

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Auditor-General assesses the University of Tasmania's management of student accommodation**

Auditor-General Rod Whitehead has concluded the University of Tasmania's management of student accommodation has been effective. He said "the University has had to contend with changes in demand for accommodation arising from growth in international students and domestic students preferring to return to purpose built student accommodation rather than the private rental market" and that, "the University has planned for and dealt with these challenges well."

Mr Whitehead found the University had a strategic approach to the construction, disposal and maintenance of student accommodation as articulated in various strategies over the past decade. These strategies were based on well-researched information and helped guide the University's approach.

The University also acted quickly when less predictable changes to the property market resulted in increased unmet demand for affordable student accommodation. These responses included acquiring hotels for conversion into student accommodation, re-purposing existing University buildings and constructing modular accommodation at the Sandy Bay campus.

In his report, the Auditor-General noted the University, as part of its strategic capital management framework, had monetised its investment in its student accommodation, freeing up capital from these assets and allowing for greater investment in the University's core priorities of research, teaching and the student experience. This approach also allowed the University to shift the management and maintenance of its student accommodation to a private contractor.

Mr Whitehead made four recommendations to assist the University in clearly articulating and communicating its strategic approach and to gain better insights into student satisfaction.

Engagement with stakeholders, whilst satisfactory, could improve. Mr Whitehead stated '... a more planned approach would ensure all stakeholders are appropriately consulted. This is particularly important when linked to major transformation projects such as the relocation of the University campuses to city centres and its impact on local accommodation'.

He also found that the information contained in the University's student surveys highlighted a level of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of its accommodation. These included affordability, diversity and inclusion and maintenance. Although low numbers of students responded to the surveys the results were not encouraging. While it is important for the University to understand and act on these responses, it will also be important to gain broader insights.

The complete Report can be downloaded from [www.audit.tas.gov.au](http://www.audit.tas.gov.au).

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