

MEDIA RELEASE

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Auditor-General's report to Parliament on COVID-19 – response to social impacts assessment

The Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead, has tabled his Report on COVID-19 – response to social impacts in Parliament today.

The audit looked at the effectiveness of arrangements put in place by the Tasmanian Government to identify and agree the high priority social impacts to address, resulting from the pandemic.

Mr Whitehead highlighted the Government needed to respond in an escalated manner and make decisions quickly without complete information to preserve public health and ensure people received crucial social support, such as food relief and housing security. He said, 'The state-coordinated approach adopted by the Government resulted in very few significant gaps in the key social impacts identified'.

However, he noted that although most aspects of the State-level governance arrangements were particularly effective, the way the arrangements were implemented resulted in missed opportunities for incorporating the benefits of the previously tried and tested regionally and locally led approach. This was particularly in using the capability and capacity of regional and municipal recovery role holders. Also, he found some of the key role holders at State and regional levels were unclear about their roles and responsibilities, which it appeared was partly due to inadequate training for this type of emergency.

Mr Whitehead said, 'There were sound arrangements for regional and local role holders to communicate with state-level about the social impacts they were observing. However, communication back from State-level about the support being provided was only partly effective, as it was hampered by limited capacity at State-level'. He found Municipal Recovery Coordinators especially needed more information to coordinate support locally and tell vulnerable people in their areas where they might find support.

The Government plans to review the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements following its experience of COVID-19. Mr Whitehead made six recommendations for the Government to incorporate as part of this review and future implementation of emergency arrangements. These included the need for better communication about roles and responsibilities, effectively using regional and municipal recovery capabilities and training for this type of emergency.

The complete Report can be downloaded from www.audit.tas.gov.au.

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