

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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## **Auditor-General's report to Parliament on Small Business Hardship Grant Program**

The Auditor-General, Mr Rod Whitehead has submitted his Report to Parliament on the development and implementation of the Tasmanian Government's Small Business Hardship Grant Program (Program) administered by Department of State Growth (State Growth).

The audit assessed how well State Growth designed and implemented the Program to mitigate potential risks, promote equity and ensure consistency and transparency while supporting the timely payment of hardship grants to small businesses.

Mr Whitehead concluded, 'The implementation and management of the Small Business Hardship Grant Program as measured against the audit criteria was, in all material respects, performed effectively.'

Mr Whitehead said, 'Within the context of a Program that needed to be developed quickly, the application process was appropriately designed and risks generally identified and managed. Applications were generally assessed consistently and payments to small business were for the most part equitable and timely. The overall objective of getting hardship grants to small businesses quickly was achieved.'

The Report states 2,928 grant payments were made from 3,994 applications received. Businesses that did not receive a grant were either deemed ineligible, based on criteria developed by State Growth, or were unsuccessful when compared to other applications where those applications were deemed to provide greater economic benefit.

Mr Whitehead highlighted that, 'Due to the need for the prompt distribution of grant funds the Program could not be a truly competitive one but there was no bias of grants paid in terms of geographical location or business type.'

The Report also identified applications from the dental industry were not consistently assessed, while communication regarding how applications were assessed against eligibility criteria and for those applicants that were ineligible could have been better.

Mr Whitehead made four recommendations to assist State Growth with improving the use of functionality in grant application systems to reduce the risk of human error, improve communication to applicants and ensure eligibility criteria is applied consistently for all business types.

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

**ENDS**

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