



Report summary

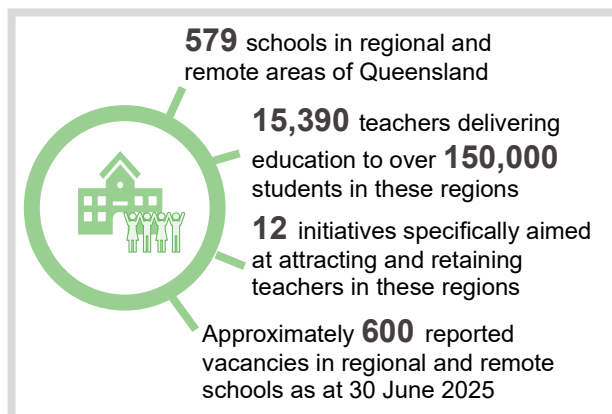
This report examines whether the Department of Education's strategies are effective in attracting and retaining teachers in regional and remote Queensland.



What is important to know about this audit?

- Teacher attraction and retention is a complex issue which is underpinned by a national and global teacher shortage.
- Attracting teachers to regional and remote areas has always been a challenge due to factors such as isolation and access to services. This is true across Australia, but it is more pronounced in Queensland because its population is so geographically dispersed.
- The Department of Education (the department) is responsible for setting its overall strategy to attract and retain teachers in its schools.
- Queensland's 1,266 state schools are centrally funded, but they operate with a high degree of autonomy in setting their overall staffing needs. This is important to ensure each school meets the needs of the local community. But it also creates challenges for the department's workforce modelling, as each school has different needs and workforce profiles.

Figure 1: 2025 key facts



Note: Teacher numbers are based on quarter 1, 2025 data from Queensland Government's Minimum Obligatory Human Resource Information (MOHRI). Student numbers are based on the department's enrolment count on the 8th day of school in 2025. Source: Queensland Audit Office, using information from the Department of Education.



What did we find?

The department is focused on attracting and retaining teachers in its regional and remote schools, but it needs to implement more comprehensive and strategic workforce planning.

- The department has a teacher workforce strategy (the strategy) that includes a variety of initiatives to attract and retain teachers in regional and remote Queensland. These initiatives have attracted teachers to the regions. However, the department does not know whether its initiatives are as effective as they could be due to limited monitoring and evaluation activity to date.
- The department has not effectively designed its strategy. It lacks the underlying data, analysis, and planning to inform the design of its strategy and some of the related initiatives. Its strategy and initiatives also lack measurable goals and targets.
- It does not monitor its strategy or initiatives and therefore is unable to assess the effectiveness of its actions. There is no central team responsible for monitoring workforce planning activities and delivery of the strategy.
- It also needs to refresh its approach to prioritising which schools can access initiatives.

The department needs to better assess its current and future needs for teachers.

- The department determines its teacher needs annually through the *Queensland State Schools Resourcing Framework* (school resourcing model). This provides schools with funding, and allocates teacher and other staffing numbers based on student enrolments at the start of each school year.
- The school resourcing model lets principals reshape their staffing profile to meet the needs of their school community. Principals can employ additional teachers, teacher aides, management, and other support staff outside of their allocation. This has led to many different staffing profiles across the schooling system.

- This flexibility means the school resourcing model is not fit-for-purpose as a workforce planning tool. While it provides a short-term projection of teacher needs, this projection does not accurately reflect the actual needs of schools across the state.
- The department has not set parameters for principals to resource within when determining their staffing profile. Without this, the department is limited in its ability to assess overall equity of teacher numbers across the education system. This limits how effectively it can make resourcing decisions and assist schools that are struggling to attract and retain teachers, such as those in regional and remote Queensland.
- Beyond the school resourcing model, the department does not undertake sufficient analysis and modelling of short- or longer-term teacher needs. It also does not identify teacher skill needs across the system, such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Without this information, it is difficult for the department to set plans and strategies beyond the short term.

A lack of reliable statewide vacancy data limits how well central functions can help regional and remote schools with teacher recruitment.

- The department collects vacancy data from regional and remote schools. However, not all schools are reporting all vacancies due to ongoing teacher shortages, or reallocating teacher roles to leadership and other support roles. Its centralised recruitment function does not include all schools across Queensland, with most schools in South East Queensland undertaking their own recruitment.
- This limits the department's ability to help regional and remote schools with recruitment activities, as it is not able to prioritise teacher recruitment to the schools of greatest need across the state. This lack of visibility also impacts the effectiveness of its key teacher mobility program, the transfer system, which is designed to help regional and remote schools.

Better guidance and monitoring of early career teachers in regional and remote areas is needed.

- Regional and remote schools attract a higher proportion of new and early career teachers. This includes teachers who are still completing their studies but have begun teaching duties.
- Individual schools are central to inducting teachers in regional and remote areas; however, the schools we visited had varied approaches to onboarding staff. Some schools had structured onboarding and wellbeing programs for new teachers, and others did not.
- The department does not set expectations or provide guidance to schools to support early career teachers' transition, experience, and development. Greater focus on this is important to increase their chances of retaining these teachers within the system.

The department has started work to improve its workforce planning.

- The department has identified gaps in its practices relating to workforce attraction and retention and has started projects to address these.
- It is in the late stages of a school resourcing review, part of which aims to redesign its resourcing model to support schools while ensuring greater equity across the education system. The department has also committed to developing a new teaching workforce strategy, which it plans to release in early 2026, and has started a project to review the effectiveness of some of its existing initiatives.



What does the department need to do?

We made 7 recommendations to the department. These focused on the following themes:

- building stronger central intelligence to inform decisions about its workforce
- implementing a longer-term strategic workforce plan
- implementing better central governance
- improving its central approaches to teacher recruitment and mobility.