

Tasmania: we have a problem

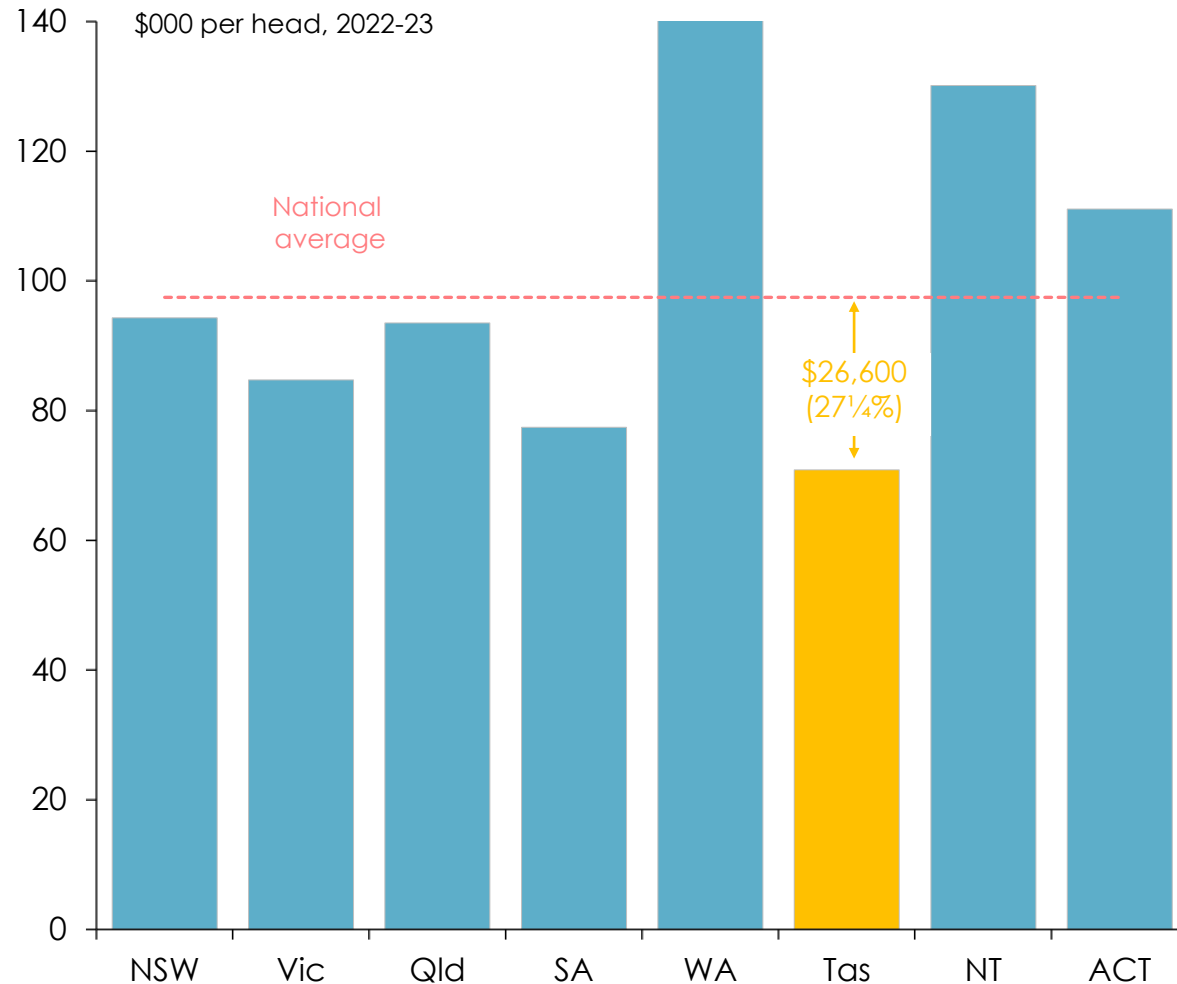
**Tasmania's declining educational outcomes and the
impact on our future prosperity**

Saul Eslake, Michael Rowan and Lisa Denny

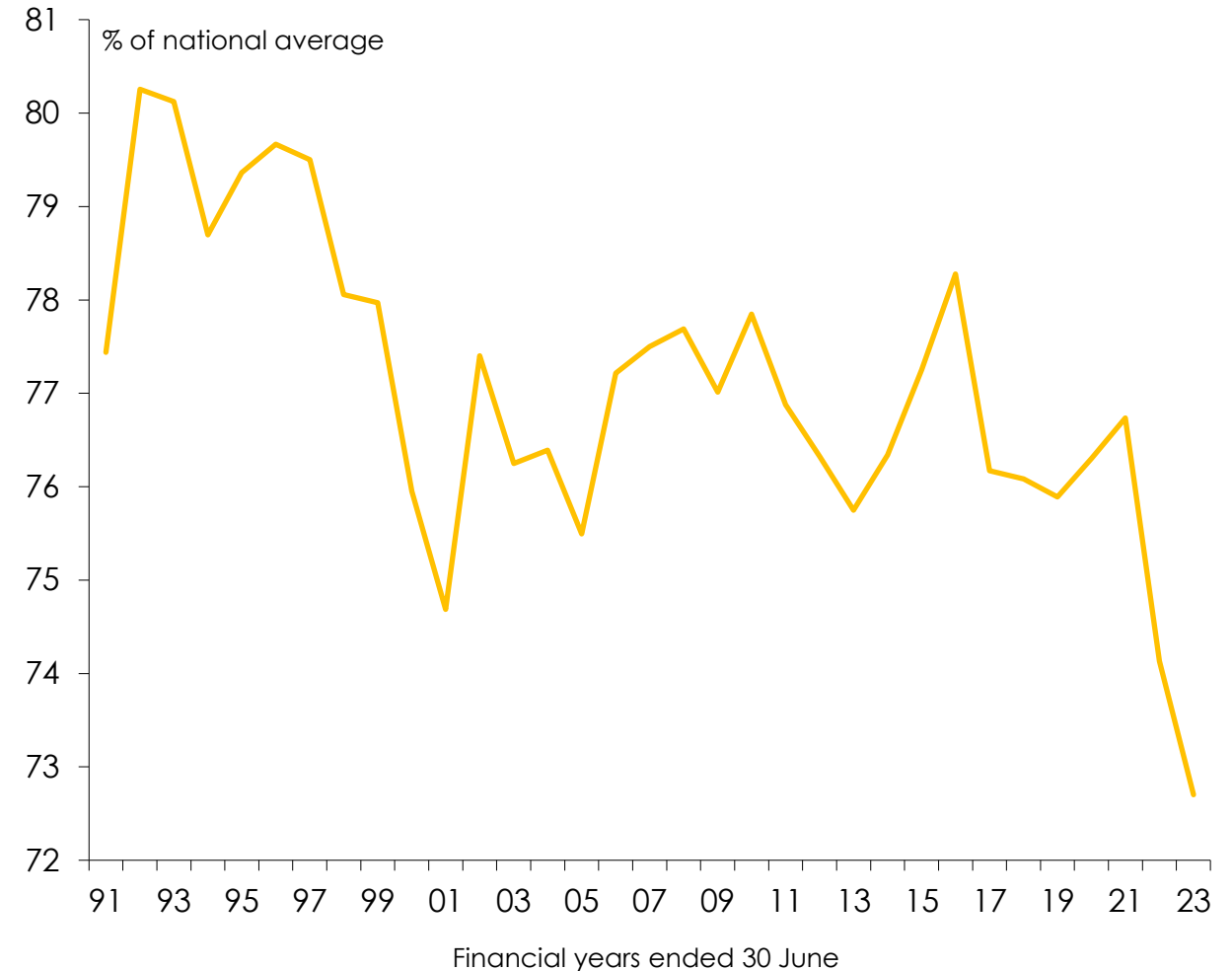
Saul Eslake

Tasmania remains Australia's poorest state, measured by per capita gross product – and in 2022-23 by the biggest margin in 32 years

Gross state product per head of population, states and territories, 2022-23



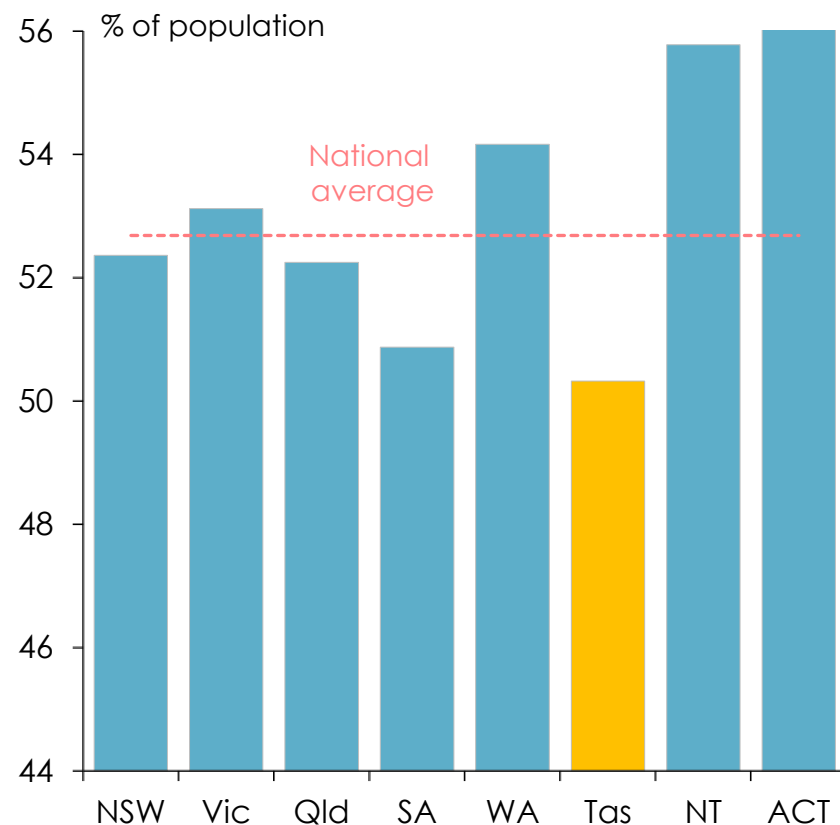
Tasmania's per capita gross state product as a proportion of the national average



Source: ABS, [Australian National Accounts: State Accounts](#), 2022-23.

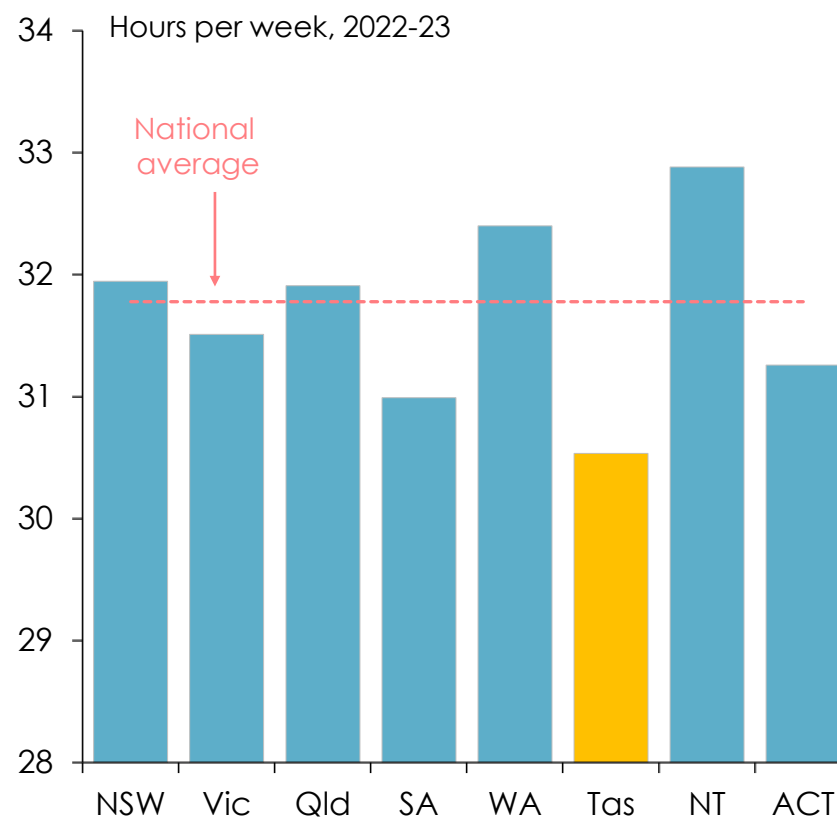
We're the poorest state in the nation because fewer of us have jobs, we work fewer hours, and for each hour that we work we produce less

People with jobs as a proportion of the population, 2022-23



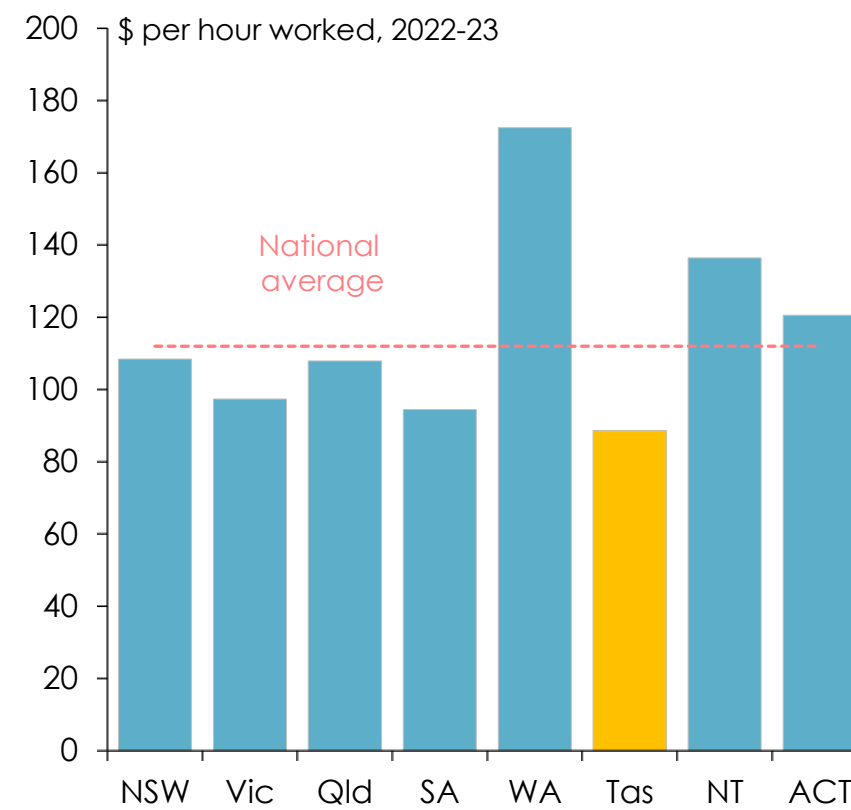
Only 50.3% of Tasmanians work – 2.4 pc pts less than the corresponding proportion of mainlanders

Average hours worked by people with jobs, 2022-23



Tasmanians work 1¼ fewer hours per week than mainlanders – equivalent to an additional 7 days off a year

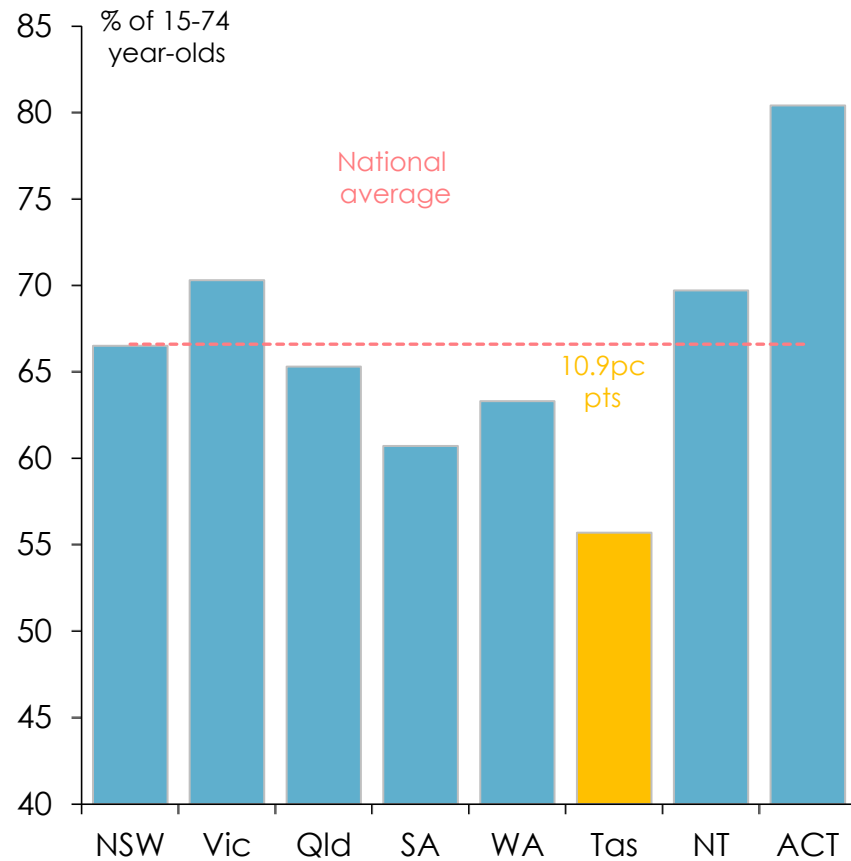
Output per hour worked by people with jobs, 2022-23



Tasmanian labour productivity is \$21.60 (20¾%) less than the mainland average

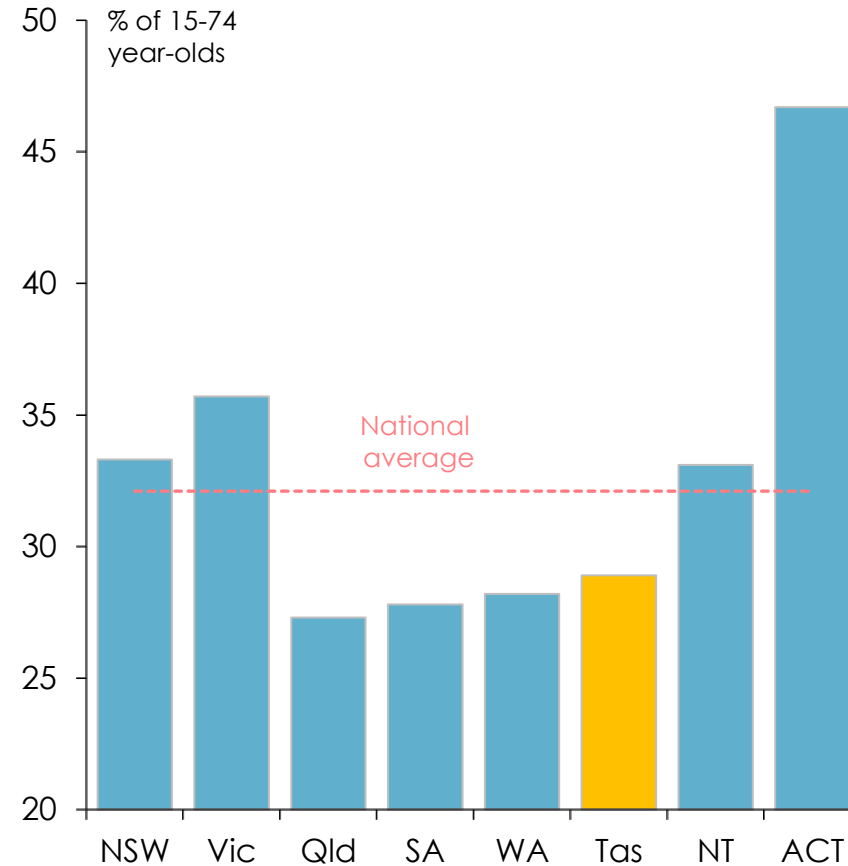
The common factor in all three of the reasons for our below-average per capita GSP is our below-average levels of educational attainment

Proportion of 15–74-year-olds with a bachelor degree or higher, 2023



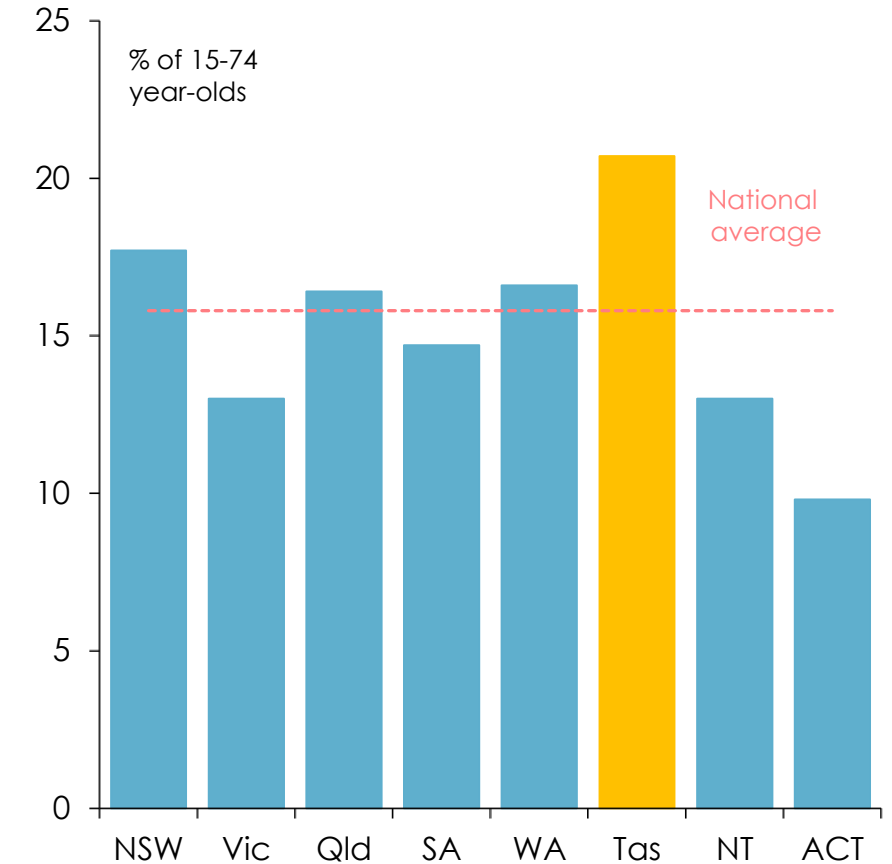
The proportion of Tasmanians with a university degree is 3¼ percentage points below the national average

Proportion of 15–74-year-olds with at least Year 12, 2023



The proportion of Tasmanians with at least Year 12 of high school is 11 pc points below the national average

Proportion of 15–74-year-olds with nothing beyond Year 10, 2023



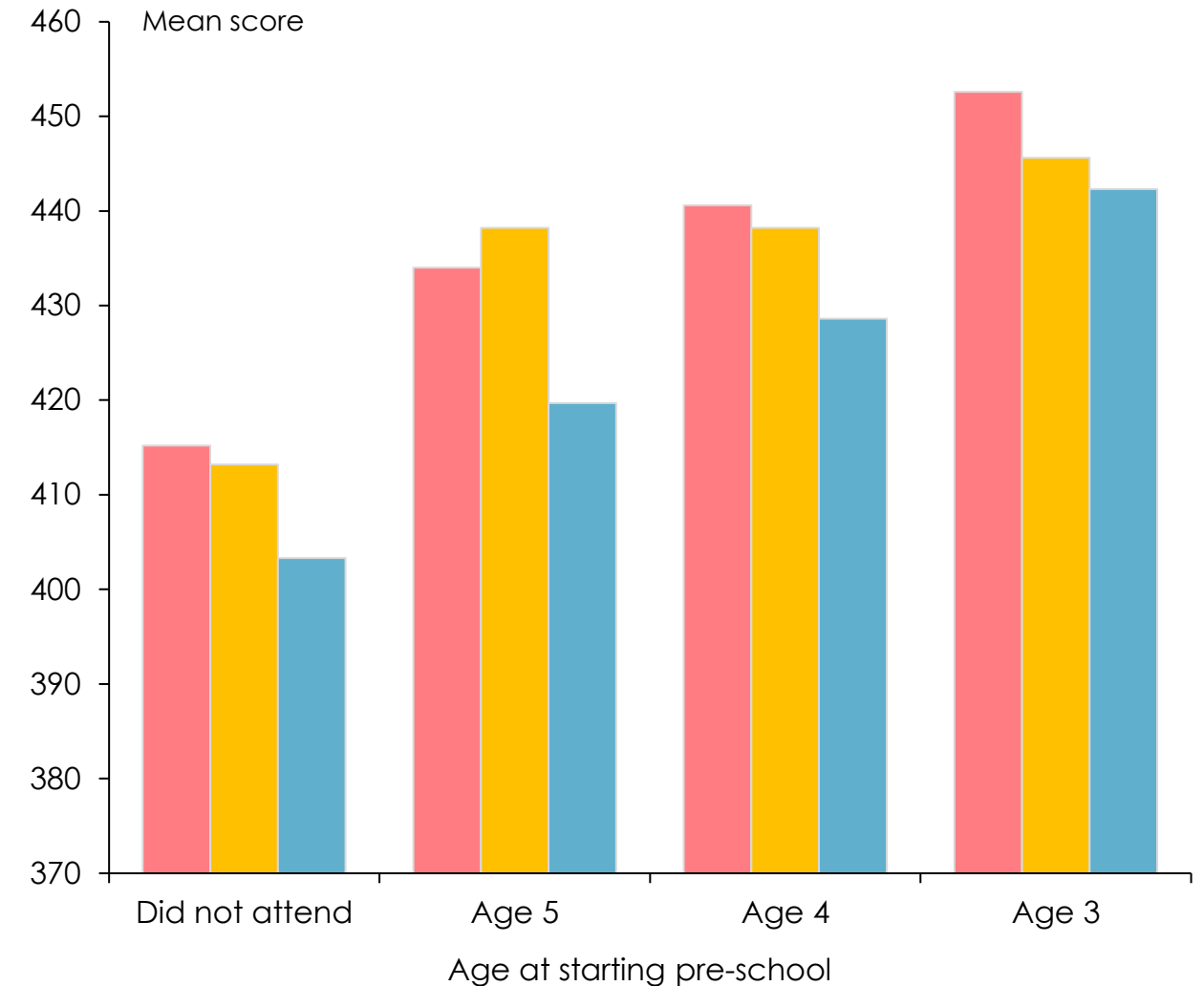
The proportion of Tasmanians with nothing beyond Year 10 is 5 pc points above the national average

Source: ABS, [Education and work, Australia](#), May 2023.

Tasmanian students are disadvantaged by starting school at an older age than their counterparts in other states and territories

- ❑ **Although a relatively high proportion of Tasmanian children attend pre-school, they start at an older age than children in other states**
 - that's because a Tasmanian child has to have turned 5 by 1st January in order to start school that year, cf. 30th April in Victoria and the ACT, 1st May in SA, 30th June in Queensland, WA and the NT, and 31st July in NSW
- ❑ **The available evidence suggests that children who start pre-school at age 3 acquire higher levels of proficiency in reading, writing and numeracy by Grade 3 than children who start at later ages**
 - the Australian Government's recent employment White Paper described the relationship as 'significant'
- ❑ **Another adverse consequence of the delayed entry to pre- and primary school is that Tasmanian students reach the age at which they can legally 'drop out' at an earlier stage of their education than students in other states**
 - which is probably a factor in our below-average Year 12 retention and completion rates
- ❑ **The Tasmanian Government abandoned its original intention of lowering the school starting age by six months in 2016**

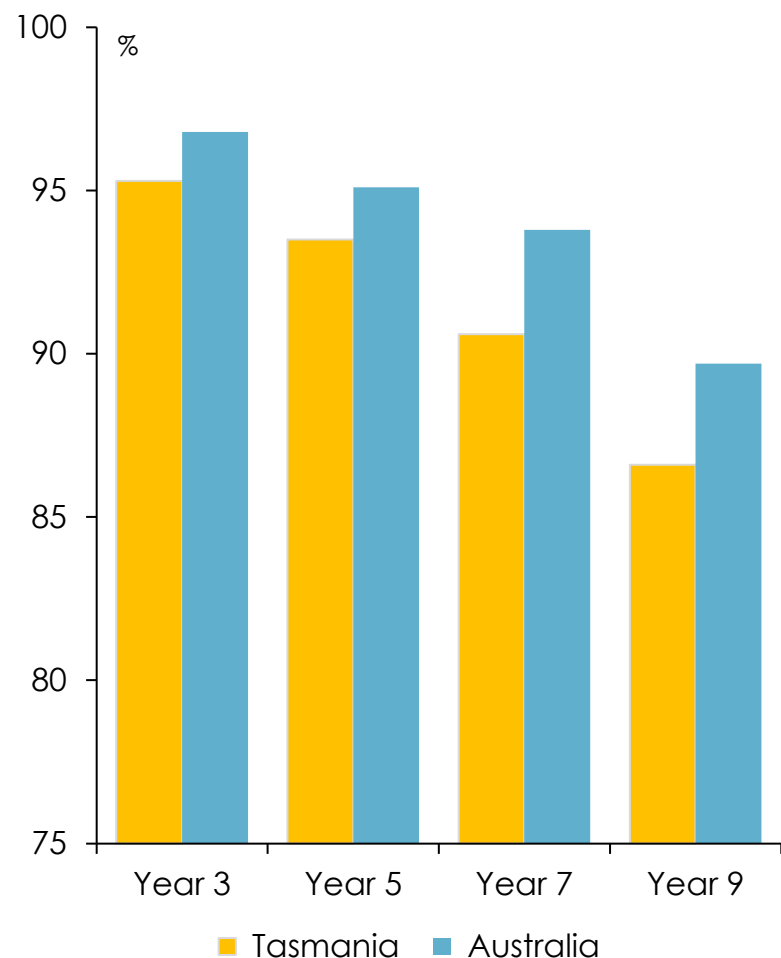
Mean Year 3 NAPLAN scores by age of starting pre-school



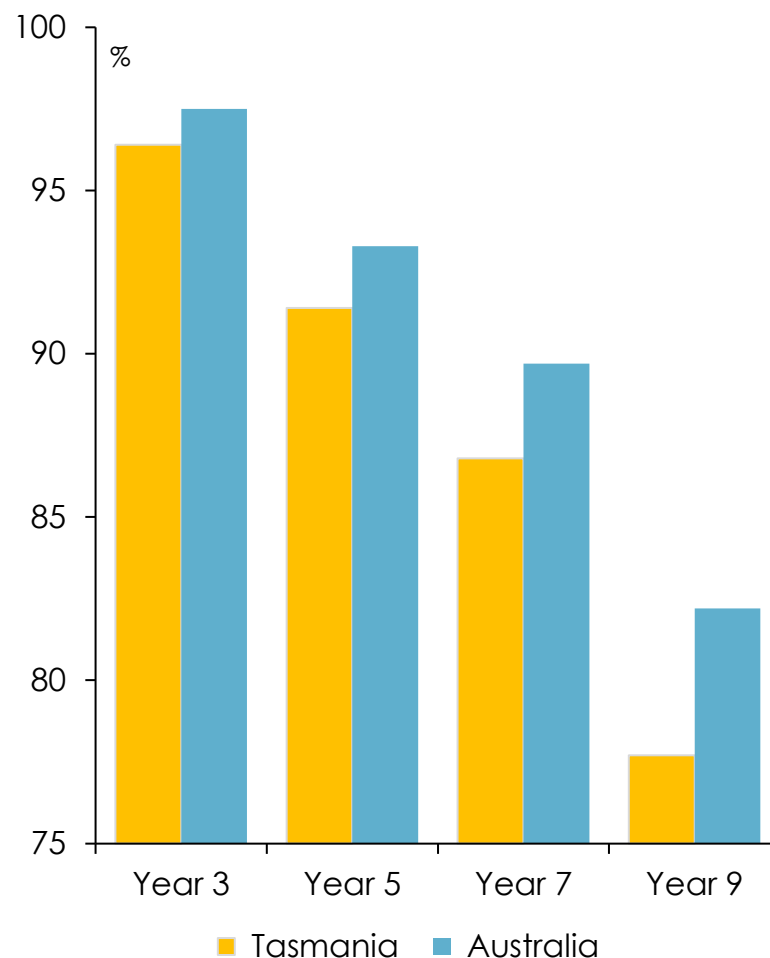
The longer Tasmanian students remain in the school system, the further (in most cases) they fall behind their peers in other states

Proportion of students achieving at or above the national minimum standard on NAPLAN tests, 2021

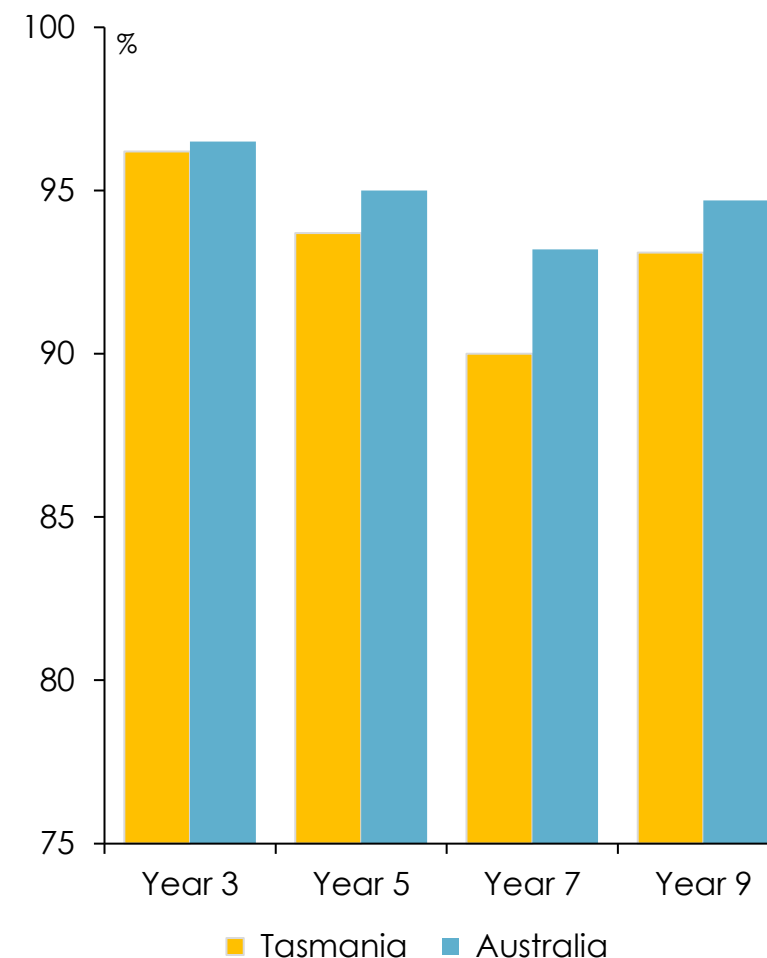
Reading



Writing

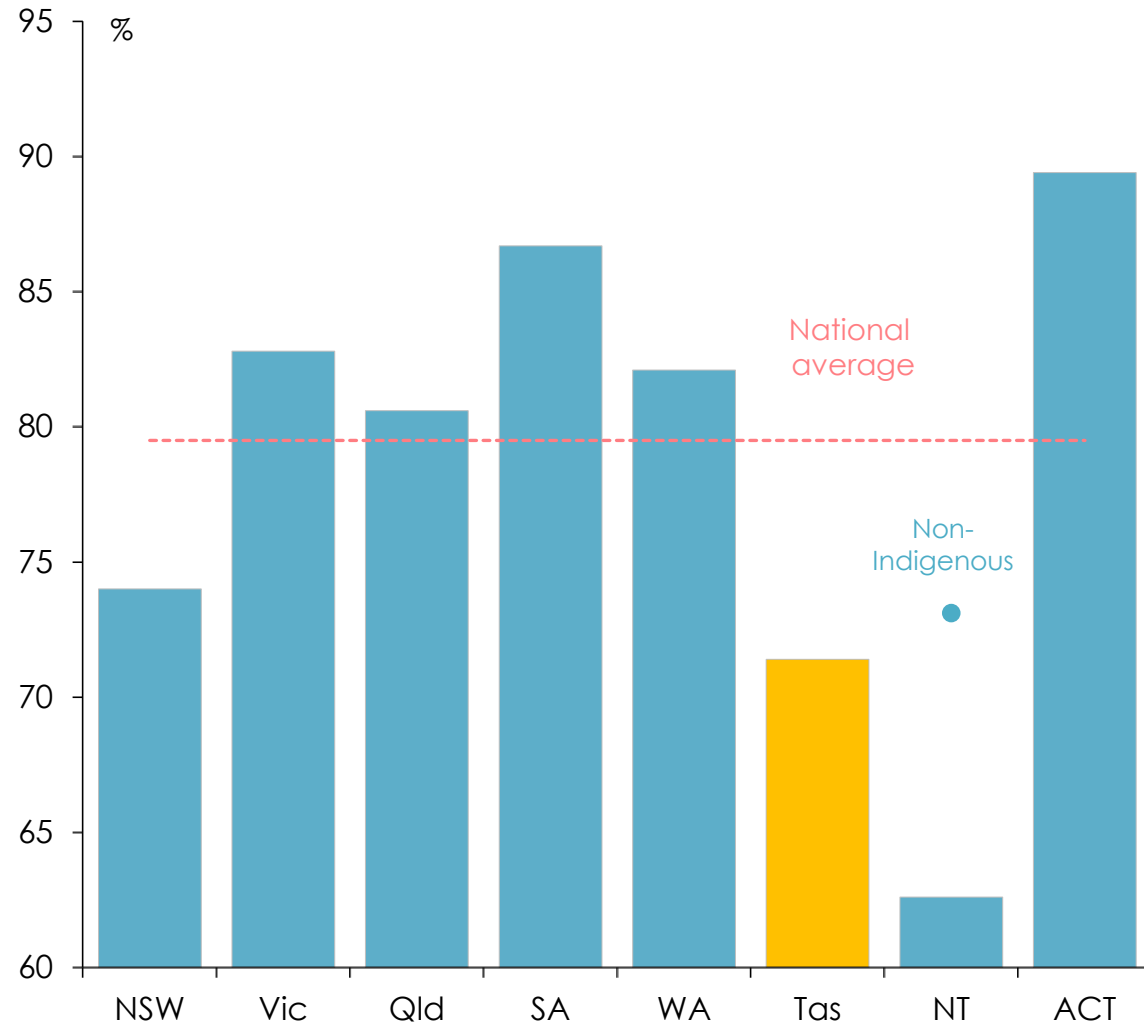


Numeracy

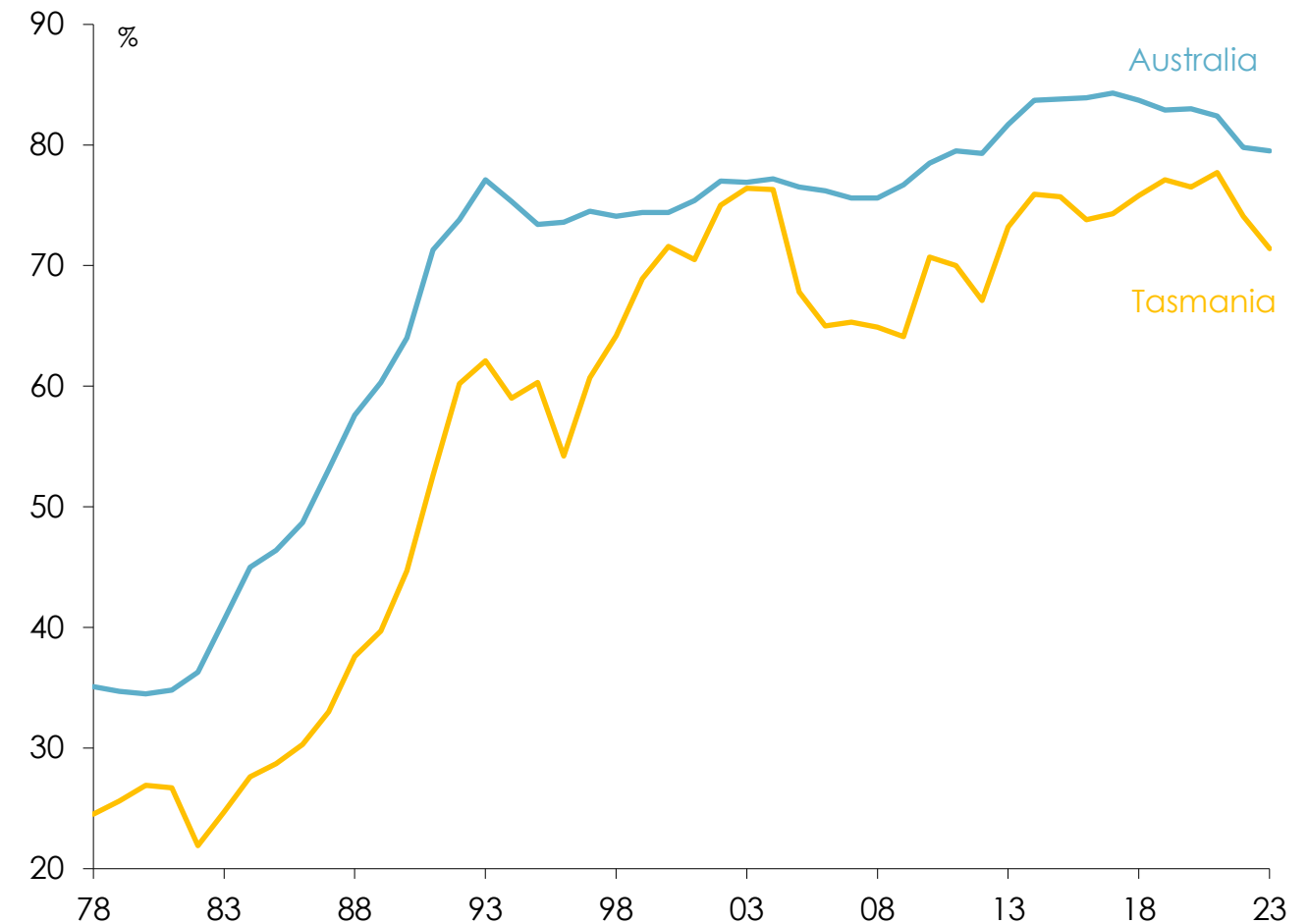


Retention rates to Year 12 among contemporary Tasmanian secondary school students remain the lowest in Australia

Retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12, states and territories, 2023



Retention rates from Year 10 to Year 12, Tasmania and Australia, 1978 to 2023



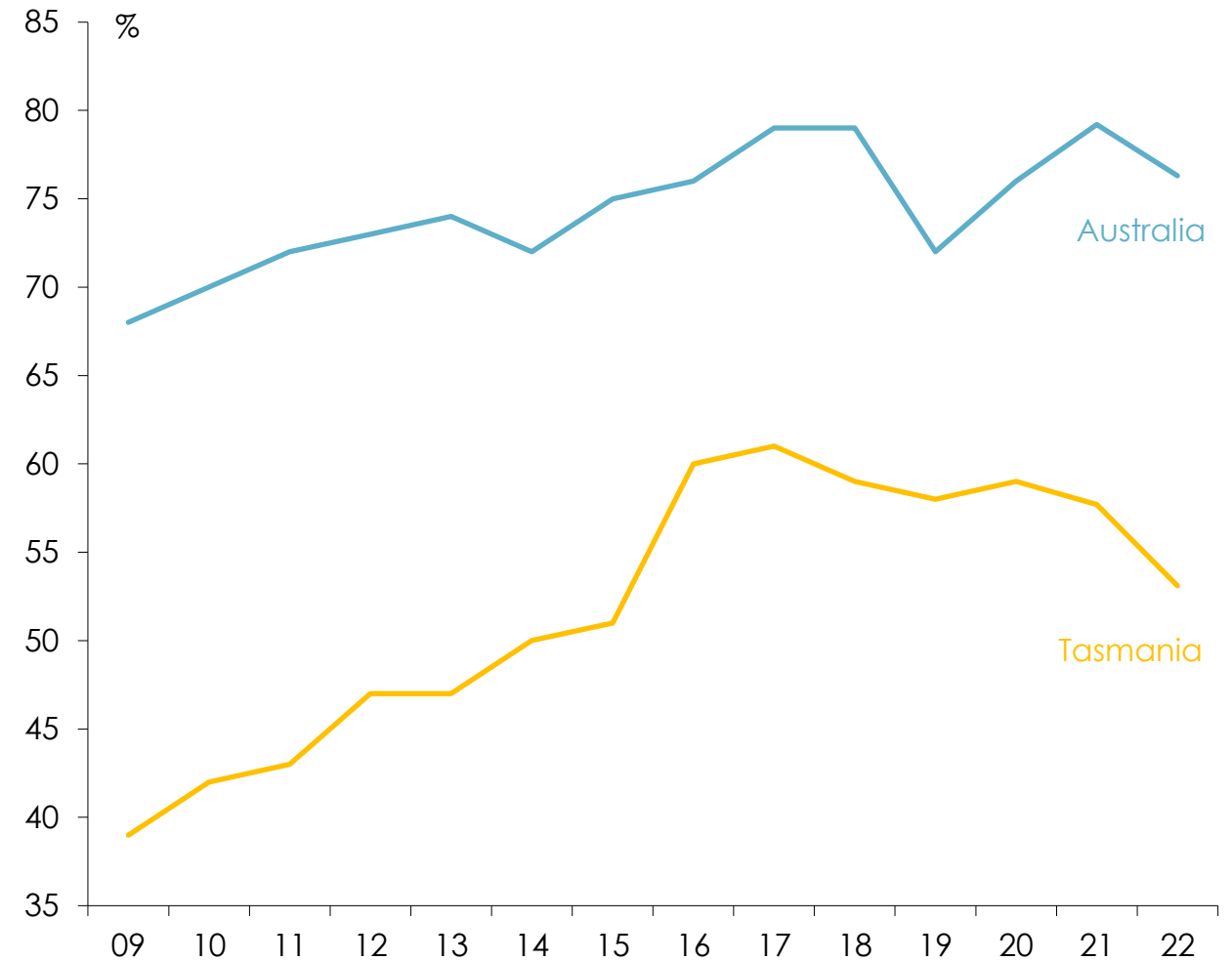
Source: ABS, [Schools](#), 2023.

Although retention rates to Year 12 have improved a bit, attainment rates haven't

Year 12 completion rates, states and territories, 2022



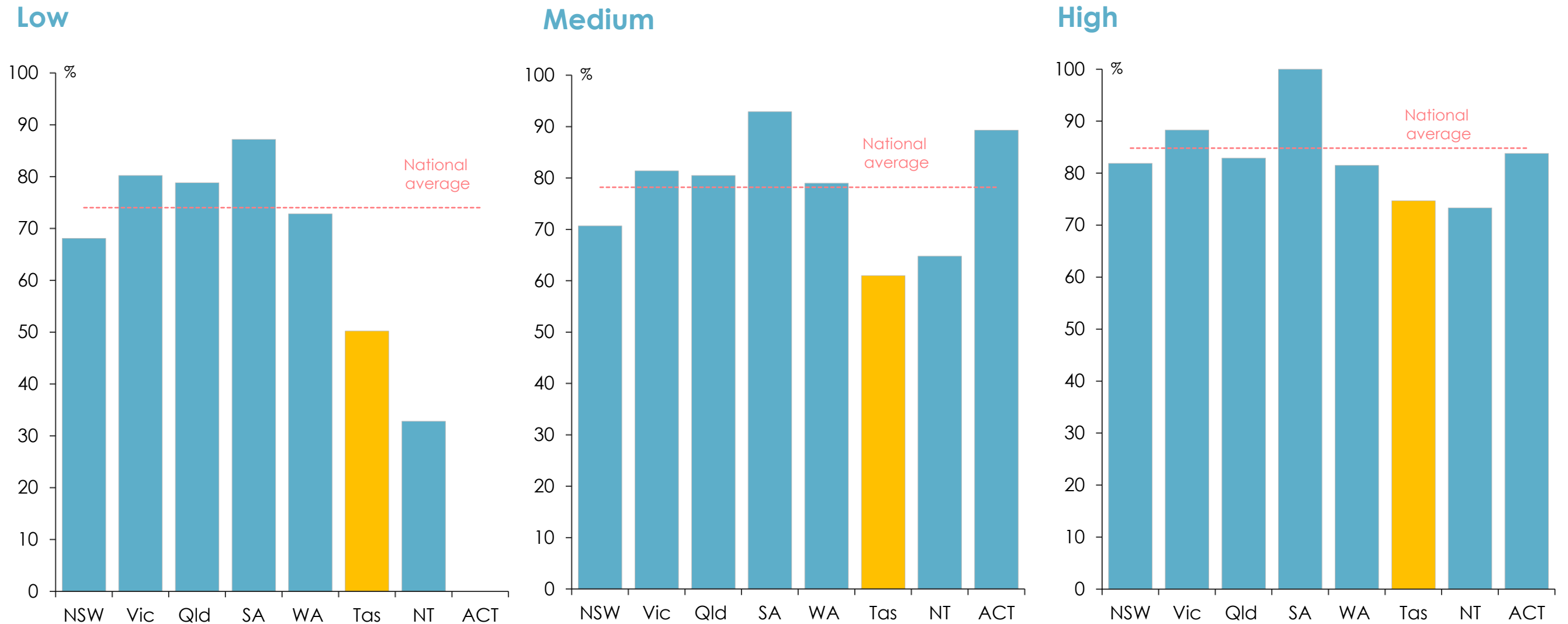
Completion rates from Year 10 to Year 12, Tasmania and Australia, 2009 to 2022



Note: Attainment rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the potential year 12 population. Source: Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services 2023: School Education](#), February 2024.

Tasmania's relatively low Year 12 attainment rates can't be wholly attributed to a higher incidence of socio-economic disadvantage

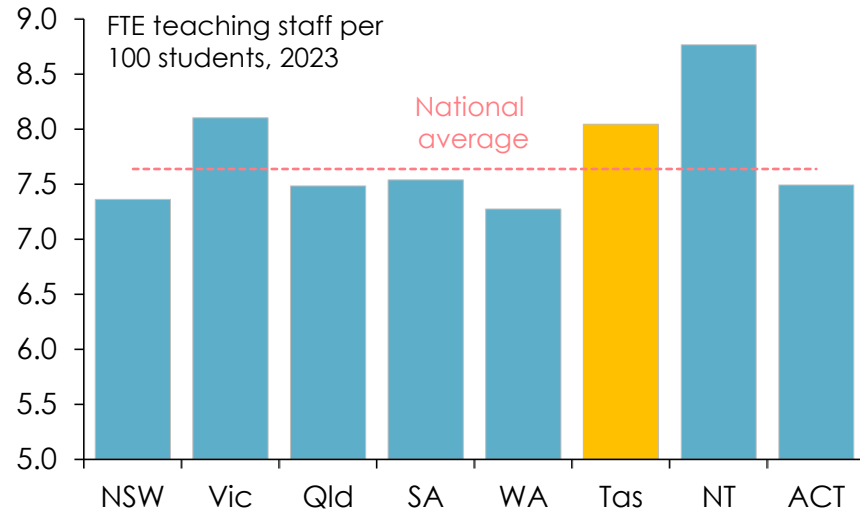
Year 12 attainment rates by socio-economic status, 2022



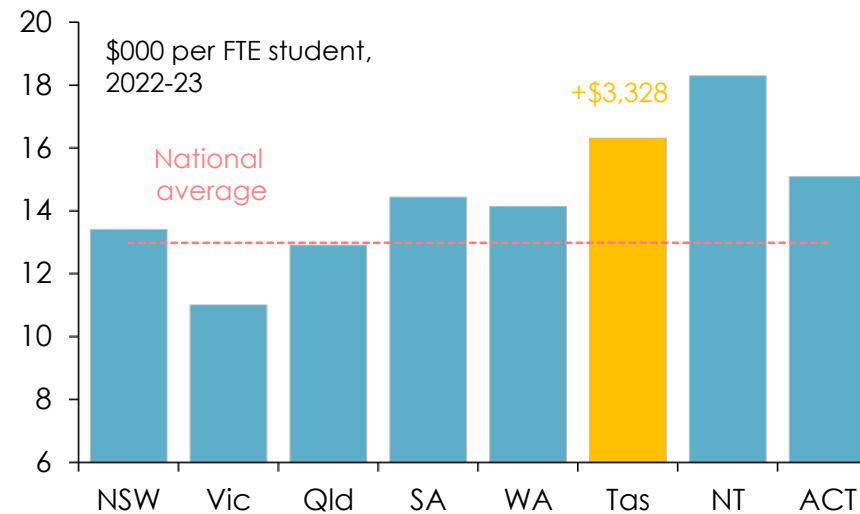
Note: Socioeconomic status is calculated the basis of postcode of students' home addresses, based on the ABS Postal Area Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage. Attainment rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who meet the requirements of a year 12 certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the potential year 12 population. Source: Productivity Commission, [Report on Government Services 2022: School Education](#), January 2023.

Tasmania's relatively poor education outcomes are not the result of any lack of resources by comparison with other states and territories

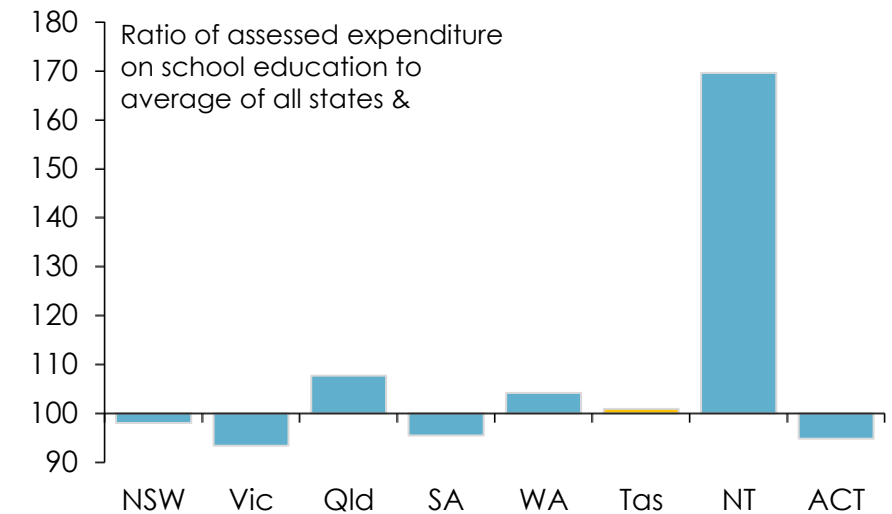
Teaching staff, 2023



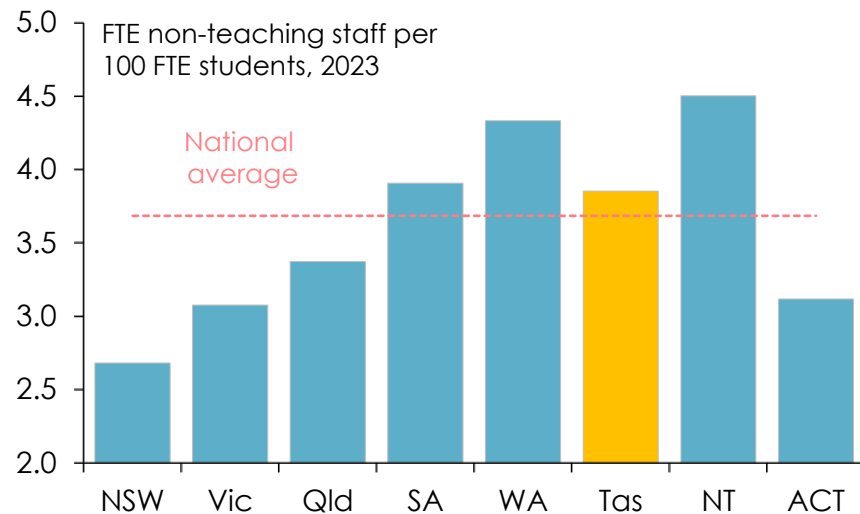
Spending on schools, 2022-23



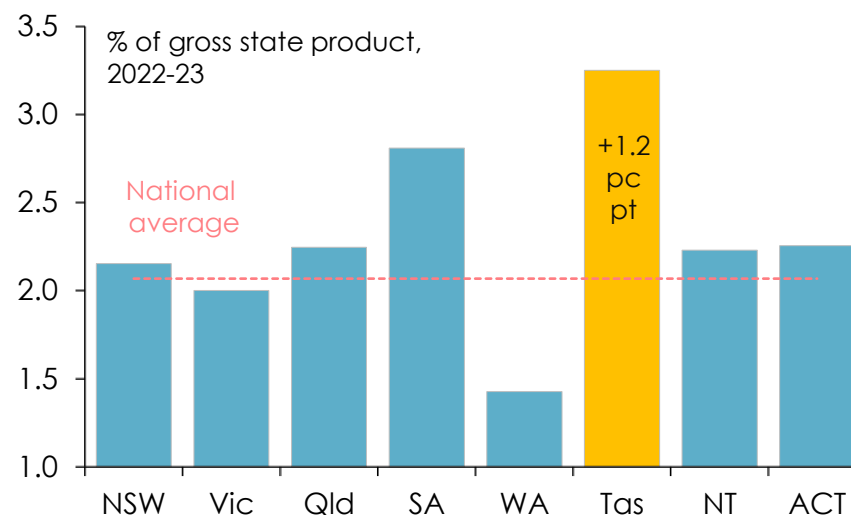
CGC assessment of spending 'needs'



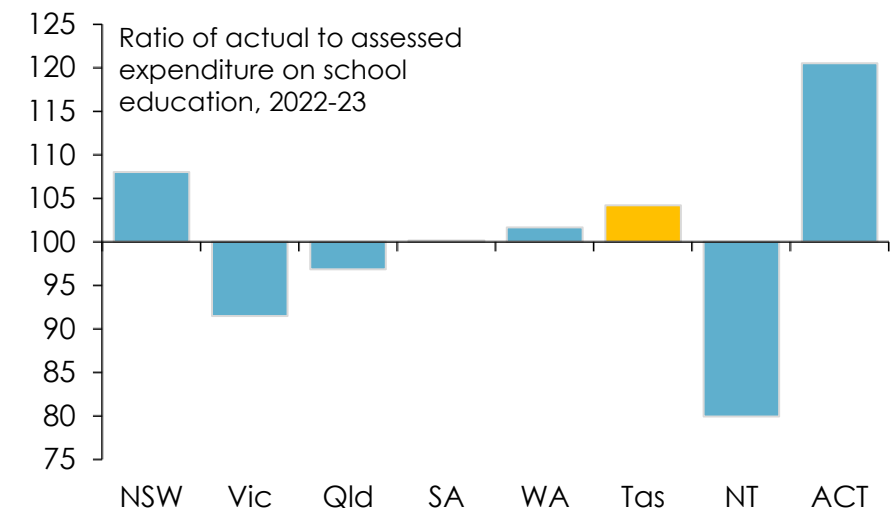
Non-teaching staff, 2023



Spending on schools as pc of GSP



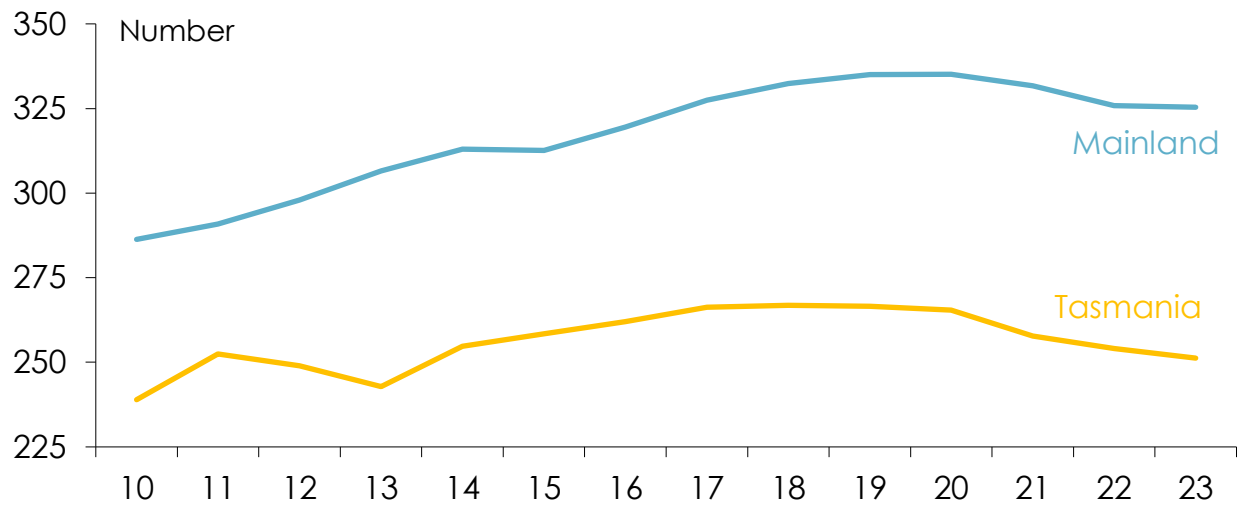
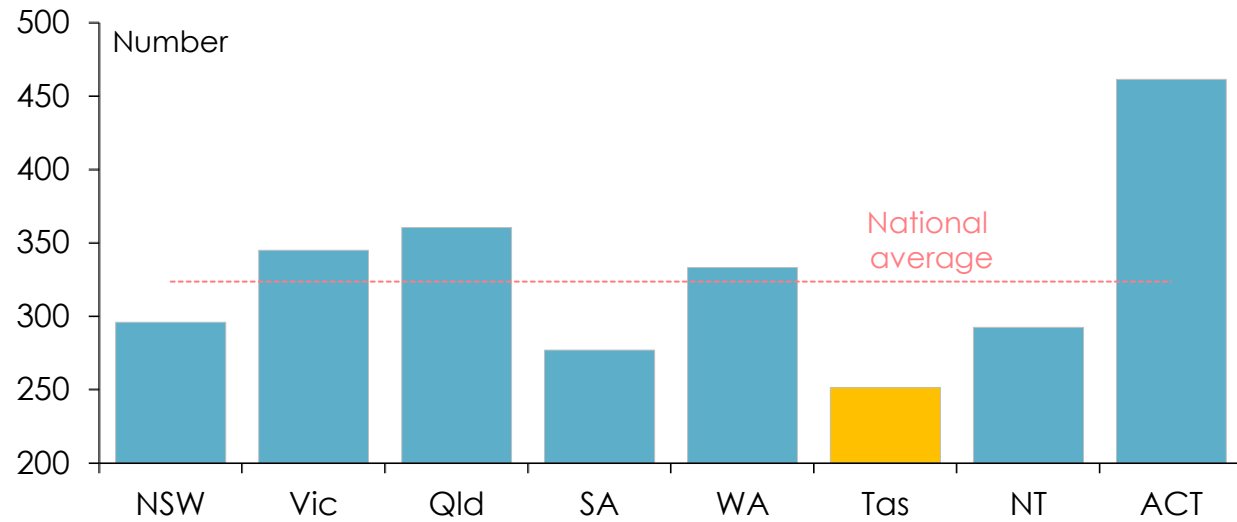
CGC assessment of actual spending



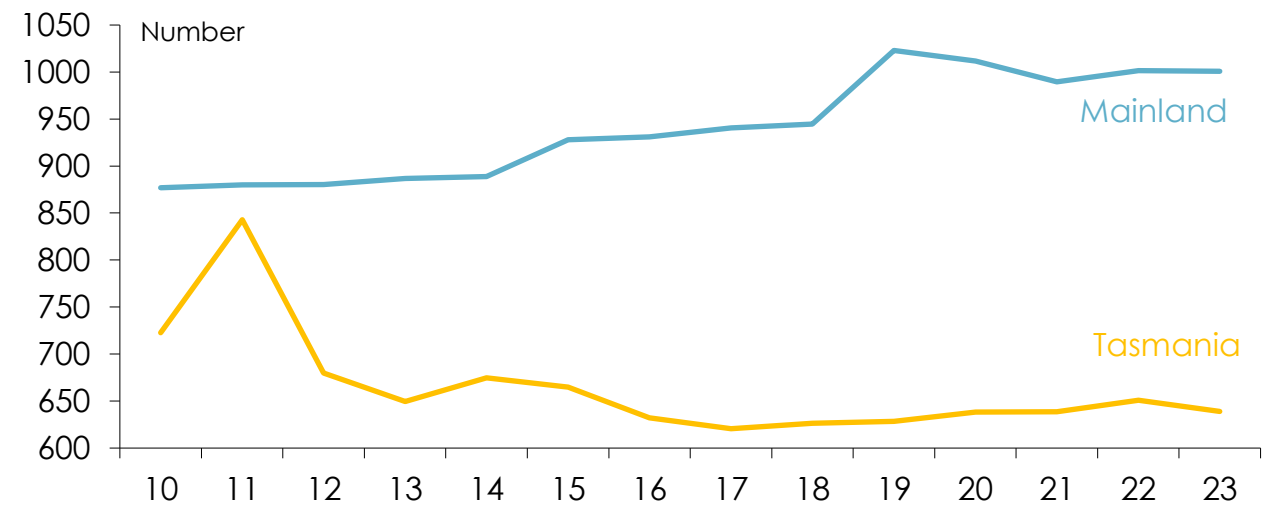
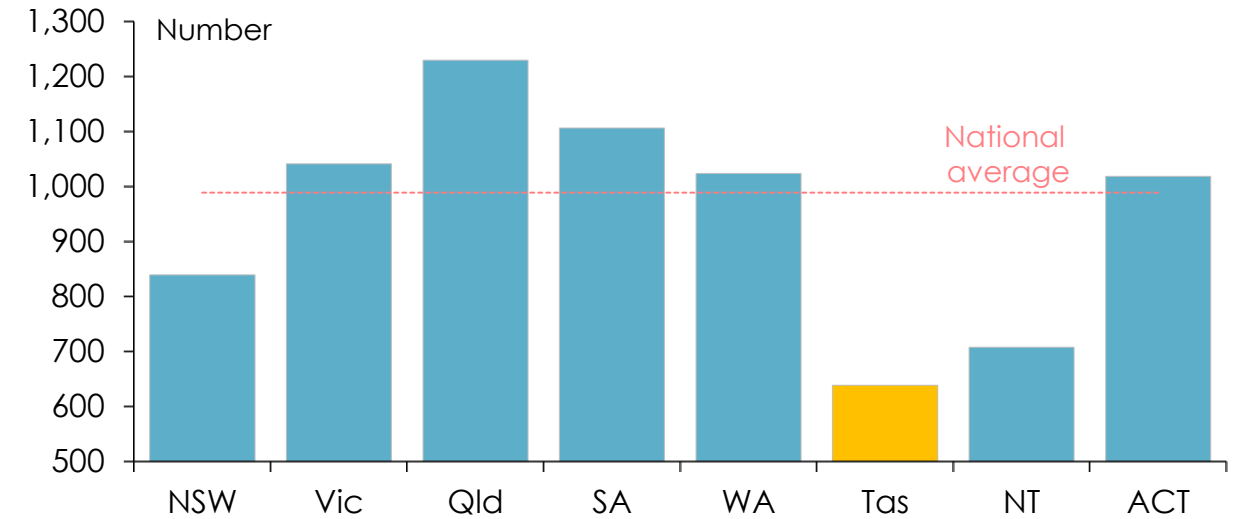
Sources: ABS, [Schools](#), 2023; [Government Finance Statistics, Annual](#), 2022-23; Commonwealth Grants Commission, [2024 Update of GST relativities](#). Note: The CGC's 'assessed' expenditure is the level of spending required to provide services of the same range and quality as the average of all states and territories.

One of the reasons why Tasmania spends more per student but gets worse results is that we have an above-average number of small schools

Government primary schools, average number of FTE students, 2023

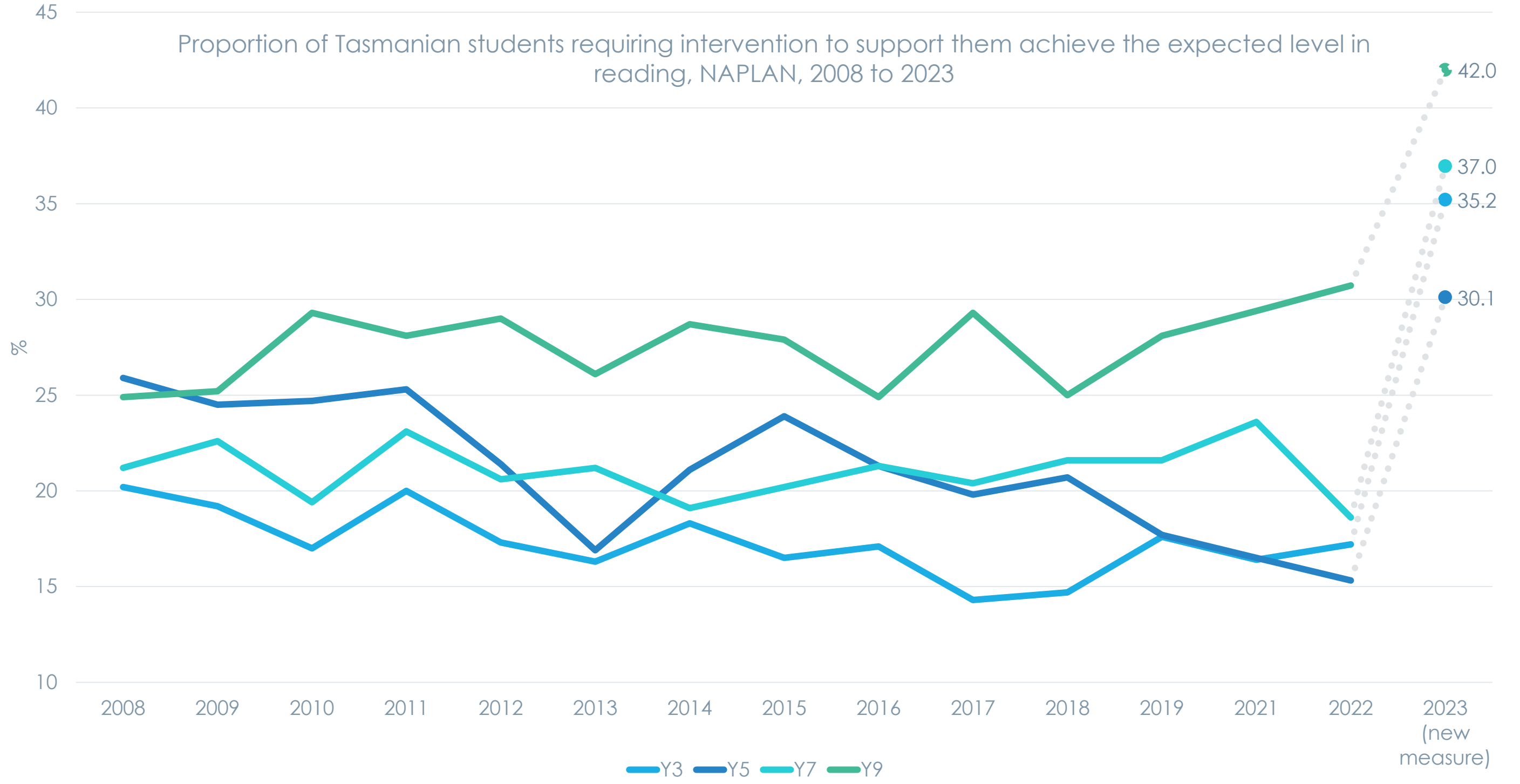


Government high schools, average number of FTE students, 2023

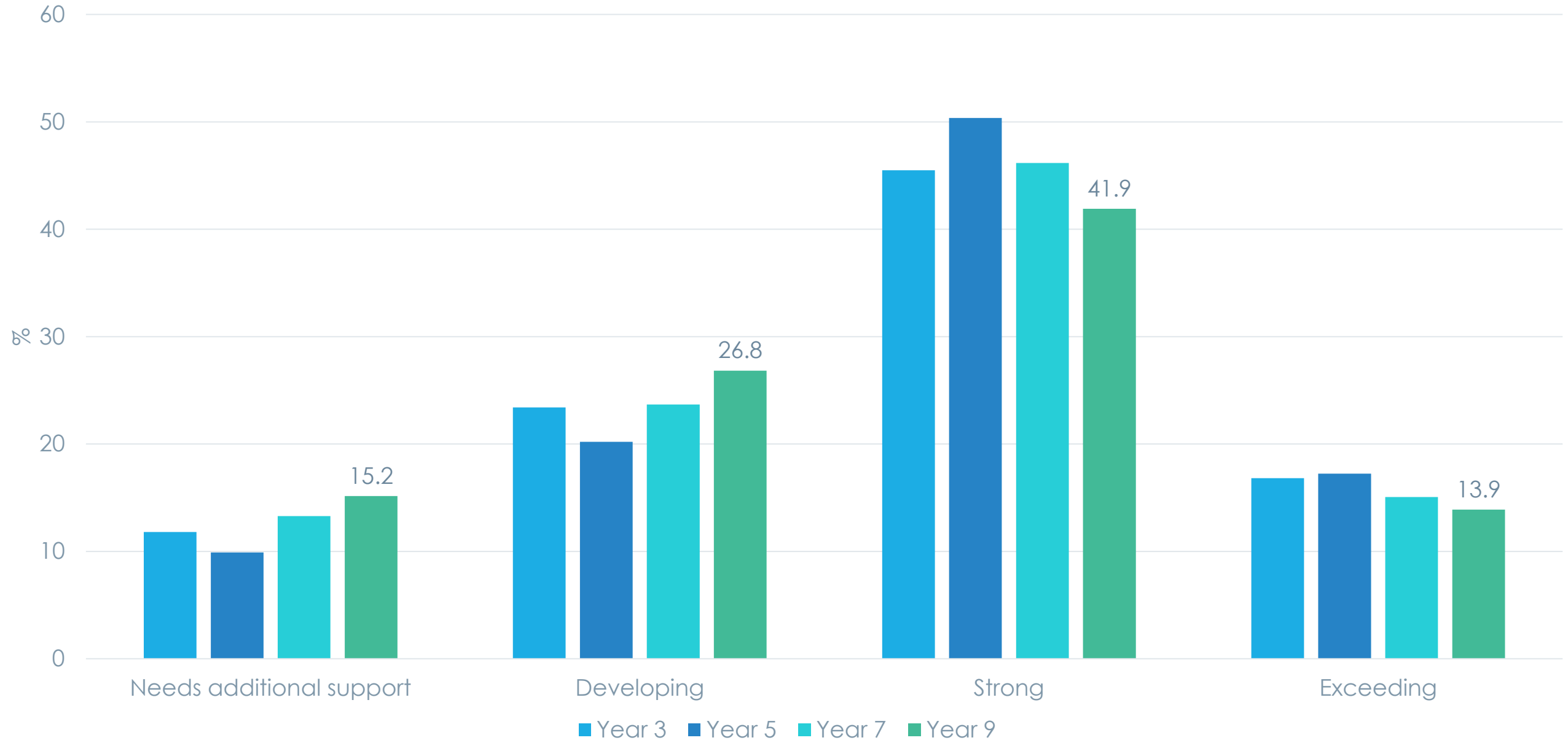


Dr Lisa Denny

Proportion of Tasmanian students requiring intervention to support them achieve the expected level in reading, NAPLAN, 2008 to 2023



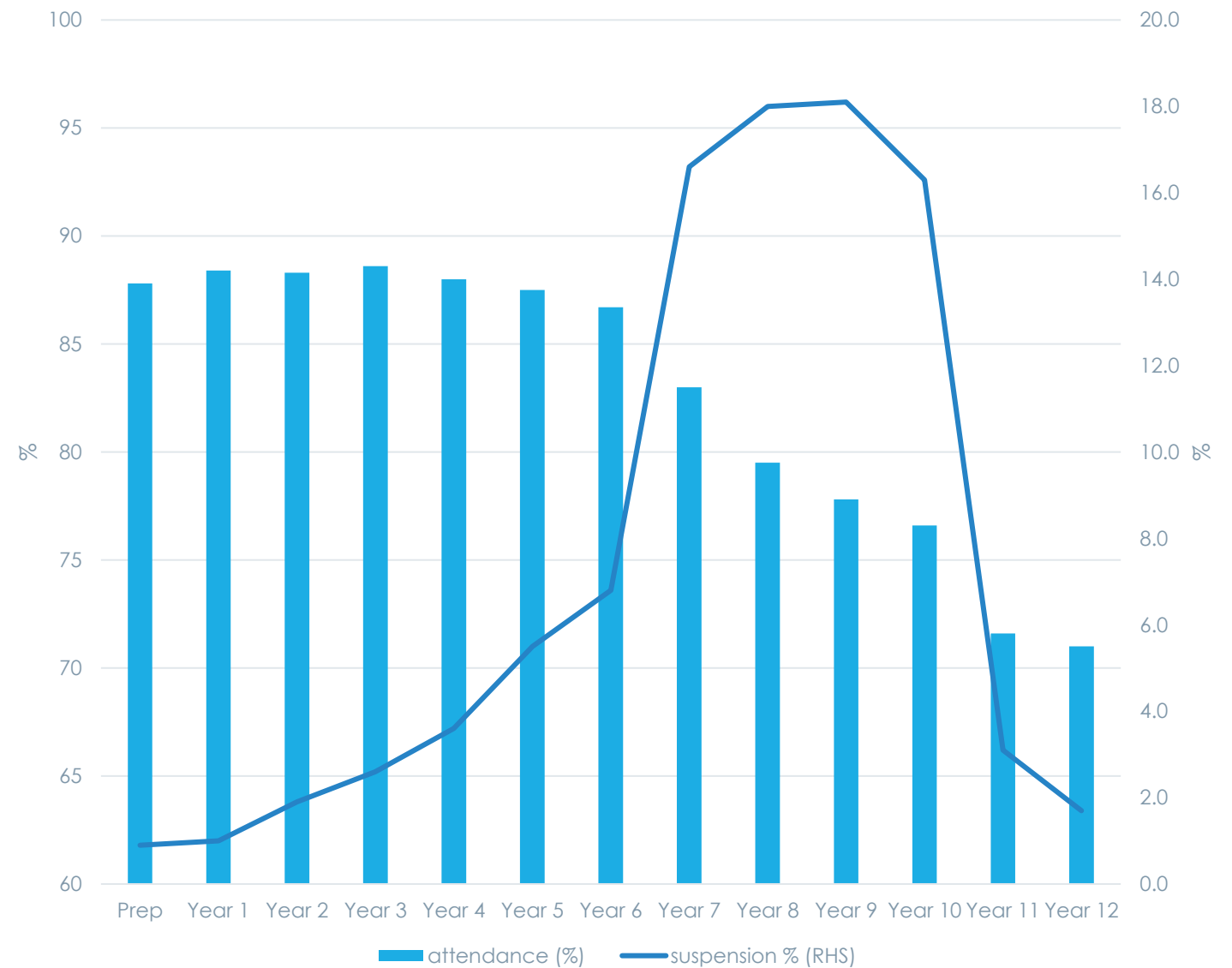
Reading, NAPLAN, 2023



Engagement and Exclusion

Top 5 reasons for exclusion:

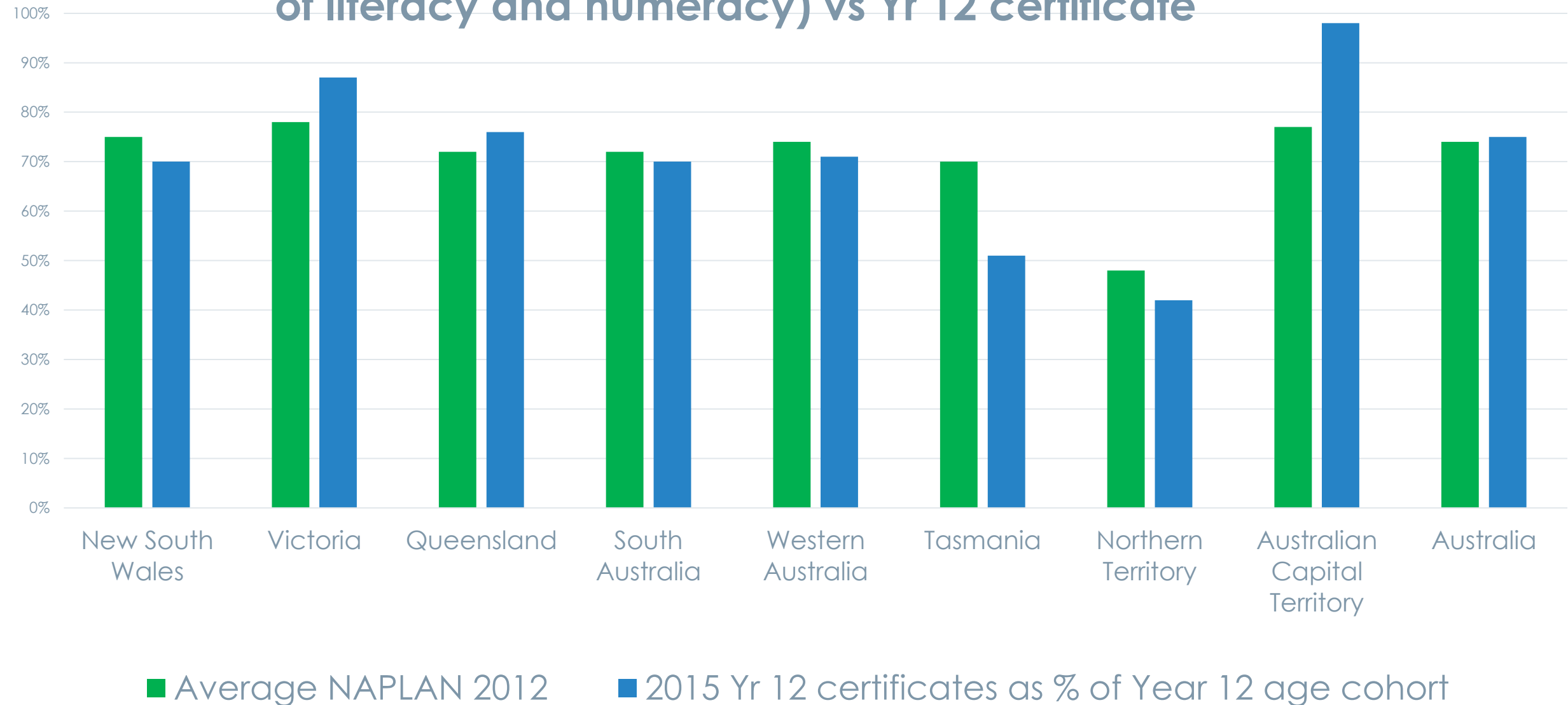
- 1) Behaviour that is detrimental to the health, safety or welfare of the staff or other students
- 2) Disobedience of instructions which regulate the conduct of students
- 3) Threatening behaviour
- 4) Unsociable behaviour
- 5) Contravening school rules and policies and Illegal behaviour (equal 5th)



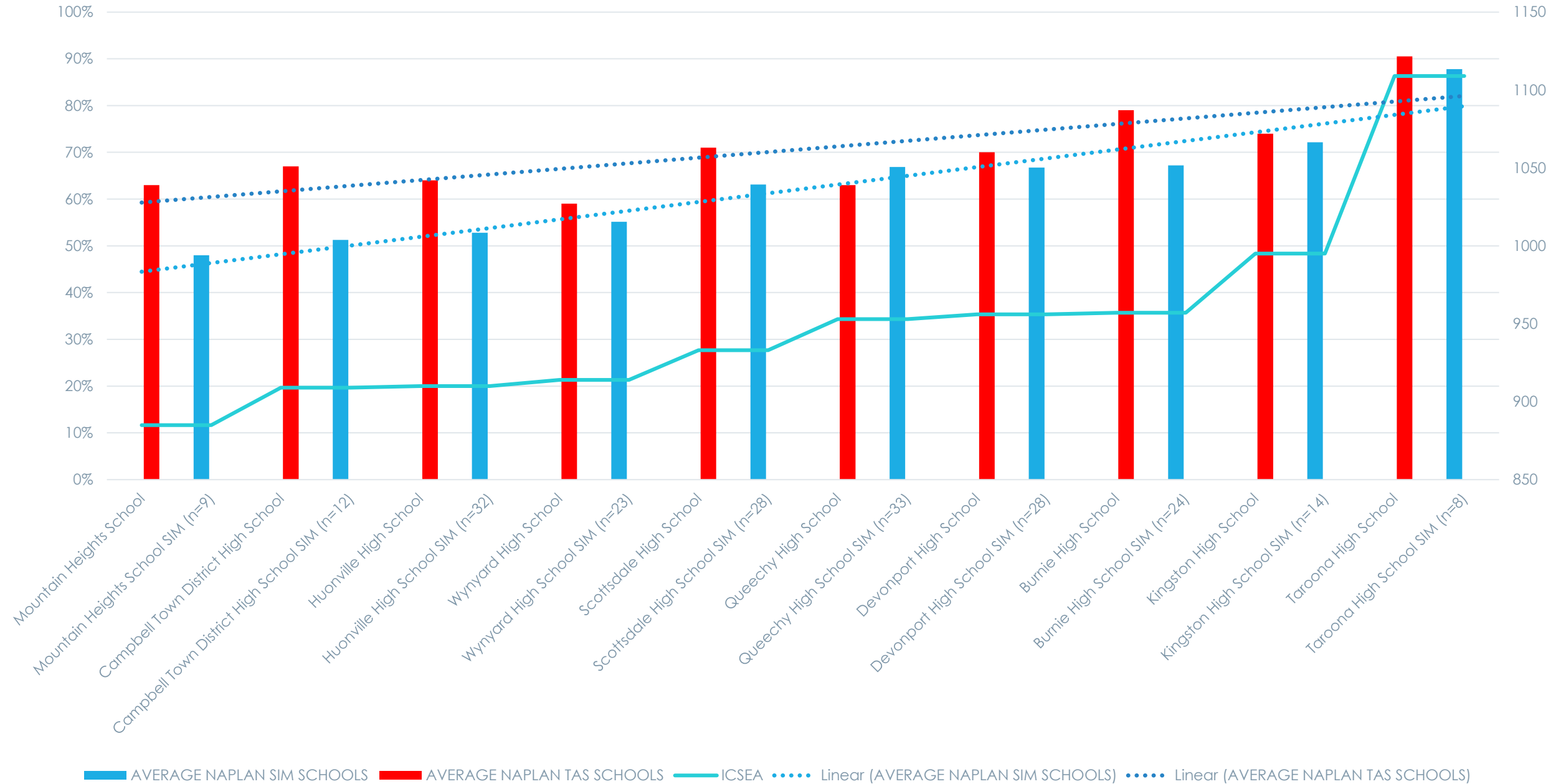
Professor Michael Rowan

Tasmania is different: that needs to be explained

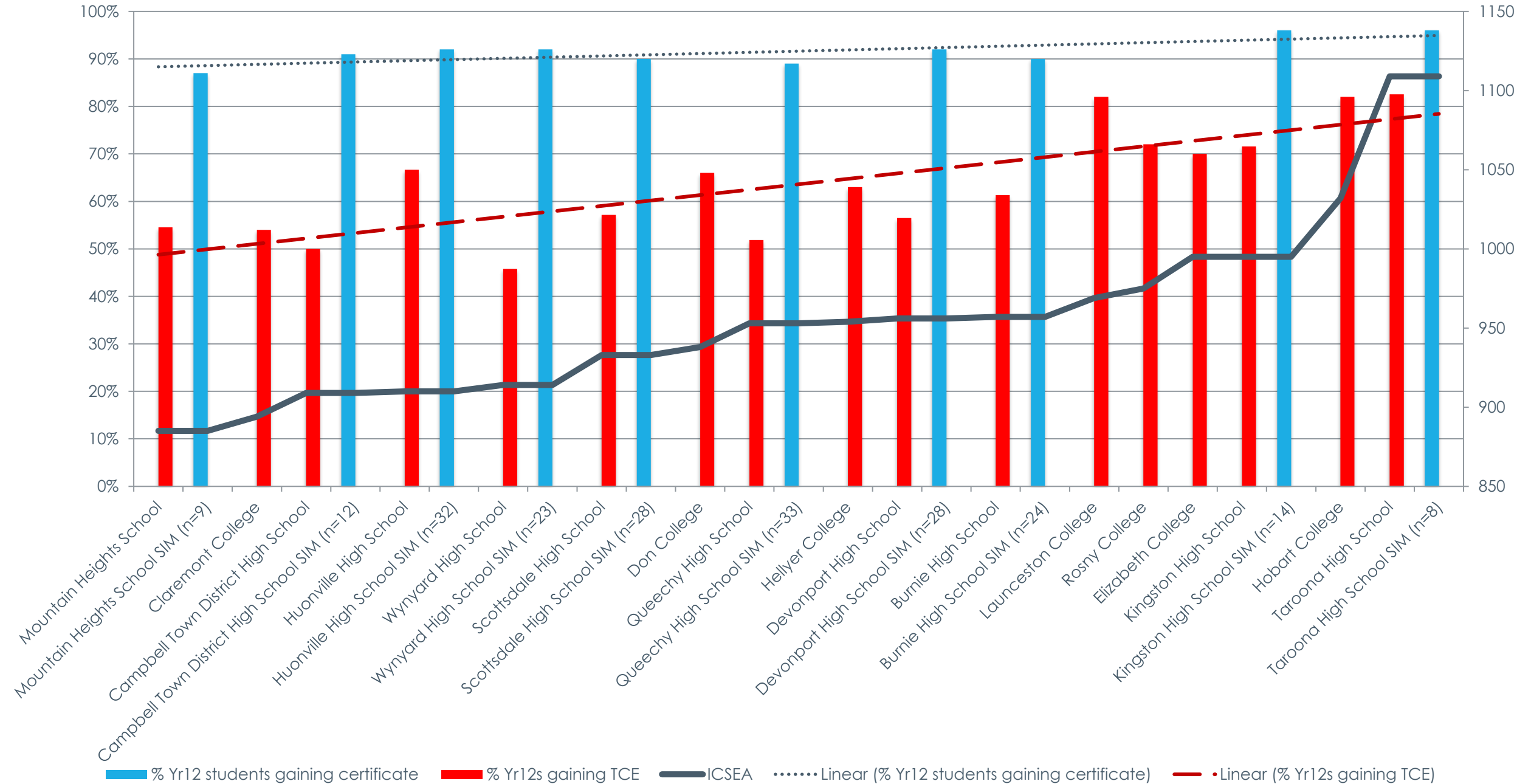
% Yr9s above NAPLAN national minimum standard (average of literacy and numeracy) vs Yr 12 certificate



Tasmanian education is more equal until at least Yr9



But at Y 12, Tasmanian education is glaringly unequal – intra- and inter-state



**Open Letter:
Call for an Inquiry into the
Tasmanian Education System**

<https://openletter.earth/call-for-an-inquiry-into-the-tasmanian-education-system-45369f23>