
Report highlights

What this report is about

Students in rural and remote areas of NSW face greater challenges compared to their metropolitan peers.

This report examined how the NSW Department of Education (the department) is ensuring that rural and remote students have access to the same quality of early childhood, school education, and skills pathways as metropolitan students.

What we found

A decade since the previous (2013) strategy to address educational disadvantage, there remain considerable gaps in access and outcomes between rural and remote students and metropolitan students.

The Rural and Remote Education Strategy (2021-24) is unlikely to address these longstanding and known issues of educational disadvantage in rural and remote areas.

Key enabling factors such as resourcing a dedicated team, setting performance measures, and establishing suitable governance arrangements were not put in place to support effective implementation of the 2021 strategy.

The department has programs aimed at addressing remoteness challenges, but does not know if these initiatives improve access or outcomes.

The department does not monitor or report on student access or outcomes according to geographic location.

What we recommended

The Department of Education should:

- develop a new strategy that addresses disadvantage in regional, rural and remote education
- establish and report publicly on regional, rural and remote key performance indicators
- improve data collection by using a standard remoteness classification
- improve governance arrangements for regional, rural and remote education
- review the resources provided for regional, rural and remote areas that recognises the additional costs
- develop an approach that ensures all students can access best practice modes of delivery.

Fast facts

44%

Government schools located in regional and remote NSW

922

Permanent teacher vacancies in regional and remote schools in January 2023

52%

Regional and remote students on track for all five Australian Early Development Census domains in 2021

54%

Remote and very remote students above national minimum standards for reading in 2022

52%

Remote and very remote students above national minimum standards for numeracy in 2022

73%

Remote and very remote school leavers in further education, training, or employment in 2022