B. How we prepared this report

Queensland Audit Office reports to parliament

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) is Queensland's independent auditor of public sector entities and local governments.

QAO's independent public reporting is an important part of our mandate. It brings transparency and accountability to public sector performance and forms a vital part of the overall integrity of the system of government.

QAO provides valued assurance, insights and advice, and recommendations for improvement via the reports it tables in the Legislative Assembly, as mandated by the *Auditor-General Act 2009*. These reports may be on the results of our financial audits, on the results of our performance audits, or on our insights. Our insights reports may provide key facts or a topic overview, the insights we have gleaned from across our audit work, the outcomes of an investigation we conducted following a request for audit, or an update on the status of Auditor-General recommendations.

We share our planned reports to parliament in our 3-year forward work plan, which we update annually: www.qao.qld.gov.au/audit-program.

A fact sheet how we prepare, consult on, and table our reports to parliament is available on our website: www.qao.qld.gov.au/reports-resources/fact-sheets.

Performance audits

Through our performance audit program, we evaluate the efficiency, effectiveness, and economy of public service delivery. We select the topics for these audits via a robust process that reflects strategic risks entities are facing. We develop or identify suitable criteria for each audit and evaluate the audited entities' performance against it. We report to parliament on the outcome.

Our performance audit reports help parliament hold entities to account for the use of public resources. In our reports, we provide recommendations or insights for improvement, and may include actions, advice, or better practice examples for entities to consider.

About this report

QAO prepares its reports on performance audits under the *Auditor-General Act 2009*:

- section 37A, which outlines that the Auditor-General may conduct a performance audit of all or any particular activities of a public sector entity.

This report communicates the findings, conclusions and recommendations from our performance audit on attracting and retaining teachers in regional and remote Queensland.

Our audit was a reasonable assurance engagement, conducted under the Australian Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements,* issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. The conclusions in our report provide reasonable assurance about the audited entities' performance against the identified criteria. Our objectives and criteria are set out below.

The objective of the audit

The objective of this audit was to assess whether the Department of Education's strategies are effective in attracting, retaining, and recruiting teachers in regional and remote Queensland.

What we cover

This report looks at how the Department of Education is workforce planning to ensure it has enough teachers in regional and remote schools now and into the future.

It focuses on the work the department does to attract teachers to regional and remote schools, and retain them.

The entity we audited

The entity subject to this audit is the Department of Education. It is responsible for workforce planning to ensure all Queensland children have access to education.

Our approach

Audit criteria

We addressed our objective through the following criteria:

Criteria	
1.1	The department identifies workforce demand for teachers in regional and remote Queensland and develops strategies and workforce plans to meet it.
1.2	The department effectively implements strategies and uses incentives to fill workforce gaps in regional and remote Queensland.
1.3	The department effectively monitors and evaluates its strategies and workforce plans for regional and remote Queensland.

Scope exclusions

This audit did not examine:

- the work the Department of Education is doing to attract people into the teaching profession. While we considered how teachers are attracted and recruited to regional and remote schools, we did not assess initiatives aimed at increasing the supply of teachers into the education system overall
- school-level workforce planning
- attraction and retention activities within Queensland's 4 inner regions
- initiatives and support for school staff other than teachers (such as cleaning and maintenance staff, teacher aides, and more).

Method

Field interviews and site visits

We conducted interviews with a range of stakeholders from across the school education sector, including regional and remote areas of Queensland. This included:

- stakeholders from the Department of Education's central and regional teams
- 24 primary, secondary, prep to year 12, distance education, and special education state schools across the 4 outer regions (out of a total 579 schools in these regions)
- members of the parents and citizens association at 1 school
- Queensland Teachers Union representatives from across the 4 outer regions
- Queensland College of Teachers
- Society of the Provision of Education in Rural Australia.

Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the department involved in the audit. This included legislation, strategies, policies, guidelines, performance reports, reviews, and evaluations. We also considered research from other jurisdictions and academia.

Data analysis

We analysed data from the Department of Education. This included payroll data, records of Permission to Teach teacher approvals, mobility data of teachers, vacancy data, and school census data.

We validated our data methods and analysis progressively with the department.

Subject matter experts

We engaged and sought advice from a university professor with extensive research and experience in regional and remote teaching. They offered advice and validated facts and concepts related to the audit.