



PREMIER OF TASMANIA

Mr Rod Whitehead  
Auditor-General  
Tasmanian Audit Office  
Email: [admin@audit.tas.gov.au](mailto:admin@audit.tas.gov.au)

Dear Mr Whitehead

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your report into the allocation, distribution and replenishment of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the first 10 months of the COVID-19 pandemic in Tasmania.

As flagged in the Report, the Department of Health (DoH) maintains plans and procedures for the management and use of its PPE stockpile during a pandemic influenza response. Similarly, other agencies with frontline roles that require them to maintain PPE, such as the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management and the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, maintain their own supplies. However, the unprecedented pace and nature of the pandemic, and the need to extend these supplies to a significant number of personnel outside the Health response, was such that these arrangements were overwhelmed. It is also important to acknowledge that, during the early weeks and months of the pandemic, a global shortage of PPE and significant competition for remaining supplies created a PPE shortfall on a global and national scale.

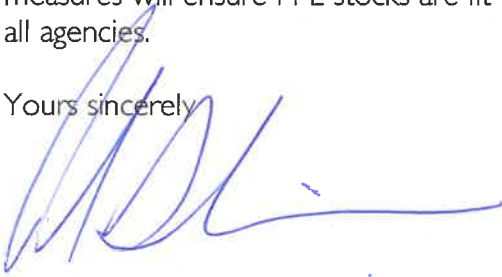
I am pleased to note that, despite these challenges, the DoH and other Tasmanian Government agencies showed a high degree of flexibility and collaboration in adapting to the rapidly changing circumstances and securing critical PPE stocks for our frontline workers.

In particular, the Department of State Growth's development of a procedure to supply PPE to non-health agencies, including securing contracts with PPE suppliers and coordinating additional supplies for both government and non-government organisations, demonstrates the agility and collaborative spirit of Tasmania's public service.

As acknowledged in the Report, the significant resourcing and supply constraints faced by DoH saw agencies act quickly to implement or improve processes that govern their use and distribution of PPE. This was a necessary measure and I commend those agencies for taking proactive steps to manage this need at a time when their DoH colleagues were under immense pressure. In some cases, this has laid the groundwork for improvements to the management and use of PPE that are consistent with the recommendations of the Report.

In conclusion, I welcome the recommendations outlined in the Report and I am confident that these measures will ensure PPE stocks are fit-for-purpose, proportionate to need, and visible and accessible to all agencies.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Peter Gutwein', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Gutwein MP  
**Premier**  
**Treasurer**

Deputy Premier  
Minister for Health  
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing  
Minister for Community Services and Development  
Minister for Advanced Manufacturing and Defence Industries



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2 July 2021

Mr Rod Whitehead  
Auditor General  
Tasmanian Audit Office  
GPO Box 851  
HOBART TAS 7001

Dear Mr Whitehead

**Subject: Performance Review – COVID-19: Allocation, Distribution, and Replenishment of Personal Protective Equipment**

Thank you for your correspondence of 2 June 2021 regarding the above-mentioned performance review.

The Government welcomes the findings of this report and supports its recommendations.

I commend the work of all agencies involved, particularly the rapid and agile response by the Department of Health to meet the challenges and uncertainty it faced in the continuous protection of our healthcare workforce, our patients and the broader community.

It is important to note, as this report highlights, that despite unprecedented global supply chain disruption, market demand and other complexities, sufficient supply of personal protective equipment remained available to meet the needs of all agencies involved in COVID-19 response operations.

I acknowledge the Tasmanian Audit Office for this report and the important work it is doing to provide assurance to the Parliament and Tasmanian community that, in response to COVID-19, state entities carry out their activities effectively, economically, and efficiently.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeremy Rockliff".

Jeremy Rockliff MP  
Deputy Premier  
Minister for Health