

TASMANIAN AUDIT OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

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Auditor-General Report to Parliament on Rostering of specialists in Tasmania's major hospitals

Auditor-General Rod Whitehead today tabled his report to Parliament on Rostering of specialists in Tasmania's major hospitals. This review focussed on assessing whether the rostering of specialists was controlled and managed in a transparent and fair manner.

Mr Whitehead reviewed procedures in two departments (anaesthetics and surgery, and general medicine) across Tasmania's four major hospitals. He found that rostering of specialists in the hospitals was not effectively controlled.

He stated, 'While clinical outcomes are paramount, there needs to be demonstrated efficiency of time spent in the public system through transparency of rostering arrangements as well as demonstrated fairness to all staff in the medical department or unit'.

Mr Whitehead found that while the process for establishing and managing rosters is generally defined, it is predominantly manual based and not usually reconciled to hours worked. There is also a system of trust with few controls. He also found that there was a heavy reliance on Heads of Department within hospitals to monitor the workload of the specialists. However these Heads are not always well-supported in their managerial responsibilities.

He also said, 'without transparency of hours worked, the risk profile of the Tasmanian Health Service is increased with greater exposure to the risks of specialist fatigue, loss of accreditation and cost to the health system'.

To address the review findings, Mr Whitehead recommended the Department of Health conduct a detailed review of how specialists account for their time in order to develop a range of improvements to this process. The review should consider whether:

- a rostering and time management system be implemented across all medical departments
- the use of timesheets be mandated in all hospital departments
- appropriate levels of non-clinical time are incorporated into rosters to enable specialists to better structure their working days
- time scheduled for private practice on other premises be recorded in specialist rosters to increase transparency, support fairness and better manage specialist fatigue..

Other recommendations included the development of statement of duties for all Heads of Department and investment in transitional and ongoing managerial and leadership development for these positions.

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

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Further information contact Rod Whitehead, Auditor-General, (03) 6173 0900