Year 5	57.3	56.5	0.8	58.0	56.1	1.9
Literacy - Year 7	89.0	87.9	1.1	89.5	87.7	1.8
Numeracy - Year 3	52.7	51.4	1.3	53.7	51.4	2.4
Numeracy - Year 5	60.7	59.3	1.4	62.7	59.9	2.8
Numeracy - Year 7	87.3	85.6	1.7	85.9	83.3	2.6

Source: NSW Department of Education and Training