



Access to Education for Rural Students

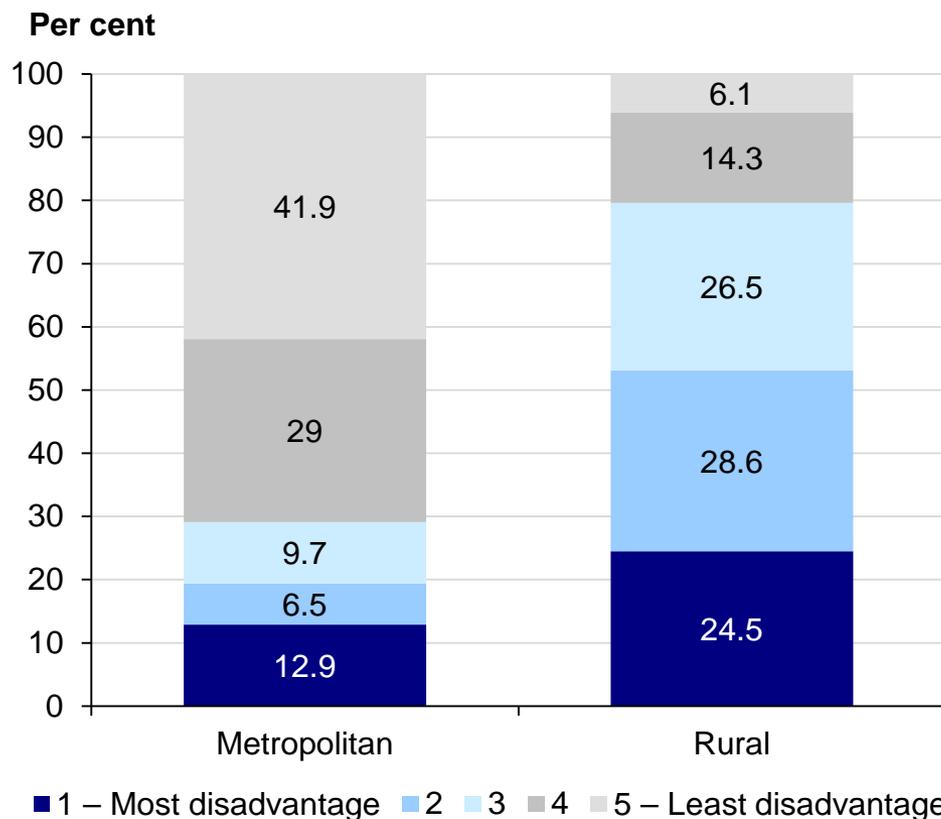
Tabled 3 April 2014

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



Background – *continued*

Recent reviews identify common barriers to rural students' greater participation in further education.

These include:

- distance
- cost
- socio-cultural factors such as:
 - lower educational aspirations
 - different family influences.



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Audit objective and scope

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.

Audit objective and scope – *continued*

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Public Transport Victoria manages the School Bus Program in partnership with the department.

It is responsible for service contracts, route planning and monitoring operations.



Photo courtesy of DEECD.



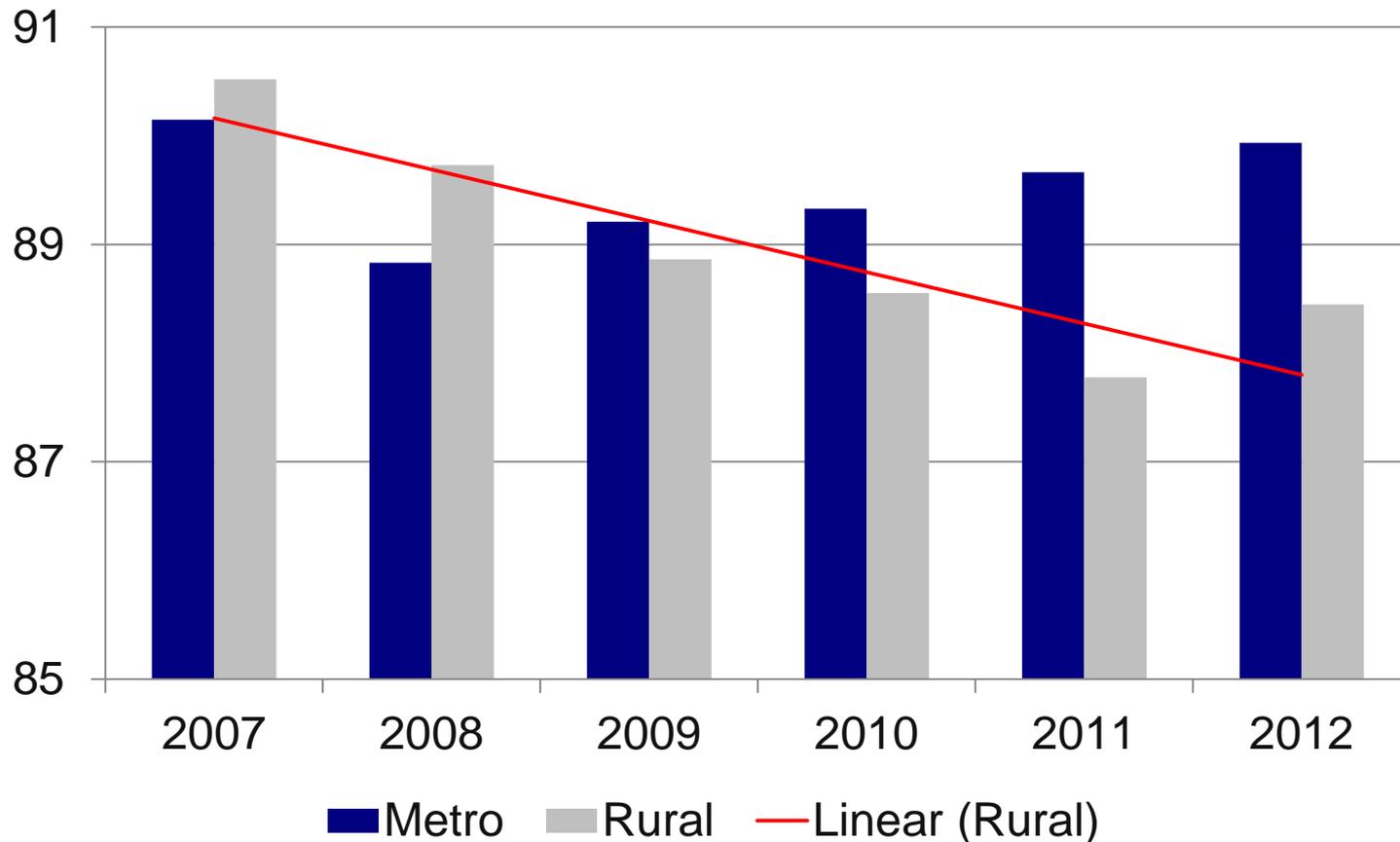
Conclusions

- 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 – Outcomes for rural students

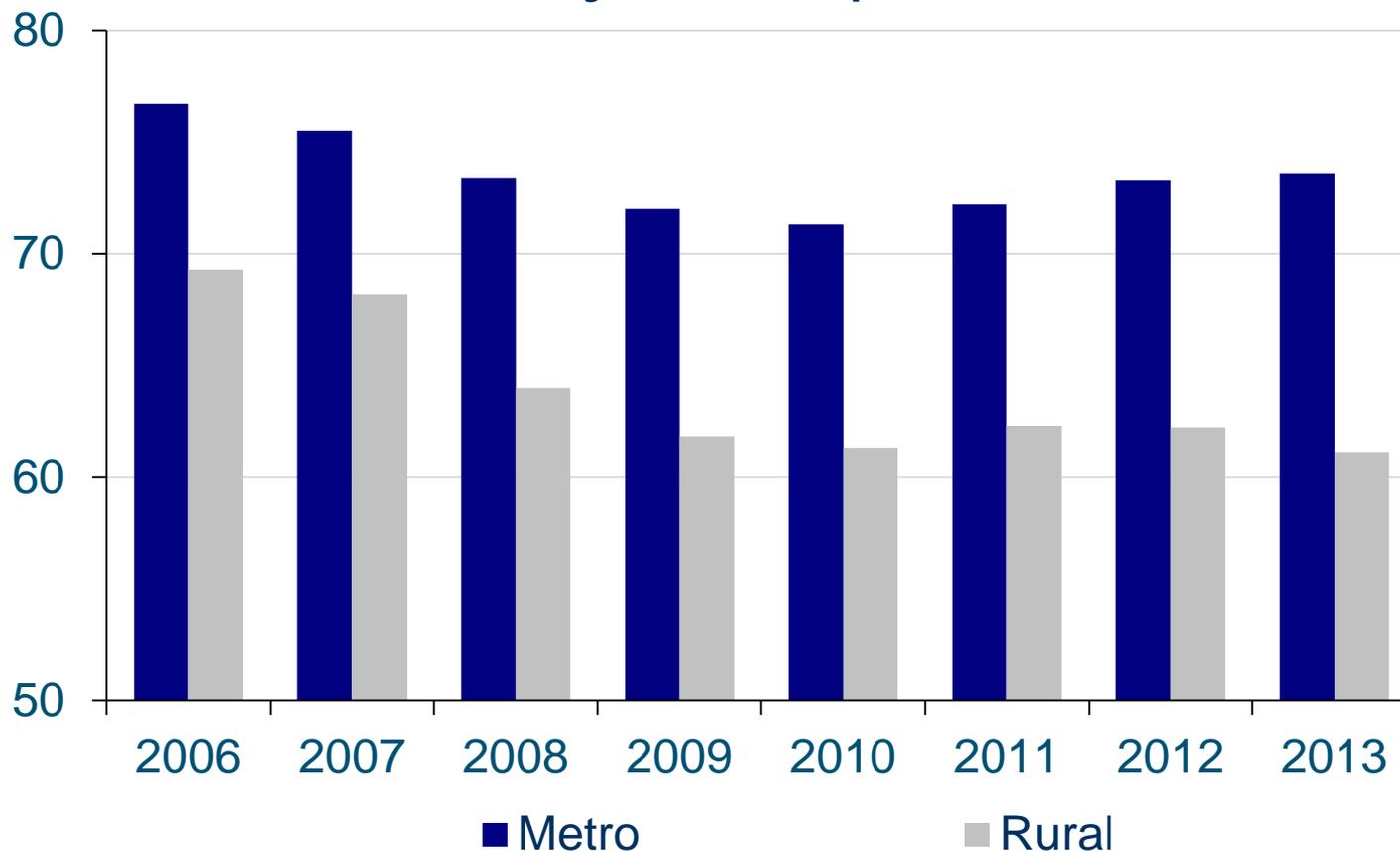
School attendance of students in Years 7–10 (per cent)





Findings – Outcomes for rural students – *continued*

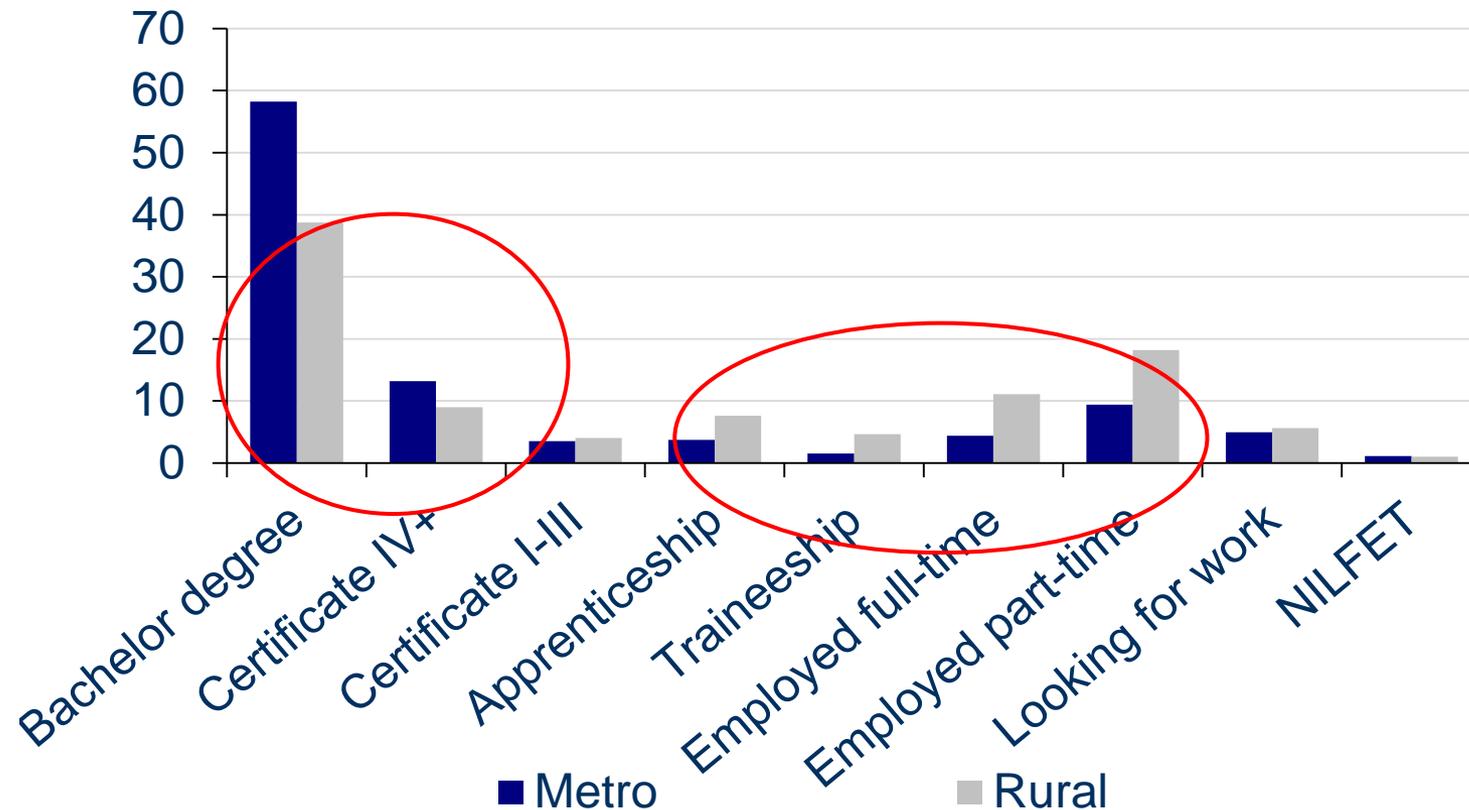
Senior secondary school completion rates for 19 year-olds (per cent)





Findings – Outcomes for rural students – *continued*

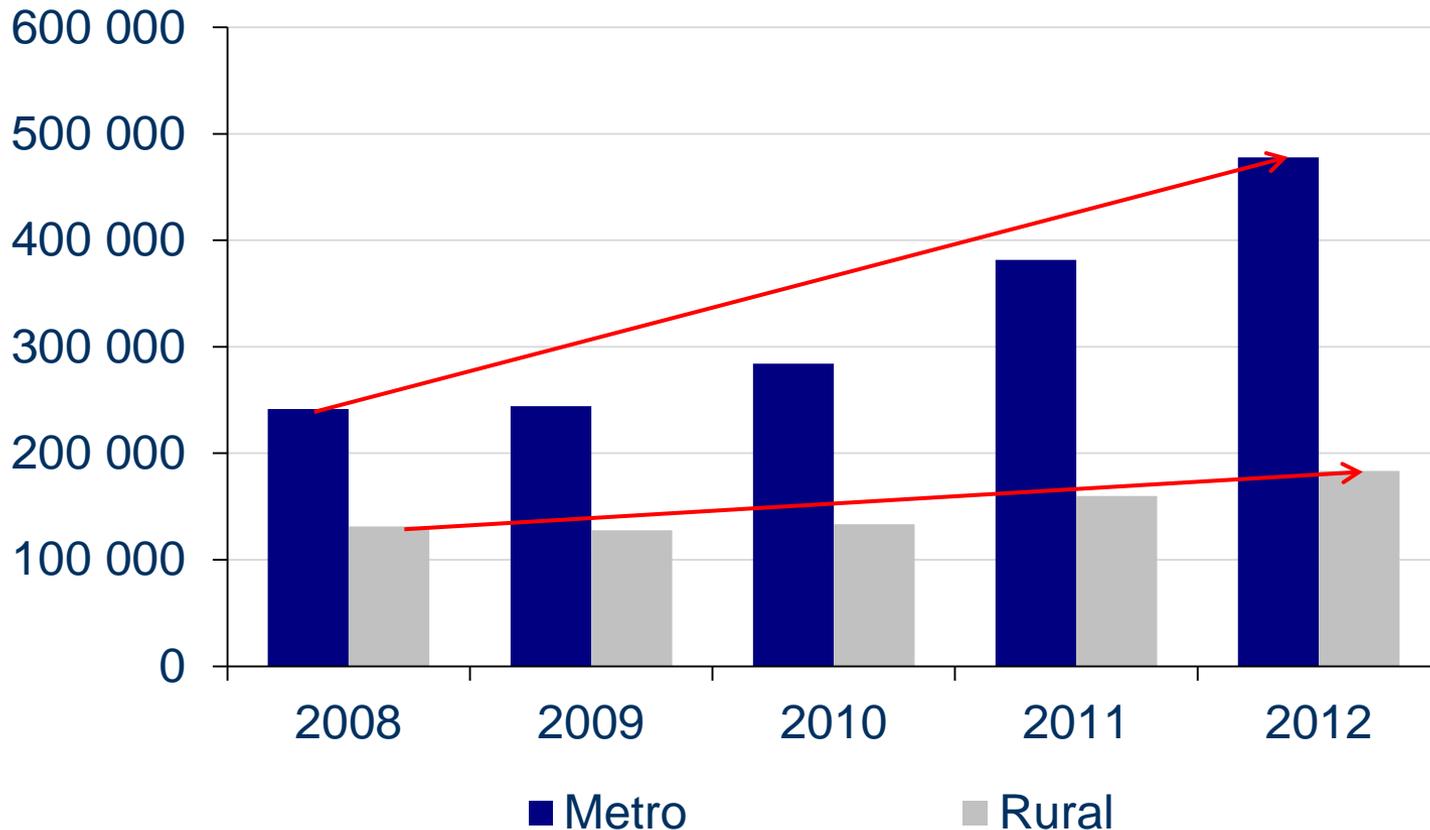
Destinations of students who completed Year 12 by location, 2013 (per cent)



Note: NILFET stands for 'not in the labour force, education or training'.

Findings – Outcomes for rural students – *continued*

Number of government-subsidised vocational education and training (VET) enrolments by location, 2008–12



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

- The department has commissioned research.
- Victorian and Commonwealth funding is provided to address disadvantage.
- The department implements dedicated programs.
 - Most significant is the School Bus Program.
- Schools were critical of the School Bus Program.
- Steps are being taken to improve it.



Photo courtesy of DEECD.

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

- 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 .



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.

Summary of recommendations

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		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.	develops and implements a method to 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.	✓



Related audits

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Future audits

- The Annual Plan will set out future audit topics in June 2014.

Previous audits

- *Student Completion Rates*, November 2012
- *Science and Maths Participation Rates and Initiatives*, June 2012
- *Casual Relief Teacher Arrangements*, April 2012



Contact details

For further information on this presentation please contact:

Victorian Auditor-General's Office

[p] 8601 7000

[w] www.audit.vic.gov.au/about_us/contact_us.aspx