

**FOLLOW UP OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL'S
PERFORMANCE AUDITS SEPTEMBER 2012 -
MARCH 2013**

Organisation: Department of Education and Communities
Name: Dr Michele Bruniges
Position: Secretary
Date Received: 10/04/2014



DGL14/268

Mr Jonathan O'Dea MP
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Legislative Assembly
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Mr O'Dea

I write in response to your letter received on 7 March 2014, regarding the Auditor-General's Performance Audit Report No. 226: *The impact of the Raised School Leaving Age* (your reference: LAC14/054).

Please find attached the Department's submission to the Public Accounts Committee outlining its response, including actions to date.

The Department is currently implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations in relation to the raised school leaving age in NSW government secondary schools, and is committed to delivering quality service that meets the dynamic needs of students and their school communities.

Yours sincerely



Dr Michele Bruniges AM
SECRETARY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND COMMUNITIES
9 April 2014

NSW Department of Education and Communities

Auditor-General's Performance Audits October 2011 – March 2012 Report No. 226: The impact of the raised school leaving age

IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
1 The Department should, by December 2013, collect data from school principals on student destinations after Year 10 and report annually on the alternate pathways chosen such as full-time paid employment and/or vocational education and training programs.	Referred to the Project Control Group for consideration	Gather destination data from a large scale sample of school leavers enrolled in Years 10-12 in 2012 but not enrolled in 2013. Conduct a destination survey in 2014, 2015 and 2016. Investigate apparent retention rates Year 7 to Year 12 for 2008-2013.	April 2014 December 2014, 2015 and 2016 March 2014	Completed In 2013 the Department gathered destination data from a large scale sample of school leavers enrolled in Years 10-12 in 2012, but not enrolled in 2013. On track The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation is developing a destinations survey. Completed In 2013 the Department investigated apparent retention rates Year 7 to Year 12 for 2008-2013.	State Training Services Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation Public Schools Portfolio
2 The Department should, by December 2013, revise the School Attendance Policy to provide guidance to schools about what constitutes poor patterns of attendance which would normally trigger a response by the school.	Accepted	Review the <i>School Attendance Policy</i> and related procedures during the 2013 school year with implementation scheduled during the 2014 school year.	December 2013	Completed In 2013 the Department reviewed the <i>School Attendance Policy</i> and related procedures and developed and prepared a draft for consultation which is being considered by stakeholders in 2014. These documents will provide more guidance to schools about what constitutes poor patterns of attendance that would trigger action from the school.	Public Schools Portfolio
3 The Department should, by June 2013, collect data on referrals of 15 to 17 year olds to HSLO's for poor attendance and examine the outcome for students to inform planning and identify training needs of HSLOs	Accepted	Collect data relating to referrals to the Home School Liaison Program during 2013.	June 2013	Completed In 2013 the Department collected data relating to referrals to the Home School Liaison Program. The Department is now developing professional learning initiatives for HSLO and ASLO staff which will assist them to further respond to the specific needs of students 15 to	Public Schools Portfolio

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
and school attendance personnel.				17 years of age.	
4 The Department should, by June 2013, review the enrolments of 15 to 17 year olds in TAFE courses in those regions where there has been a decline to determine if there are any practices that discourage enrolment.	Accepted	The Managing Director, TAFE NSW will review the enrolment of eligible 15-17 year olds in TAFE courses in the annual May-June performance reviews of each TAFE NSW Institute, to identify if there are practices which discourage enrolments. If such practices are identified, the Managing Director will discuss what remedial actions individual Institutes are taking within the constraints imposed by budgetary and Smart and Skilled reform parameters.	June 2013	Completed The Managing Director, TAFE NSW reviewed the enrolment of all eligible 15-17 year olds in TAFE NSW to determine if there are any practices that discourage enrolment as part of Institute Performance Review meetings. All 10 TAFE NSW Institutes have completed review meetings. Institutes have provided written advice to demonstrate that they do not have practices that discourage enrolment. Institutes have also identified the strategies they have to support improved outcomes for school aged young people. The Managing Director is satisfied that all 10 Institutes do not have practices that discourage enrolment by eligible 15-17 year olds. The Institutes regard schools as important partners in developing pathways for young people.	TAFE NSW
5 The Department should, by April 2014, update and publish further case studies of good practice that demonstrate innovative and flexible approaches taken by schools to engage students affected by the raised school leaving age.	Accepted	The Project Control Group will coordinate the collection of a variety of case studies already available.	April 2014	On track The Department has published case studies and will continue to identify and publish further case studies of good practice demonstrating the flexible and innovative approaches taken by schools to engage students. Six <i>Links to Learning</i> Projects have been identified and providers contacted to seek their support in developing case studies. Case studies are expected to be completed at the beginning of May 2014. As further case studies are identified they will be made available on the Department's	Public Schools Portfolio

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
		The Project Control Group will identify any gaps in the current case studies and consider how to collect more.	August 2014	website. On track The Department has engaged a researcher to conduct research into the skills and practices through which schools effectively engage with students to develop a culture of engagement across the school. The ten case studies will examine enhanced administration and communications processes, refining teaching and learning practices, customising student support and strategic planning in schools covering a range of geographical areas in NSW.	Public Schools Portfolio
6 The Department should, by December 2013, further report on actions taken to develop and implement appropriate alternative education programs.	Referred to the Project Control Group for consideration (The Project Control Group has determined that "programs" be interpreted to mean "educational pathways and programs to broaden a school's curriculum offering".)	Investigate alternative education programs and pathways currently supported by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES).	December 2013.	Completed In 2013 the Department investigated current alternative education programs and pathways which were supported by BOSTES. The Project Control Group is using this data to develop appropriate alternate educational programs including a new virtual secondary school and a distance education outreach program.	Public Schools Portfolio
		Investigate alternative education programs and pathways currently supported by <i>Links to Learning</i> and make recommendations based on this work. <i>Links to Learning</i> is a targeted program implemented by the NSW Department of Education and Communities to improve outcomes for young	December 2014	On track The <i>Links to Learning</i> program is being reviewed in the context of Local Schools, Local Decisions and departmental priorities including the <i>Rural and Remote Education – a blueprint for action</i> .	Public Schools Portfolio

RECOMMENDATION	ACCEPTED OR REJECTED	ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN	DUE DATE	STATUS (completed, on track, delayed) and COMMENT	RESPONSIBILITY (Section of agency responsible for implementation)
		people and which focuses on effective transitions for at risk young people.			
7	Accepted	<p>Questions added to the annual School to Work reporting template completed by schools and the then regions starting from December 2012.</p> <p>Evaluation of data collected from the annual School to Work (STW) 2012 report</p> <p>Review existing programs supporting the professional learning of school careers advisers and transition advisers.</p> <p>Commission a survey to broadly examine careers advice in schools.</p>	<p>June 2013</p> <p>May 2014</p> <p>December 2013</p> <p>June 2015</p>	<p>Completed In 2013 questions were added to the annual School to Work reporting template.</p> <p>On track This data will further inform the development of the Careers Adviser Induction Program.</p> <p>Completed In 2013 the Department reviewed existing programs which supported the professional learning of school careers advisers and transition advisers.</p> <p>On track The Department is developing a survey to examine careers advice in schools. This work will be undertaken in conjunction with the education sector's response to Recommendation 1 of the Independent Review into Agricultural Education and Training in NSW.</p>	<p>Public Schools Portfolio</p> <p>Public Schools Portfolio</p> <p>Public Schools Portfolio</p> <p>Public Schools Portfolio</p>
8	Referred to the Project Control Group for consideration	Collect data from the targeted support program, <i>Links to Learning</i> .	December 2013	Completed In 2013 the Department collected data from 270 government schools which refer around 3,600 students to the <i>Links to Learning</i> program.	Public Schools Portfolio