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# Appendix two – About the audit

## Audit objective

This audit assessed the effectiveness of the Department of Education's activities to ensure that regional, rural and remote students have access to the same quality of early childhood, school education and skills pathways as their metropolitan peers.

## Audit criteria

We addressed the audit objective by assessing whether:

1. The department developed and implemented a strategy that enables regional, rural and remote students to access the same quality of early childhood education, school education, and skills pathways as students in metropolitan New South Wales.
2. The department has been addressing the complexities and needs of regional, rural and remote early childhood education, school education, and skills pathways.

## Audit scope and focus

The audit focused on a range of organisational activities undertaken between 2018 and 2023. This included reviewing of the transition between the 2013 strategy 'Rural and Remote Education: A blueprint for action' and the current 'Rural and Remote Education Strategy (2021–2024)'.

## Audit exclusions

The audit did not assess:

- non-government schools
- disaster recovery arrangements
- activities and effectiveness of external service providers
- the merits of government policy objectives.

## Audit approach

Our procedures included:

1. interviewing relevant staff at the Department of Education
2. consulting with other relevant stakeholders
3. field visits to a selection of schools in three regional, rural and remote locations
4. examining relevant departmental documents
5. examining documents from other stakeholders
6. analysing relevant data on access, wellbeing and educational outcomes.

The audit approach was complemented by quality assurance processes within the Audit Office to ensure compliance with professional standards.

## Audit methodology

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements and other professional standards. The standards require the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with requirements specified in the *Government Sector Audit Act 1983*.

## **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided by the Department of Education. We would particularly like to thank our liaison officers and staff who participated in interviews and provided evidence for the audit. In addition, we would like to thank the schools who participated in interviews as part of our field work.

## **Audit cost**

The estimated cost of this audit is \$465,000.