

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## *Metropolitan students outperform provincial, remote students in literacy assessments*

Metropolitan students continue to outperform their provincial and remote counterparts in literacy and problem solving assessments, a new international study has found.

The results from the 2003 cycle of testing in the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) was released today by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). ACER leads the consortium that conducts PISA internationally and also implemented the testing within Australia.

PISA 2003 assessed 15-year-old students from 41 countries in mathematical, reading and scientific literacy as well as in problem solving. In Australia just over 12500 students participated in PISA. Seventy per cent of Australian schools were in a metropolitan area, 27 per cent a provincial city and three per cent were in remote areas.

ACER chief executive Professor Geoff Masters said that overall, Australian students had acquitted themselves very well in PISA but the results showed that some students outside of metropolitan areas were struggling.

"Students in metropolitan areas performed at a significantly higher level than students in provincial cities, who in turn outperformed at a significantly higher level than students in rural areas," he said.

Performance of students in remote areas was slightly below the OECD average in mathematical literacy.

Achievement in reading and scientific literacy was also highest in metropolitan areas and lowest in remote areas, and performance in both reading and scientific literacy was lower than the OECD average in remote areas. Similar findings were observed in problem solving skills.

It has been the opinion of some school principals in provincial and remote areas that the availability of school resources has an impact on student performance and the availability of resources declines depending on the distance that a school is from a major city.

Further findings are available in the report, *Facing the future: A focus on mathematical literacy among Australian 15-year-old students in PISA 2003*, by Sue Thomson, John Cresswell and Lisa De Bortoli, which can be downloaded from the ACER website at [www.acer.edu.au](http://www.acer.edu.au)

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