

MEDIA RELEASE

TUESDAY, 12 October 2021

Auditor-General's report to Parliament on Council general manager recruitment, appointment and performance assessment

The Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead, tabled his Report on the recruitment, appointment and performance assessment of council general managers in Parliament today. The report includes the outcome of the review into Huon Valley Council's management of the conflict of interest that arose during the recent general manager recruitment process.

The audit examined whether recruitment and appointment processes were in line with established guidance and contemporary human resources practice and whether processes to assess general manager performance were effective.

Mr Whitehead said, 'Five out of six councils examined had contracted a consultant to assist with the recruitment process, with instances of both good and poor practice identified.'

In highlighting an instance of poor practice, Mr Whitehead said 'the recruitment and appointment of the general manager was not conducted in accordance with the principle of transparency as Councils did not have adequate documentation supporting either the shortlisting or preferred applicant decisions'.

Mr Whitehead found performance assessments broadly followed the principles of fairness, integrity and impartiality and aligned with councils' strategic objectives. However, he noted significant variation in the approaches adopted by individual Councils, which impacted on the effectiveness of the performance assessment. He also identified instances where Council decisions to reappointment or increase salary did not refer to the most recent performance assessment.

Mr Whitehead made four recommendations to councils to review and improve recruitment, appointment and performance assessment processes to ensure they were consistent with contemporary human resources practice.

In respect of Huon Valley Council's management of the conflict of interest during the recent general manager recruitment process, Mr Whitehead said 'inadequate management of the conflict of interest resulted in a flawed recruitment process. The potential for bias and unfair treatment of applicants was significant throughout the process. The process also undermined the public confidence required in an appointment as significant as the general manager of Council.'

Mr Whitehead recommended Huon Valley Council review and improve the recruitment and appointment process by developing guidance and implementing a process whereby those involved in a recruitment process declare conflicts of interest, or lack thereof, once applicants are known and implement management strategies that are commensurate with the nature and extent of the conflict of interest.

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

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