

COVID-19 Impact on Financial Statement Submission Deadlines under the *Audit Act 2008*

The *Audit Act 2008* (Audit Act) requires, pursuant to section 17(1), that an accountable authority, as soon as possible, and within 45 days after the end of each financial year (usually this falls on 14 August), prepares and forwards to the Auditor-General the financial statements for that financial year which are complete in all material respects.

Due to the impacts of COVID-19 on Tasmanian councils, the Auditor-General has been asked by LGAT to consider whether it is possible for the submission deadline to be extended for this year. The Office is supportive of this deferral for councils. However, in examining this further it has become clear that a notice under s 13 of the *Covid-19 Disease Emergency (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2020* cannot specify that the period under s 17(1) of the Audit Act is extended only in relation to a particular class of State entity, for example councils. Regrettably, this means it will not be possible to vary the submission deadline for councils from 14 August.

What the Office instead proposes to do is post information on our website to advise all clients, including councils, that we will take a pragmatic approach to submission breaches when reporting to Parliament. This means we will acknowledge that an unforeseen impact of responding to the COVID-19 outbreak was some of our clients were unable to meet the deadline. We will also work with clients at an individual level to understand challenges they are facing and to gauge when they are likely to submit.

Given COVID-19 has also impacted our work program, it is likely we will be completing some audits later this year. Again, we will advise all clients and work with them on an individual basis to find timing for audit completion that is agreeable to both parties.