



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Follow-up of the Report of the Auditor-General
Expressions of Interest for Tourism Investment Opportunities
(No. 3 of 2020-2021)

Members of the Committee

Legislative Council

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
(Chair)

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC

Hon Bec Thomas MLC
(Deputy Chair)

House of Assembly

Mr Simon Behrakis MP
(until 11 June 2025)

Mr Rob Fairs MP
(from 11 August 2026)

Mr Roger Jaensch MP
(from 9 September 2025 until 17 June 2026)

Mr Mark Shelton MP
(until 11 June 2025)

Mr Marcus Vermey MP
(from 9 September 2025)

Mr Josh Willie MP
(until 11 June 2025)

Mr Dean Winter MP
(from 9 September 2025)

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Charter of the Committee

The Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) is a Joint Standing Committee of the Tasmanian Parliament constituted under the *Public Accounts Committee Act 1970* (the Act).

The Committee comprises six Members of Parliament, three Members drawn from the Legislative Council and three Members from the House of Assembly.

Under section 6 of the Act the Committee:

- **must** inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any matter referred to the Committee by either House relating to the management, administration or use of public sector finances, or the accounts of any public authority or other organisation controlled by the State or in which the State has an interest, and
 - **may** inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any matter arising in connection with public sector finances that the Committee considers appropriate, and any matter referred to the Committee by the Auditor-General.
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AHT	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
COVID	Coronavirus-19 pandemic
CVS	Commercial Visitor Services
DNRET	Department of Natural Resources and the Environment Tasmania
DSG	Department of State Growth
EOI	Expression of Interest
EPBC	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Cth)
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
LUPAA	<i>Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993</i> (Tas)
MLC	Member of the Legislative Council
MP	Member of Parliament
MRT	Mineral Resources Tasmania
OCG	Office of the Coordinator-General
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service
RAA	Reserve Activity Assessment
The Act	<i>Public Accounts Committee Act 1970</i> (Tas)
The Committee	Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts
TICT	Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania

Executive Summary

In September 2020, the Auditor-General concluded the Tourism Expressions of Interest process was, in all material respects, implemented and administered effectively and consistently with the Government's policy objectives. The Auditor-General nevertheless identified opportunities to strengthen governance, consultation, transparency, assessment documentation, legal risk management and post-approval monitoring, and made ten recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the Expressions of Interest and Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) processes.

The Committee undertook this follow-up review to assess the extent to which those recommendations had been implemented. The Committee received written departmental responses to a series of questions and subsequently heard evidence given by responsible Ministers and departmental officers at a public hearing on 5 February 2026.

The Committee acknowledges the responsible agencies have made a number of substantive improvements since the Auditor-General's report. These include updating the suite of Expressions of Interest guidance and application documents, clarifying Expressions of Interest are assessed at concept stage only, modifying Assessment Panel reports, introducing mandatory public consultation for significant Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessments, improving the timeliness of website updates, separating the probity adviser from other advisory work, and introducing more active follow-up of proposals that have not demonstrated substantial progress.

The Committee considers Recommendations 4, 7 and 8 to have been substantially implemented. The Committee is also satisfied that meaningful progress has been made on Recommendations 1, 2, 3 and 6, although further work is required to demonstrate the revised processes are operating consistently and achieving their intended outcomes.

The Committee is not satisfied Recommendation 5 has been implemented as intended. Although the composition of the Assessment Panel was reviewed and potential conflicts associated with regulatory responsibilities were addressed, the Panel itself does not appear to include broader community representation from conservation and community interests. Agency consultation with specialist bodies is valuable but currently does not include conservation and community perspectives on the decision-making panel. The Auditor-General's concern was directed specifically to the breadth, independence and community representation of the Panel.

The Committee also considers that further evidence is required before Recommendations 9 and 10 can be regarded as fully implemented. The introduction of improved document-management arrangements, operational audit templates and a public lease and licence portal are positive developments. However, evidence to the Committee did not establish a consistent, risk-based schedule for post-approval reviews or a consolidated mechanism for recording and monitoring breaches, remedial actions and outcomes.

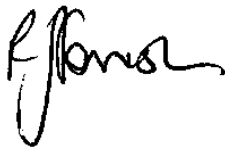
Similarly, contacting operating proponents has improved project data and provided useful information about investment, employment and market conditions. However, the follow-up has relied principally on voluntary proponent feedback, and the evidence did not clearly

demonstrate how that information has been systematically assessed against the original guiding principles or translated into documented changes to the Expressions of Interest framework.

The Committee has therefore made recommendations directed at:

- establishing a documented, agency-led framework for stakeholder consultation
- expanding and evaluating consultation at the scoping stage of significant Reserve Activity Assessments
- reconsidering the composition of the Assessment Panel
- establishing a risk-based and auditable framework for post-approval monitoring, and
- implementing a structured evaluation program against the original guiding principles for completed and operating projects.

The Committee recognises the Expressions of Interest process is a gateway rather than a project approval mechanism. Its effectiveness ultimately depends not only on the quality of its initial assessment, but also on transparent consultation, sound coordination with subsequent statutory and administrative assessment processes, robust oversight of approved activities and demonstrated learning from project outcomes.



Hon Ruth Forrest MLC
Chair

31 August 2026

Summary of Findings

The Committee made the following findings:

Area	Finding
AGR 1	F1. The responsible agencies have updated the application form, guidelines, probity guidelines, conditions and online information, and have removed or reduced obsolete terminology associated with 'EOI Round 2'. F2. Administrative changes allowing project status information to be updated within 48 hours are a positive improvement in public transparency. F3. The original concern by the Auditor-General about consultation being proponent-driven remains relevant where the agencies rely on proponents to identify or engage stakeholders.
AGR 2	F4. Public consultation for significant Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessments represents a material improvement on the arrangements examined by the Auditor-General. Proposals are published for at least 28 days, submissions are considered by the Parks and Wildlife Service, and an Environmental Assessment Report is subsequently published.
AGR 3	F5. The EOI documentation has been revised to state that a recommendation from the EOI Assessment Panel does not constitute an alternative or accelerated approval pathway. Further assessment is required beyond the concept stage.
AGR 4	F6. The Assessment Panel Evaluation Report has been modified to document assessment against the three criteria and seven guiding principles. Departmental evidence indicates that the report now contains narrative addressing the principles and the appropriateness of each proposal. F7. Advice from the Parks and Wildlife Service, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Mineral Resources Tasmania inform the Assessment Panel's consideration of environmental, cultural, land-management and project-specific matters.
AGR 5	F8. The composition of the Assessment Panel was reviewed and that a position carrying a later regulatory decision-making role was replaced by an independent member. This change appropriately reduces the potential for actual or perceived conflicts between initial assessment and subsequent regulatory functions. F9. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, the Aboriginal Heritage Council where appropriate, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Mineral Resources Tasmania and other specialist bodies may provide advice on proposals. F10. Receiving advice from agencies or specialist bodies is not equivalent to including broader community perspectives in the membership and deliberations of the Assessment Panel.
AGR 6	F11. A mechanism to seek advice of the Solicitor-General when required is in place.

Area	Finding
AGR 7	F12. The Probity Advisor role has been appropriately revised to be precluded from providing external advice on individual Tourism EOI proposals.
AGR 8	F13. The EOI application has been amended to require proponents to disclose the previous status or consideration of a proposal.
AGR 9	F14. There have been substantial improvements to post-approval monitoring of leases and licences. F15. A replacement for the current Crest system which is nearing its end-of-life is warranted considering over 6,000 leases and licences are managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.
AGR 10	F16. Recommendation 10 has been partially implemented through surveys and ongoing contact with proponents, but there is no demonstrated systematic evaluation of operating projects against their original objectives and the seven guiding principles.

Summary of Recommendations

The Committee makes the following recommendations to the Department:

Area	Finding
AGR 1	R1. Building Tasmania and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania jointly develop and publish a stakeholder-consultation framework for Tourism EOI proposals, including: a. criteria for identifying affected and interested stakeholders b. input from the Parks and Wildlife Service into stakeholder selection c. minimum consultation and record-keeping requirements d. measures to identify and address potential selection or confirmation bias e. responsibility for verifying the completeness and accuracy of consultation reports, and f. a clear explanation of the relationship between the Tourism EOI, Reserve Activity Assessment and other lease, licence and approval pathways.
AGR 2	R2. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania: a. finalise and implement an early public and targeted stakeholder-consultation stage for significant Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessments, and b. periodically evaluate and publicly report on the effectiveness, accessibility and representativeness of Reserve Activity Assessment consultation.
AGR 5	R3. The Government consider the composition and appointment framework of the Tourism EOI Assessment Panel to ensure it includes independent members with demonstrated expertise in: a. conservation and protected-area management b. community engagement, and/or c. social-impact assessment.
AGR 9	R4. The Committee recommends that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania implement a documented, risk-based monitoring framework for leases and licences on reserved land that: a. assigns a risk rating and monitoring frequency to each authorisation b. records all applicable Reserve Activity Assessment, lease and licence conditions c. records inspections, evidence reviewed, non-compliance, remedial action and closure d. provides automated reminders for reviews and contractual milestones e. sets escalation and ministerial-reporting thresholds, and f. enables periodic management reporting on compliance trends and outstanding actions. R5. Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania report to the Committee, within 12 months of this report, on progress

Area	Finding
	toward replacing the Crest system and on the implementation of the new monitoring and audit framework.
AGR 10	R6. The Office of the Coordinator-General, jointly with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, establish a structured post-implementation evaluation program for operating Tourism EOI projects. Evaluations should: a. compare actual outcomes with the original proposal, stated objectives and seven guiding principles b. consider economic, employment, environmental, cultural, social and regional outcomes c. include compliance and monitoring information held by the Parks and Wildlife Service d. seek views from affected stakeholders where appropriate, rather than relying solely on proponents e. identify lessons and required changes to guidance, assessment or monitoring arrangements, and f. publish aggregated findings while protecting legitimate commercial information.

Conduct of Review

In line with section 6(2) of the Act, the Committee resolved to undertake a review of the responses to the Auditor-General's recommendations contained within [Report No. 3 of 2020-21 – Expressions of Interest for Tourism Investment Opportunities](#).

On 29 May 2025, the Committee wrote to Hon Jeremy Rockliff MP (Premier and then Minister for Trade and Investment) and Hon Nick Duigan MLC (then Minister for Parks) informing both of the Committee's intention to follow-up the Auditor-General's Report with a questionnaire to establish the extent to which the recommendations of the audit had been implemented by the Tasmanian Government. The original response deadline was set to 27 June 2025.

For each of the audit recommendations, the Committee requested a written response by the Department detailing actions undertaken to implement the same, including (but not limited to):

1. clear indication of acceptance, in part, in full or in-principle or non-acceptance for each recommendation
2. in the case of recommendations not fully accepted, the rationale for not implementing or otherwise adopting the recommendation and detailed explanation related to this decision
3. evidence of implementation or progress toward the implementation of each accepted recommendation
4. an explanation for any delay in the implementation of any accepted recommendation, and
5. any other relevant detail.

Copies of documents that provided evidence to support the responses to the recommendations were encouraged.

On 11 June 2025, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC (Governor of Tasmania), agreed to Hon Jeremy Rockliff's MP (Premier) request to prorogue the Parliament and dissolve the House of Assembly and a State election was called for 19 July 2025.

Noting the existent caretaker period, the Secretary and Departmental representatives renegotiated a revised response date, and a submission was provided to the Committee on 10 October 2025.

After the commencement of the 52nd session of Parliament, the Committee was re-established on Wednesday, 24 September 2025.

The Committee resolved to hold a public hearing with the responsible Minister and Departmental representatives in Committee Room 2, Parliament House, Hobart:

Thursday, 5 February 2026

Hon Felix Ellis MP (via Teams)
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

Department of State Growth Representatives

Mr Dennis Hendriks (Acting Coordinator-General)
Ms Peta Sugden (Acting Chief Operating Officer)
Mr Andrew Crane (Tourism EOI Project Director, Office of the Coordinator General)

Hon Nick Duigan MLC (via Teams)
Minister for Parks

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania Representatives

Ms Sophie Muller (Deputy Secretary, Parks and Wildlife Services)
Ms Danielle Poirier (General Manager, Landscape Programs) (via Teams)
Mr Andrew Harvey (Manager, Tourism Projects and Programs) (via Teams)

Copies of the transcripts, tabled papers, broadcasts and responses are available on the Committee's inquiry webpage.¹

¹ See in general, 'Follow-up Audit - EOI Tourism Investment Opportunities', <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/committees/joint-committees/standing-committees/public-accounts-committee/inquiries/follow-up-audit-eoi-tourism-investment-opportunities>

Background

The Auditor-General undertook an independent assurance report of the expressions of interest (EOI) process for tourism investment opportunities.

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the EOI process for the development of sensitive and appropriate tourism experiences and associated infrastructure in Tasmania's national parks, reserves and Crown land, by private investors and tourism operators.

The audit covered the tourism developments submitted under Round 1 and Round 2 of the EOI process from June 2014 to October 2019. State entities that were included within the scope of the audit were:

- Department of State Growth (DSG) including the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG), and
- the former Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (now the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment Tasmania – NRE Tasmania) including the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS).

The audit assessed whether OCG and PWS handled the EOI process effectively by analysing data, performing audit procedures on selected EOI applications, examining and verifying internal and external reports, reviewing strategic planning processes and documents and discussing the EOI process with relevant staff, members of the assessment panel and proponents.

The audit also assessed whether:

- there was effective coordination of EOI submissions
- governance arrangements ensured a clearly defined separation of duties and personnel between the assessment and approval functions
- there was clarity and consistency in how due consideration was given to other relevant processes and approval requirements in related procurement policy documents (including relevant management plans and guidelines), and
- the extent to which advice was provided by Crown Law or the Solicitor-General and whether that advice was followed.

The Report contained ten (10) recommendations against five (5) audit criteria and related sub-criteria:

1. *Was there an effective governance structure for the whole EOI process?*
2. *Were EOI projects appropriately assessed by the EOI Assessment Panel?*
 - a. *Were EOI projects assessed by the EOI Assessment Panel in accordance with the assessment criteria and the guiding principles and established decision-making process?*

- b. *Did the EOI assessment criteria and guiding principles align with the Government's objectives?*
3. *Were EOI projects appropriately assessed by PWS and approved by the relevant authority?*
 - a. *Were EOI projects assessed by PWS in accordance with applicable assessment and decision-making processes given the level of information available at that time and the level of decision/assessment required?*
4. *Did effective licence and/or lease negotiation processes exist?*
5. *Were ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes effective?*

In response to the Committee's request for an update, Hon Felix Ellis MP (Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) stated the following:

... The Auditor-General handed down his independent assurance report on the Tourism Expression of Interest (EOI) process on 22 September 2020.

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the EOI process for the development of sensitive and appropriate tourism experiences and associated infrastructure in our national parks, reserves and Crown Land.

The audit assessed whether the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG) and Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) handled the EOI process effectively by analysing data, performing audit procedures on selected EOI applications, examining and verifying internal and external reports, reviewing strategic planning processes and documents and discussing the EOI process with relevant staff, members of the assessment panel and proponents.

The audit concluded that:

- *the EOI process, as measured against the audit criteria, was in all material aspects implemented and administered effectively and, in a manner, consistent with the Government's policy objectives*
- *there was no evidence to support allegations of undue secrecy of the EOI process*
- *the publication of information on recommended proposals had been sufficiently timely and appropriately handled*
- *the process and guiding principles are fundamentally sound and well supported by reference to authoritative guidance on eco-tourism*
- *staff were knowledgeable and diligent in relation to relevant issues pertaining to proposal and adequate advice was sought, obtained and considered from qualified experts, and*
- *the EOI process has been successful in contributing to the objectives of economic growth that were the purpose of its instigation by the Government.*

The audit made ten recommendations to further improve the effectiveness of the EOI process and the PWS Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) processes. Several of the areas for continuous improvement that were included in the findings had already been recognised and acted upon prior to the audit report.

The OCG, PWS, and the EOI Assessment Panel conducted a detailed review of the audit report and its recommendations, ...

Please note that – in addition to responding to all of the Auditor-General's Report recommendations – the administration of the Tourism EOI process applies a continuous improvement approach and continues to seek ways in which the process can be strengthened.²

At the public hearing, Hon Felix Ellis MP provided the following opening statement:

***Mr ELLIS** - ... The Tasmanian Government takes its responsibility for managing Tasmania's extensive reserve estate seriously, and remains committed to delivering the Tourism expression of interest (EOI) process, given the important role it plays in facilitating sensitive and appropriate tourism projects within Tasmania's national parks, reserves and Crown lands.*

Critically, the Tourism EOI process provides a first-level filter of projects at concept stage to ensure that an equitable, consistent and statewide approach is maintained in assessment of commercial tourism propositions on public land. These concepts are reviewed by an independent expert panel and must demonstrate that they are environmentally, culturally, economically and socially responsible before they can be recommended to proceed to the next stage of formal assessment. If a proposal is recommended to proceed to the next stage and that recommendation is accepted, the Parks and Wildlife Service of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE) assumes the responsibility for the environmental assessment and client management of the proponent and proposal, including the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process.

Any proposal that reaches this stage must address any relevant Commonwealth and State environmental and planning approval requirements. This stage also provides opportunity for community involvement.

This staged approach is intended to clearly delineate between the responsibility of the office of the Coordinator-General as the investor attraction facilitator, and NRE Tasmania as the regulatory body. The EOI process is designed to play a key role in delivering the Government's vision for increased yield and dispersal in the tourism industry, generating demand for travel to our State and in our State, particularly in our regional areas.

² Minister for Business, Industry and Resources response to Committee (10 October 2025) ([Attachment A](#)), p.1-2

The Maydena Bike Park in the Derwent Valley and the Blue Derby Pods Ride in the north-east are fantastic examples of great ideas becoming great successes with the help of the Tourism EOI process.

...

The Tasmanian Government has been committed to further improvement. In a 2022 comprehensive review, consultation and assessment of the tourism EOI process was completed and subsequently considered by Government. The review included recommendations from the Auditor-General's September 2020 report and input from the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania (TICT), the EOI Assessment Panel and NRE Tasmania. This feedback was used to enhance the Tourism EOI process and has resulted in a number of improvements to both processes and information provided to potential proponents.

In my letters to this Committee of October [2025] last year, I outlined the progress in implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations, but I'd also note that the enhancement process has included other changes.

One particular important enhancement which we've made, to address concerns about land banking, is that, from June 2022, the proponents with projects at the stage of formal assessment and approvals have been asked regularly to provide evidence of substantial progress or risk being removed. The Panel will now request that proponents provide updates, typically within six months of receiving the request. This process has been repeated three times. In addition, the Panel has requested shorter timeframes for the provision of evidence where specific matters have been identified. As a result of this process, eight of the original 18 remaining projects have been withdrawn, either voluntarily or by the Minister.

Another enhancement, in 2024, was to amend administrative procedures which allow for updating the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG) website without compromising the robustness and integrity of the EOI process and necessary probity arrangements. This change allows the website to be updated within 48 hours of receiving advice on a change in project status, rather than first requiring notification of the Panel, which had previously resulted in delays in updating publicly available information.

I am confident that the Tourism EOI process is robust, fair and responsible, and doing what it's intended to do. Of the 73 EOI projects that have been submitted to the OCG, to date nine projects have completed the assessment process and have worked through all of the approval processes to be operational.

Job creation and investment value to date for operational projects is 64 employees and \$31,575,000.

Projects have been approved to proceed via the EOI process, including those that are already operational, are estimated to provide investment of over \$98 million and 305 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs when fully realised ...³

³ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0014/101831/PAC-Follow-Up-Audit-EOI-Tourism-Investment-Opportunities-5-February-2026.pdf, p.1-3

Later in the public hearing, Hon Nick Duigan MLC (Minister for Parks) provided the following statement:

***Mr DUIGAN** - ... I understand you have heard from Minister Ellis, but obviously we would like to reinforce how the Tasmanian Government welcomes appropriate nature-based tourism proposals in our parks and reserves. We remain committed to delivering the tourism expression of interest process which proactively encourages tourism opportunities in our natural areas by inviting creative and innovative proposals that will provide best practice environmental tourism and deliver social, environmental and economic benefit and visitor experiences that are the envy of the world.*

To support best practice management of Tasmania's reserve land, the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service released a consultation paper seeking feedback on proposed amendments to the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002. The proposed amendments related to the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) process. Interest in the process was significant, with more than 800 submissions received. There was strong support for retaining the existing provisions for assessment under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 (LUPAA). We have listened to this feedback, and that's why the Government will not be introducing a new statutory process for the environmental impact assessments on reserved land.

Importantly, improvements to the RAA process over the past four years have resulted in a more consistent and robust process with greater transparency on the significant projects of interest to the community on reserve land. This includes the launch of the online Lease and Licence Portal, which supports our transparency agenda through the publication of active leases and licences on reserve land.

Parks and Wildlife will continue to focus on increasing transparency through the publication of RAA assessment guidelines. It will also improve coordination between the RAA processes and the planning permit application process under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act.⁴

Minister Ellis (Minister for Business, Industry and Resources) also outlined which recommendations he was responsible for:

***Mr ELLIS** - Recommendation 1: obviously, the stakeholder consultation in the context of the reserve activity assessment. When we're talking about reserve activity assessments, those are typically done by Parks and Wildlife, and then the OCG aspects are contained in that. There are some recommendations on EOI Round 2 which the OCG has undertaken for Recommendation 1.*

Recommendation 2 is for the Minister for Parks.

Recommendation 3 is for myself.

Recommendation 4 is for myself.

⁴ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, p.15-16

Recommendation 5 will be myself, although there are some matters in relation to Aboriginal assessment that, of course, the Minister for Parks may wish to speak more to.

Recommendation 6 is for myself.

Recommendation 7 is for myself.

Recommendation 8 is for myself.

Recommendation 9 is for the Minister for Parks, although there are some matters that we could discuss.

Recommendation 10 is for myself, although Parks may wish to talk more about learnings from successful projects as well.⁵

⁵ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, p.3-4

Departmental Responses

Auditor-General Recommendation 1

Explore and implement options, for improving the format and structure of stakeholder consultation so that it is more robust and objective. This should include PWS input into stakeholders selected for consultation and appropriately defining and communicating how the EOI process and the CVS⁶ system interface, including removing any references to 'EOI Round 2'.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed.⁷

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The OCG has undertaken a comprehensive review of each of the process documents for the EOI and updated the suite of documents, including:

- *Application form*
- *Guidelines*
- *Probity Guidelines*
- *Conditions*
- *Online material*

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRET) through PWS will continue to work closely with the OCG to review the guiding advice and documents to ensure a robust and thorough approach to areas like stakeholder consultation.

At the public hearing Minister Ellis, Mr Andrew Crane (Tourism EOI Project Director, Office of the Coordinator General), Mr Dennis Hendriks (Acting Coordinator-General) and Ms Peta Sugden (Acting Chief Operating Officer) provided the following:

CHAIR - ... *Recommendation 1: You say that's complete. Minister, you referred to parts of that, and I believe this also feeds into where the website has been updated to enable more timely adjustments to it. It seems that you've ticked the boxes here, but how have you demonstrated that actually is happening, that it is being updated?*

Mr ELLIS - *We're updating the website. I'm happy to pass to the team from the Office of the Coordinator-General to talk about website updates.*

Mr CRANE - ... *The specific incident that prompted that particular change in terms of the speed at which information could change was the withdrawal of a proposal. A successful proponent retired and decided to do something else and in fact entered the TAFE education system to teach.*

⁶ Commercial Visitor Services

⁷ See [Attachment A](#), p.2

What happened was that that process we had in hand which we had been using meant that the Panel needed to be notified and it took several months for the information to change on the website. We've changed the administrative process so that once we have been notified of the withdrawal of the application, and the licence has been returned to Parks and Wildlife, we're able to change the status information on the website within 48 hours. We've adopted that as a practice from now on with the endorsement of the Panel. We no longer need the Panel's approval to make those kind of administrative changes.

I think the more substantive changes relating to this are the information and the recommendation from the Auditor-General in regard to Recommendation 1 around updating the documentation for potential proponents to ensure the information in those documents was accurate and up-to-date. There have been significant changes to that documentation to make sure it's contemporary.

Ms THOMAS - ... On the 'Accepted Concepts' page for proposals for new tourism opportunities in national parks and reserves, it appears that that page was last updated on 21 May 2025. Can you explain, if it's being updated as things occur, why that's the last date of update?

Mr CRANE - There's been no change to the status of any of those projects within that timeframe.

Ms THOMAS - ... There's been no new accepted concepts in almost 12 months?

Mr CRANE - That's correct.

Ms THOMAS - ... There's another web page with the heading 'EOI Statistics' and that was last updated on 26 May 2025. That suggests, again, that there's been no changes to those statistics since May last year.

Mr CRANE - That's correct.

CHAIR - The Minister said in his opening comments, unless he was referring to something else, that there's a six-monthly update and that was one of the other changes that have been made, so one would expect some of these to progress. What's going on that nothing has changed?

Mr HENDRIKS - My understanding is that it's typically every six months that the Panel would ask the proponents to provide further updated information, but that information is predominantly around providing evidence that their proposals are moving forward and that they're undertaking activities to support that progress. That doesn't necessarily result in an actual change to the website information that's actually available. It does inform the Panel in relation to whether or not a proponent's project should stay within the EOI process.

Ms SUGDEN - Of course, Chair, that would be changed should the Panel then decide to withdraw or to seek further evidence to look to withdraw. In fact, that process has been undertaken recently. I will chair a meeting shortly where we will be going through the

information provided from proponents to make an assessment on whether there has been progress or not.

CHAIR - *One would assume from that if that decision is made that they haven't made progress, and there doesn't appear to be a likelihood of it -*

Ms SUGDEN - *We would ask them to withdraw.*

CHAIR - *Yes, and then that would be updated within 48 hours?*

Ms SUGDEN - *Correct.*

...

CHAIR - *The last review that was done, then - just to clarify - was a six-monthly review of all the projects that sit there?*

Ms SUGDEN - *We send a letter out to the proponents and the proponents are then given six months to provide us information. Then the meeting for the assessment panels are scheduled and therefore information may not be truly six months, but then it is assessed. It doesn't necessarily mean there's no progress, it just means that there may well be an iteration, but that iteration doesn't change the overall project. For example, they may still be doing exploratory works, they may give us evidence that they've undertaken a detailed Aboriginal [Heritage] assessment, those types of things which aren't then recorded.*

Ms THOMAS - *... So, there's no public visibility, ultimately, of what's occurring unless it's significant?*

Ms SUGDEN - *I suppose it's like those that then have gone on to Parks and they would be starting to undertake their environmental approvals and you would be able to check with the Minister about the processes for consultation along that pathway.*

Mr HENDRIKS - *It's probably also worth noting that not every project is necessarily written to every six months simply because a lot of the projects are voluntarily providing information through to the office or they may be involved in other processes that both ourselves and Parks are well aware are ongoing, so there's really little point to actually asking them because it's already known.*

Ms THOMAS - *... So, in the last 12 months, has there been any action taken in relation to the Halls Island, Lake Malbena application or proposal?*

Ms SUGDEN - *I can confirm a letter was sent in the last few months to Halls Island [proponent] on the matter, yes.*

Ms THOMAS - *But there's no update for the public on where that proposal is at?*

Ms SUGDEN - I suppose it's important to note that our processes as far as Halls Island are largely completed because that's a matter where we are progressing the approvals along with the Australian Government.⁸

The Committee considers Recommendation 1 substantially implemented in relation to documentation and process terminology, but is not in a position to comment in relation to demonstrating a consistently robust and objective stakeholder-consultation framework.

Committee Findings

- F1. The responsible agencies have updated the application form, guidelines, probity guidelines, conditions and online information, and have removed or reduced obsolete terminology associated with 'EOI Round 2'.
- F2. Administrative changes allowing project status information to be updated within 48 hours are a positive improvement in public transparency.
- F3. The original concern by the Auditor-General about consultation being proponent-driven remains relevant where the agencies rely on proponents to identify or engage stakeholders.

Committee Recommendations

- R1. Building Tasmania and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania jointly develop and publish a stakeholder-consultation framework for Tourism EOI proposals, including:
 - a. criteria for identifying affected and interested stakeholders
 - b. input from the Parks and Wildlife Service into stakeholder selection
 - c. minimum consultation and record-keeping requirements
 - d. measures to identify and address potential selection or confirmation bias
 - e. responsibility for verifying the completeness and accuracy of consultation reports, and
 - f. a clear explanation of the relationship between the Tourism EOI, Reserve Activity Assessment and other lease, licence and approval pathways.

⁸ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, p.4-6

Auditor-General Recommendation 2

Increase the rigour of the public consultation as part of the RAA process to improve the level of transparency or objectivity.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee he had accepted the Auditor-General's recommendation.⁹

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation or progress (continuous delivery):

NRET – through PWS – has implemented a new RAA process whereby public consultation on significant projects occurs via the PWS website.¹⁰

In this new process, proposals identified at level 3 are available for public comment for a minimum of 28 days. At the end of the comments period, PWS reviews comments and prepares an Environmental Assessment Report which describes how PWS will address issues raised.

This report is then made public on the PWS website.

The Committee considers Recommendation 2 substantially implemented and subject to continuous improvement and finds that the effectiveness of the revised consultation process should be periodically evaluated.

Committee Findings

- F4. Public consultation for significant Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessments represents a material improvement on the arrangements examined by the Auditor-General. Proposals are published for at least 28 days, submissions are considered by the Parks and Wildlife Service, and an Environmental Assessment Report is subsequently published.

Committee Recommendations

- R2. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania:
- finalise and implement an early public and targeted stakeholder-consultation stage for significant Level 3 Reserve Activity Assessments, and
 - periodically evaluate and publicly report on the effectiveness, accessibility and representativeness of Reserve Activity Assessment consultation.

⁹ See Attachment A, p.2

¹⁰ See 'Reserve activity assessment', Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service, <https://parks.tas.gov.au/about-us/managing-our-parks-and-reserves/reserve-activity-assessment> [Accessed 19 November 2025]

Auditor-General Recommendation 3

Make stronger guidance available to potential proponents which more clearly outlines the process beyond the EOI stage once ministerial approval has been given. This information should include general information such as likely costs, timeframe and potential hurdles needing to be negotiated before the project can commence.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:¹¹

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The OCG has undertaken a comprehensive review of each of the process documents for the EOI and updated the suite of documents, including:

- *Application form*
- *Guidelines*
- *Probity Guidelines*
- *Conditions*
- *Online material.*

These updates provide clearer guidance to proponents, confirming that their Expression of Interest (EOI) application will be evaluated by the EOI Assessment Panel solely as a concept.

Based on this assessment, a recommendation—either in support or otherwise—will be made to the relevant Minister(s).

Input from other stakeholders will be sought as appropriate to inform the process.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis, Mr Hendriks and Ms Sugden provided the following in relation to the above updated suite of documents:

Mr ELLIS - ... *These updates clarify the EOI applications are assessed by the EOI assessment panel, and that this is an assessment of the concept and does not constitute proposal approval. The steps required to obtain the necessary approvals are contained within the process documentation that's provided to proponents.*

Clearer guidelines outlining the process beyond the EOI stage have been incorporated into the revised documentation a total of six times. This guidance provides proponents with clear information about what occurs after Ministerial approvals; timeframes; and potential hurdles that may need to be addressed before the project can proceed further.

Mr HENDRIKS - *I suppose the only other comment that I could make is that the proponents are generally - and I think it's on the website, or certainly within some of the forms, they're encouraged to actually talk to both our office and Parks as part of that process as they're moving forward. There is further guidance given at that point, too.*

¹¹ See [Attachment A](#), p.3

CHAIR - In your response to the Committee, you note:

Input from other stakeholders will be sought as appropriate to inform the process.

Who are the stakeholders we're talking about here? There was some commentary from the Auditor-General about engagement with stakeholders, which obviously occurs in the later stage as well.

Ms SUDGEN - The Panel receives advice from the agencies that are relevant, so always Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), Mineral Resources Tasmania (MRT), Aboriginal Heritage and Heritage Tasmania.

CHAIR - That's the list of stakeholders we're talking about here? We're not talking about any local community?

Ms SUDGEN - No, we're talking about those official bodies. They basically address the proposal appropriateness and then that information is given to the panel.¹²

The Committee noted that this stage of the process does not include community engagement.

The Committee considers Recommendation 3 substantially implemented, with an opportunity to improve the detail, accessibility and periodic review of the information provided.

Committee Findings

- F5. The EOI documentation has been revised to state that a recommendation from the EOI Assessment Panel does not constitute an alternative or accelerated approval pathway. Further assessment is required beyond the concept stage.

¹² See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.8-9

Auditor-General Recommendation 4

Modify the Assessment Panel Evaluation Report to include documentation of the Panel's considerations to clearly indicate how the assessment panel view the proposal's alignment with each of the seven guiding principles.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:¹³

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The OCG has modified the Assessment Panel Evaluation Report to effectively document how the Assessment Panel has viewed each individual proposal against the three Criteria as well as the seven Guiding Principles.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis, Ms Sugden and Mr Hendriks provided the following:

CHAIR - ... *Have you got anything further to add about how you've demonstrated the application and effectiveness of this recommendation?*

Mr ELLIS - ... *It should be noted that the guiding principles relate directly to the three criteria, with six of those principles specifically focused on the appropriateness of a proposal - criterion 1, and one principle focused on the financial viability of the proposal and the ability of the proponent to deliver it, which is criteria 2 and 3.*

The Panel receives advice from PWS, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Mineral Resources Tasmania that specifically addresses the proposal appropriateness. That is, this advice responds to the guiding principles and allows the panel to evaluate the proposal against these principles and overarching criterion.

Ms SUGDEN - *I might add, Chair, that I recently returned to this role in about October [2025] and I personally did review those reports and saw that that was noted. It is literally the narrative within the report that notes the guiding principles and the proposal's appropriateness.*

CHAIR - *I'm not sure if a comment from the Auditor-General refers to this, but he did make this point:*

We found the publication of information on recommended proposals to be sufficiently timed ... and appropriately handled. Notwithstanding the adequate publication of information, stakeholder consultation undertaken through the reserve activity assessment is primarily proponent-driven and unstructured. This increases the risk of positive bias by the proponent, either conscious or otherwise, in reporting on the outcomes of consultations.

I'm interested in how that's mitigated against because everyone wants to spruik their own project. Is this the process where that occurs, or is that in a different point?

¹³ See [Attachment A](#), p.3

Mr HENDRIKS - I think within the Auditor-General's report, that stakeholder consultation that he is talking about there predominantly occurs after it's been through the EOI and is actually made public. I mean, one of the issues prior to that is that until it's actually approved through the EOI, it's confidential and commercially sensitive. When it gets to that next stage, most of the referral points through the Auditor-General's report is very much focused around the RAA¹⁴ process and the stakeholder consultation that's occurring through that process.

CHAIR - He does point out the risk, though, of proponent positive or confirmation bias in that. That's to do with Parks, not to do with you or your office?

Ms SUGDEN - Chair, I might add, because I was the person that was there during the time of the audit, to say that a lot of that was linked to the commentary with regards to making it clearer for proponents that this was, in fact, a concept stage approval because proponents had a certain view, some of them, that it had a level of an approval. So, I think those two do need to be considered together.

Mr CRANE - One of the services that we offer is, essentially, a concierge service at the beginning of this process, which is entirely voluntary for a proponent to take up. But what we do as part of that is ensure they understand the local operating context in which they are proposing to develop something and the kinds of stakeholder consultation and the stakeholders they need to engage with at that stage.

CHAIR - This is members of the public you're talking about? Or it could be the organisations, or whatever?

Mr CRANE - Absolutely. And to understand that context in which they are proposing something so that they don't suffer from confirmation bias. And we make sure that they don't only seek out the advice of those people who are likely to support their proposal.

I'd also say that the way in which the Panel operates - and I've certainly experienced this in my time in this role, is extremely diligent in terms of drilling down to the facts, rather than simply what's put in the proposal. And the Panel will seek to go back to a proponent for further information and evidence of any assertion they may make about community support.

...

Mr ELLIS - In general, the Tourism EOI Assessment Panel is based on relevant skills and experience. Its members do not represent any organisation, including those for whom they work. The Panel consists of members with a wide range of skills and experience, including planning and land use management, management of the Tasmanian reserve estate, tourism and tourism development, financial and business case analysis, and governance, and community group expectations.

Following the Auditor-General report, the OCG undertook a review of the composition of the Assessment Panel, and the Panel was reshaped to ensure there was no potential or perceived conflicts.

¹⁴ Reserve Activity Assessment

CHAIR - Minister, you referred to ... the Assessment Panel ... look[ing] at matters of significant Aboriginal heritage?

Mr ELLIS - ... Obviously, this is the gateway to a process, and that process includes Aboriginal heritage assessment. All proposals received to the EOI process are then submitted to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT) for review and advice on potential impacts on Aboriginal heritage and related matters.

CHAIR - Before the process proceeds any further?

Mr ELLIS - From what I understand, it's just part of the normal process, although, I should say that the advice from AHT is then formally considered by the EOI Assessment Panel. The process ensures that cultural appropriateness is a fundamental consideration of the Panel in its evaluation and recommendations for each EOI proposal...

...

Mr JAENSCH - Do you have something to add, Mr Crane?

Mr CRANE - I was simply going to say that a proponent is strongly advised to undertake, or have undertaken, an Aboriginal heritage assessment of the site on which their proposal is to be located as the first stage as part of that submission. If a submission was to be made that did not include that assessment, the panel would not accept it and would require the proponent to then have that work undertaken. There is that advice provided from the proponent as part of their submission. That advice is then reviewed by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania also has to review that original report when it's prepared as part of that process, so there are two gateways to get that professional advice. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania may also seek the advice of the Aboriginal Heritage Council should they wish, to get further detailed information and community feedback as a part of that process as well.

CHAIR - Before they feed back to the initial process -

Mr CRANE - That's correct, yes.

CHAIR - Under the Office of the Coordinator-General?

Mr CRANE - Yes ...¹⁵

The Committee notes the modified Assessment Panel Evaluation Report and the environmental, cultural, land-management and project-specific advice from key stakeholders are positive changes. These changes directly address the Auditor-General's finding that earlier reports did not always explicitly demonstrate how proposals aligned with each guiding principle. Accordingly, the Committee considers Recommendation 4 implemented.

¹⁵ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, p.9-12

Committee Findings

- F6. The Assessment Panel Evaluation Report has been modified to document assessment against the three criteria and seven guiding principles. Departmental evidence indicates that the report now contains narrative addressing the principles and the appropriateness of each proposal.
 - F7. Advice from the Parks and Wildlife Service, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and Mineral Resources Tasmania inform the Assessment Panel's consideration of environmental, cultural, land-management and project-specific matters.
-

Auditor-General Recommendation 5

Review the composition of the EOI Assessment Panel, specifically to obtain broader representation of community stakeholders, including those representing conservation and Tasmanian Aboriginal interests.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:¹⁶

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The OCG undertook a review of the composition of the Assessment Panel.

The EOI Assessment Panel has been reshaped to ensure that there are no potential and perceived conflicts, such as replacing the Secretary of NRET due to this position having a regulatory role in decision making later in the RAA process. This position has been replaced by an independent panel member.

Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT), and where appropriate, the Aboriginal Heritage Council, are provided the opportunity to input on every proposal, early in the assessment process. This builds on the existing process where the Panel can seek additional advice from AHT, MRT,¹⁷ Crown Law, and PWS on any proposal as required and allow further discussion on:

- *Site impact and location-specific risks and issues relating specific reserve status and the zone within a reserve.*
- *Locality specific access and operational impacts related to visitation such as rubbish, sewage and related amenities.*
- *Visual amenity considerations.*
- *Cultural significance of the project locality, including Aboriginal heritage and other flora and fauna considerations.*

At the public hearing, Minister Duigan, Ms Danielle Poirer (General Manager, Landscape Programs) and Ms Sophie Muller (Deputy Secretary, Parks and Wildlife Services) provided the following:

Mr DUIGAN - *In terms of the recommendation of the Auditor-General review the composition of the EOI Assessment Panel which, as I understand it, sits with the Minister, Mr Ellis. The composition of the panel is not something to which I would necessarily provide commentary on.*

In terms of RAA, there has been a fairly substantial process in the last couple of years and then subsequently, prior to that, another review held into RAA. The RAA is kind of a living document or a living process, to some extent, and we are constantly looking at ways of improving it.

¹⁶ See Attachment A, p.3-4

¹⁷ Mineral Resources Tasmania

... typically in the tourism EOI process, these would be level 3 RAAs: I think, almost without exception, level 3 RAAs. With the level 3 RAA, currently there is one opportunity for public comment - a 28-day opportunity for people to submit in regard to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Following that, Parks and Wildlife, through their assessment of the RAA, would detail how it would seek to mitigate any of those issues that are raised in that part of the consultation project or process.

We are subsequently looking at having a further, or a step prior to that, whereby the public would potentially be asked to comment on the scoping of the RAA parameters and what are the issues that we should be looking at prior to.

As I say, there are constant improvements going on with the RAA, noting that the composition of the Panel is not one of those things.

CHAIR - *... This is about the rigour of the public consultation. What led me to that was that there's no public engagement in the initial process, and it then sits with the RAA process. I'm just asking your view of how this is going and what their feedback is from that. Is how it's now operating truly reflecting the Auditor-General's recommendation about improving or increasing the rigour of the public consultation process to ensure all relevant voices are heard?*

Mr DUIGAN - *Yes, and as I was saying in my answer to the previous question, there is currently the RAA process, but it's important to recognise as well that there is still the requirement, in the large part, for those proposals to go through the local process, so a DA¹⁸ and council approval as well. The RAA process runs in parallel, and there is the opportunity for people to comment on the draft environmental impact statement and Parks then responds to those submissions. What we are contemplating is having a step prior to that where there would be public consultation and perhaps targeted stakeholder consultation around scoping the EOI. ...*

Ms POIRIER - *... With respect to the scoping consultations, at the moment those components that make up the requirements of the reserve activity assessment are drafted. We talk to internal stakeholders and specialists, but the proposal is for those to be drafted, and then for a step to be published for a certain period - four weeks, something like that - to then receive comment from the community, the public and interest groups, in helping to respond to those draft requirements and then taking that feedback on board.*

In addition to some standard conditions, there would be some specific for that particular project and then perhaps influenced through the submissions from the public during that development of those assessment requirements.

CHAIR - *Minister, have you gone out and sought feedback on how the process is now working in view of the recommendation that the rigour of the public consultation be*

¹⁸ Development Application

improved? How do we know that people are feeling that this is a better, more open, transparent and engaging process? If you don't measure it, how do you know?

Mr DUIGAN - ... *I think it's important to recognise that to support best practice and make sure we get this right, we released a Government consultation paper on the RAA process recently, I think probably in 2023 or 2024, if memory serves. That was obviously to get feedback on proposed amendments, and those proposed reforms were subject to an extensive public consultation process. In response to that, we had some 807 submissions, so there has been a great deal of focus on the RAA process in recent times and it continues to evolve. We have made a decision not to introduce a new statutory process, but to continue to use the RAA in concert with LUPAA, because that was very much the feedback we received through that consultation process, ...*

CHAIR - *Was that view shared across proponents or those involved in the tourism sector, Aboriginal organisations and environmental groups and others?*

Mr DUIGAN - *Look, I think there was a reasonable level of alignment. ...*

Ms MULLER - ... *I think one of the things that's definitely worth noting in this regard is that the requirement for consultation since this report was released is a new requirement. When this report was undertaken, there wasn't a requirement for significant projects to have this period of consultation. That's a new step in the process that is required for all significant developments, so for all level 3 RAAs. That's undertaken through our website, so it's highly transparent and highly accessible. I think, as the Minister indicated, through our RAA review there were no concerns or issues raised with regard to that consultation part of the process.*

CHAIR - *Minister, you said you've decided, based on that review, not to change the process at all or introduce a new statutory process.*

Mr DUIGAN - *Yes.*

CHAIR - *You're confident, then, that the current process can deal with more complex or contentious proposals?*

Mr DUIGAN - *Yes, I think so. I'm certainly not saying we're not going to change the process. I think there is a constant evolution of the process. As Sophie said, it formerly didn't require public consultation and now there is the requirement for that. We would seek to, as I say, expand that into two public interactions through a level 3 RAA. We will also be making, I think, some changes to our level 2 RAA to provide some more visibility.*

One of the things that came out of the consultation process was a greater desire for transparency into the RAA process. That's something we're seeking to do. Work in that space has been happening as well with the leases and licence portal, which essentially puts up on the website all the current leases and licences over reserved land in the State. Again, that's been welcomed by many in this space on both sides of the ledger.

CHAIR - Minister, you said that it's an ongoing process, so how will you monitor how the newer system is working? I call it 'newer' because there has been some change. How are you going to assess that into the future to make sure there's not other things that become apparent that may need further adjustment?

Mr DUIGAN - ... The reality is we don't do a lot ... level 3 RAAs. There's probably one or two each year and they are invariably pretty public facing and well-known kinds of projects. I think each one has various certain nuances to them and there is the opportunity to take learnings out of them, noting that no two are exactly the same. They're each quite distinct and different proposals and we're seeking to have a process that can encompass all of those things. I would say that I feel quite confident in the process and again, not adverse to changing it if that is required.

*In terms of the review, I note one of the recommendations from the Auditor-General's report was around what we do in terms of reviewing how projects are meeting the requirements of their RAA. I think they then go into business-as-usual once they have passed through. There is a suite of reporting and monitoring we would do with each of the projects that come through the EOI, or whether they come through more normal means. It's just part of what we would do in the normal course of business.*¹⁹

The Committee notes, the Auditor-General specifically recommended broader Panel representation, including conservation and Tasmanian Aboriginal interests, after finding the Panel's composition was predominantly governmental and broader representation could contribute environmental, cultural and social-licence perspectives at an early stage.

The evidence provided does not establish conservation or Tasmanian Aboriginal representatives have been appointed as members of the Panel. The departmental response therefore addresses independence and access to expert advice, but not the central element of broader community representation.

The Committee considers Recommendation 5 partially implemented.

Committee Findings

- F8. The composition of the Assessment Panel was reviewed and that a position carrying a later regulatory decision-making role was replaced by an independent member. This change appropriately reduces the potential for actual or perceived conflicts between initial assessment and subsequent regulatory functions.
- F9. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, the Aboriginal Heritage Council where appropriate, the Parks and Wildlife Service, Mineral Resources Tasmania and other specialist bodies may provide advice on proposals.
- F10. Receiving advice from agencies or specialist bodies is not equivalent to including broader community perspectives in the membership and deliberations of the Assessment Panel.

¹⁹ See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.17-19

Committee Recommendations

- R3. The Government consider the composition and appointment framework of the Tourism EOI Assessment Panel to ensure it includes independent members with demonstrated expertise in:
- a. conservation and protected-area management
 - b. community engagement, and/or
 - c. social-impact assessment.
-

Auditor-General Recommendation 6

Seek advice from the Solicitor-General, as part of the EOI assessment process, to enhance legal understanding, help mitigate potential risks and provide valuable insight for subsequent recommendations made to the Minister.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:²⁰

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

If a new or novel legal issue arises, advice will be sought from the Solicitor-General's Office.

In most cases, Crown Law is the appropriate area within the Department of Justice for obtaining advice regarding a project.

As previously noted, this matter is typically addressed by PWS as part of the lease/licence drafting stage.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis, Mr Hendriks and Ms Sugden provided the following:

CHAIR - *One point that the Auditor-General did make in his report was that the Office of the Coordinator-General did not seek the Solicitor-General's legal advice on individual EOI proposals, which may have enhanced the quality of legal guidance on specific proposals in recommendations made to the Minister. He wasn't recommending necessarily that that happens, but it was an observation. Has that changed and have there been any cases where the advice of the Solicitor-General has been sought?*

...

Mr ELLIS - *The OCG sought advice from the Solicitor-General early in the development of the EOI process, where a need to understand the application of legislation including the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 and the National Parks and Reserve Land Regulations 2009 was identified. Given that responsibility for the relevant legislation was and is the responsibility for the Minister for Parks, it was also agreed by the OCG and Parks and Wildlife early in the EOI process that all subsequent requests for legal advice was best managed by PWS.*

Every proposal considered by the panel includes advice from PWS relating to the application of relevant legislation. Furthermore, there's substantial consultation with the Office of the Crown Solicitor, Crown Law, during any resulting negotiations of leases, licences and other authorities.

If new legal issues arise that involves the interpretation of law, advice will be sought from the Office of the Solicitor-General. However, in most cases, Crown Law will be the appropriate area within the Department of Justice for obtaining advice regarding a proposal.

²⁰ See Attachment A, p.4

Since the Auditor-General's report, there have been eight projects. Given the nature of these, the panel did not require SG advice in the early concept stage. NRE may wish to speak to this more, but I will pass to the team from the OCG if there's anything further they'd like to add.

CHAIR - *Does your answer to the question I asked have any - has the advice of the Solicitor-General been sought on any since the Auditor-General's report was done?*

Mr ELLIS - *Yes, that's what I just said, Chair. Since the Auditor-General's report, there have been eight projects -*

CHAIR - *I thought you said they weren't.*

Mr ELLIS - *Given the nature of these, the panel did not require SG advice in the early concept stage.*

Mr HENDRIKS - *No advice sought from the Solicitor - they didn't require it.*

CHAIR - *They didn't require it?*

Mr HENDRIKS - *They didn't require it, essentially.*

CHAIR - *They weren't new or novel, or -*

Mr HENDRIKS - *No.*

CHAIR - *There is no legal issues identified? Is that the reason?*

Ms SUDGEN - *There's no legal issues identified in the concept stage, Chair. There well may be issues that come up once they start through the assessment processes, but they would be a matter for NRE.*

Mr HENDRIKS - *Parks do brief the Panel. They advise in relation to every proposal that comes through. The Panel's also getting the advice at that concept stage from Parks in relation to the relevant legislative basis.*

CHAIR - *Minister, are you confident that this is being handled appropriately?*

Mr ELLIS - *Yep.*²¹

The Committee recognises that Crown Law is ordinarily the appropriate source of legal advice for lease, licence and approval matters, and the Parks and Wildlife Service provides legislative advice to the Assessment Panel on each proposal.

The Committee also notes the departmental position that Solicitor-General advice will be sought where a new or novel issue involving statutory interpretation arises.

²¹ See Public Hearing (5 February 2026) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan, p.7-8

The Committee further notes no Solicitor-General advice has been sought for the eight proposals considered since the Auditor-General's report because no new or novel legal issues were identified at concept stage.

The Committee finds this approach is reasonable provided:

- there is a documented legal-risk screening process
- the basis for deciding that Solicitor-General advice is not required is recorded, and
- matters are reconsidered when a proposal changes or legal complexity emerges.

The Committee considers Recommendation 6 implemented in principle, noting evidence of a documented decision framework was not provided.

Committee Findings

F11. A mechanism to seek advice of the Solicitor-General when required is in place.

Auditor-General Recommendation 7

Exclude the contractor appointed to provide the Probity Advisor role from providing any external advice to the EOI process to remove any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:²²

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The company appointed in the Probity Advisor role has been precluded from providing external advice to the Tourism EOI Panel on matters pertaining to the individual proposals.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis and Ms Sugden provided the following:

CHAIR - ... *We will go to Recommendation 7: to exclude the contractor appointed to provide the probity adviser role on providing any external advice. Minister, you've given us a very brief response to this saying this is a complete recommendation as well, but can you further elaborate on that at all?*

Mr ELLIS - ... *Probity officers are appointed in order to ensure that the probity guidelines are observed. A suitably qualified probity adviser is present at all meetings of the assessment panel as well as being available to provide advice to the OCG and PWS staff throughout the assessment process. The probity adviser also provides a report at the completion of assessment of each proposal, with an opinion on adherence to the process. The Attorney-General recommended that the contractor appointed to provide the probity adviser role be precluded from providing any external advice to the EOI process to remove any perceived or actual conflicts of interest. The company appointed in the probity adviser role, KPMG, has been precluded from providing external advice to the Tourism EOI panel on matters pertaining to the individual proposals.*

CHAIR - *So they may still provide advice on other matters, but not on that particular proposal? Is that what you're saying? Is it focused on proposals or more broadly, to be clear?*

Ms SUGDEN - *Either of us can answer it. KPMG is limited to providing the probity advice.*

CHAIR – *Just on the individual proposals?*

Ms SUGDEN - *They attend every meeting.*²³

The Committee finds that the company appointed as probity adviser has been precluded from providing external advice on individual Tourism EOI proposals and is limited to its probity

²² See [Attachment A](#), p.4

²³ See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.12

function: this structural separation addresses the Auditor-General's concern about actual or perceived self-review and self-interest threats where one contractor performed both probity and substantive advisory roles. The original audit found that safeguards had not been addressed with sufficient rigour.

The Committee considers Recommendation 7 implemented.

Committee Findings

F12. The Probity Advisor role has been appropriately revised to be precluded from providing external advice on individual Tourism EOI proposals.

Auditor-General Recommendation 8

Include a question on the EOI application form as to whether the proposal has been previously put forward and reasons for it not progressing at that time. Where a proposal has previously been considered and rejected by PWS, prior to being put forward in the EOI process, consideration should be given to not progressing the proposal past the initial assessment if circumstances have not changed.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:²⁴

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

The EOI application form has been updated as part of the OCG's comprehensive review of the process documents.

The updated documentation now includes a specific question asking proponents to declare the status of their proposal—an addition that addresses a gap in the existing systems, which previously dealt with the matter indirectly but did not explicitly request this information.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis, Ms Sugden and Mr Andrew Crane (Tourism EOI Project Director, Office of the Coordinator General) provided the following:

Mr ELLIS - *Consistent with Recommendation 8 of the Auditor-General's report, if a proposal has been previously assessed and rejected by PWS, the panel will consider whether circumstances have materially changed before allowing it to progress beyond the initial assessment stage. Where no substantive changes are evident, the Panel may determine that the proposal should not proceed further in the EOI process.*

CHAIR - *How is that reported? What's the process there?*

...

Ms SUGDEN - *There's a section on the form that makes it very clear.*²⁵

The Committee finds that the EOI application form now expressly requires proponents to disclose the previous status or consideration of a proposal.

The Committee notes that the Panel will consider whether circumstances have materially changed where a proposal was previously assessed and rejected by the Parks and Wildlife Service and may determine that the proposal should not progress where no substantive change is evident.

These changes directly address the Auditor-General's finding that the Panel had not always been informed of relevant previous applications and rejection decisions.

The Committee considers Recommendation 8 implemented.

²⁴ See [Attachment A](#), p.4-5

²⁵ See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.12-13

Committee Findings

F13. The EOI application has been amended to require proponents to disclose the previous status or consideration of a proposal.

Auditor-General Recommendation 9

PWS better document Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) post-approval reviews and ongoing monitoring of leases and/or licences.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee the recommendation had been completed:²⁶

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation:

PWS continues with activities already underway to review and monitor compliance actions with respect to each EOI/lease/license condition to ensure all activities meet the requirements of legislation, plans and policies as spelled out in the RAA.

The OCG provides input, if required.

At the public hearing, Minister Duigan, Ms Poirer and Ms Muller provided the following:

CHAIR - ... *You say it's complete. Can you just explain how you've achieved that? Sometimes things do need to be revisited, if some other problem is identified. This particular recommendation may have been adopted. ...*

Mr DUIGAN - ... *As I was saying, while the Auditor-General's report is focusing on the EOI process, from the viewpoint of Parks, once a project passes through the EOI process and is assessed, through LUPAA via EPBC and then subsequently in RAA, it then becomes just another one of the operations in the Parks landscape. There is a range of monitoring that happens to all of our projects that are happening on reserved land. ...*

Ms POIRIER - ... *As you talked about, I suppose from the get-go, where the conditions from a Reserve Activity Assessment are incorporated into the relevant authorising instruments: so, where we might have a lease or licence or grant authority. The process there to include those conditions and have them be very visible and very clear, and that then, as the Minister said, can be viewed through that lease and licence portal. Those agreements can be accessed there and those conditions are visible.*

In terms of then into that operational environment, Parks will undertake post-approval assessment of documentation, so where it moves into that, post the lease or licence being in place, the management of those environmental management plans, operational plans. We do that with the component to ensure they align with the assessment.

If there's a construction component to the contractor, environmental management and monitoring, making sure those conditions are being met. Then in that operational phase, as the Minister said, it becomes a part of our business as usual how we operate, how we then manage that process of ensuring that those conditions are being met.

Since the Auditor-General's report, a comprehensive document management system's being rolled out in the department, and Parks is a part of that. That's a contemporary system where we document all our documentation, licences, leases, but also guidance and

²⁶ See [Attachment A](#), p.5

documentation. How we monitor conditions - there might be an auditing, we're trying to improve the guidelines for our teams on the ground. One example is development of a template for auditing during operations, so that will assist our staff out in the field when they're liaising with proponents or leaseholders in the field. In those operational ways, what the conditions are, also the ways to audit those particular conditions.

...

CHAIR - *That's much more effective, I'm sure. I'm just interested in how often there is an actual review that the individual business or organisation is meeting the obligations of their lease or licence, and how is that reported if they're not?*

Ms MULLER - *I guess there are 6,000 leases and licences that Parks manages. We have a system called Crest that helps to facilitate the management of that. Although that system is at end of life and we're currently going through the development of a business case around the replacement of that to have a more contemporary and fit-for-purpose systematic approach to managing that volume of leases and licences. Certainly, the team looks at milestones, rent reviews, et cetera, that are triggered by those leases and licences, and that occurs as part of our BAU (business as usual).*

CHAIR - *If a member of the community, say, raised a concern about the compliance with a lease or licence requirement or something, how is that dealt with?*

...

Ms MULLER - *If concerns are raised in terms of compliance with lease and licence conditions, that would be considered through property services or through a field centre, depending on the nature of the concern and the compliance matter that's been raised.*

CHAIR - *How is that reported - if there is found to be a breach in the lease or licence conditions?*

Ms MULLER - *Reported in what sense?*

CHAIR - *Well, I assume you'd let the Minister know? If someone's breaching their lease or licence conditions, there must be some sort of process to respond to that.*

Ms MULLER - *Correct, yes.*

CHAIR - *What is that process? I'd just like you to outline that process*

Ms MULLER - *It would involve seeking appropriate legal advice, understanding the requirements of the lease, understanding the avenues within the lease or licence for us to take appropriate steps in relation to issuing breach notices, monitoring, doing an audit, giving the alleged breach information to the person, and the opportunity for them to respond. That's something that we would undertake in a fairly routine manner and we would inform the Minister as we went through those types of processes.*

Mr DUGAN - *Certainly there are a number of those issues that come to me, Chair, but as Sophie said, there are some 6,000 leases and licences that Parks manage. Not all of*

*those breaches would necessarily make it to me. Certainly the odd one does. I can't think of a time where an EOI proponent or operation has done so, though...*²⁷

The Committee acknowledges improvements including:

- incorporation of Reserve Activity Assessment conditions into authorising instruments
- publication of leases and licences through an online portal
- implementation of a contemporary document-management system
- development of operational audit templates, and
- established processes for investigating and responding to alleged breaches.

The Committee notes, however, that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania manages approximately 6,000 leases and licences using a system described as being at end of life, with a business case being developed for its replacement.

The Committee also notes the Auditor-General's concern was not simply whether monitoring activities occurred, but whether they were sufficiently documented to demonstrate that reviews had taken place, were effective and could support enforcement action.

The Committee considers Recommendation 9 substantially implemented: however, the Department should consider investing in a documented, risk-based monitoring framework for leases and licences in conjunction with replacing the current Crest system.

Committee Findings

- F14. There have been substantial improvements to post-approval monitoring of leases and licences.
- F15. A replacement for the current Crest system which is nearing its end-of-life is warranted considering over 6,000 leases and licences are managed by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

²⁷ See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.19-20

Committee Recommendations

- R4. The Committee recommends that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania implement a documented, risk-based monitoring framework for leases and licences on reserved land that:
- a. assigns a risk rating and monitoring frequency to each authorisation
 - b. records all applicable Reserve Activity Assessment, lease and licence conditions
 - c. records inspections, evidence reviewed, non-compliance, remedial action and closure
 - d. provides automated reminders for reviews and contractual milestones
 - e. sets escalation and ministerial-reporting thresholds, and
 - f. enables periodic management reporting on compliance trends and outstanding actions.
- R5. Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania report to the Committee, within 12 months of this report, on progress toward replacing the Crest system and on the implementation of the new monitoring and audit framework.
-

Auditor-General Recommendation 10

OCG take the opportunity to learn from successful projects by reviewing those currently operating to assess the extent to which proponents have achieved their objectives and how the operating project aligns with the original guiding principles of the EOI.

Minister Ellis reported to the Committee it had accepted the Auditor-General's recommendation in full:²⁸

Minister Ellis provided the following as evidence of implementation or progress (continuous delivery):

In September 2024, proponents with projects that had commenced commercial operations were invited to complete a short online questionnaire. The survey explored their experiences with the Tourism EOI process, subsequent approvals, and current operations. A follow-up was conducted two weeks later. Fifty per cent of proponents responded.

In September 2025, all proponents with ongoing commercial operations were contacted again. The responses received have helped the OCG update project data, including investment levels and employment figures. The process also serves as a mechanism to remind operators of their responsibilities under the EOI framework.

Follow-up with remaining proponents is ongoing to continue learning from their experiences and updating EOI proponent information and assessment processes as required.

Updated information from the proponents is put onto the Tourism EOI website.

At the public hearing, Minister Ellis, Ms Sugden and Mr Andrew Crane provided the following:

Mr ELLIS - *The proponents with projects that have commenced commercial operations were invited to complete two short online questionnaires in 2024 and 2025. The response rate in 2024 was 50 per cent and in 2025 it was 71 per cent. The responses received have helped the OCG update project data, including investment levels and employment figures. The processes also serve as a mechanism to remind operators of their responsibilities under the tourism EOI framework and updated information from the proponents has been included on the tourism EOI website.*

CHAIR - *Can you be more specific about the changes that have been made in response to that feedback?*

Mr ELLIS - *When you say changes, do you mean as in learning from the successful proponents?*

²⁸ See [Attachment A](#), p.5

CHAIR - Yes, you indicated there had been some response to feedback from proponents.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I suppose in general, it's been helpful to gain an understanding. It should also probably be worth noting that in their responses, several proponents indicated that they've actually invested significantly more than originally intended and employ more people as well. The EOI process has provided an opportunity for ongoing investment in our tourism industry, which I think is very positive and worth putting on the record, but I will pass back to the team from OCG as far as further learnings are concerned.

CHAIR - Has there been any process changes as a result of the feedback? Effectively, that is the question.

Mr CRANE - Without wanting to suffer from confirmation bias myself, Chair, the feedback has been uniformly positive in terms of the process. What we have learnt, as the Minister has alluded to, is that it is worth trying to understand what the investment patterns are and what businesses have been successful to allow significantly increased investment. Blue Derby is a very good example of a business that has not only expanded its own local footprint but is expanding much more significantly than that. It is ambitious in terms of offering a broader range of opportunities but is also deeply embedded in the community and has been phenomenally successful in terms of the revitalisation of Derby itself.

CHAIR - Would you take that into account?

Mr CRANE - We certainly do. We're always aware that in speaking with the proponents, some of the information they have they may or may not choose to provide, given the commercial-in-confidence nature of some of that, particularly if they have expansion plans. Also, others have been very clear and happy to share their success. As an example, in one that's been alluded to, one of the proposals was originally to employ an additional person and invest \$1 million. The feedback we've received from that proponent is they now employ six people and they've invested \$14 million in their business. That's been very, very successful from what was ultimately a fairly modest proposal to start with.

We've also noted the changes within the industry. There have been - and I alluded to this previously - proponents who had relatively small businesses, single-owner operators or partner-owner operators, whose lifestyle has changed, so they've chosen to exit the industry to do other things. We've seen that that's with a typical small business. There's nothing unusual in that in terms of success or failure or otherwise. What we've also tracked from this information is the significant impact that COVID has had, ... It's very clear in talking to the proponents who remain in the system that COVID has had a significant impact on their capacity to invest further, whether that's because they operate multiple operations in different jurisdictions, whether they're facing competition from national or international markets, costs have increased in building materials - all of those things materially impact on their ability to progress their proposals. The COVID disruption continues: it hasn't changed. We've learnt a lot from discussing with those proponents exactly what the kind of market forces are that they face. That helps us

understand the challenges, but it also helps us engage with the right kind of investors that may be able to support them.

CHAIR - *Any new proponent, you would expect, would be fully aware of the escalation in construction costs from COVID and every other reason?*

Mr CRANE - *You would hope that that was the case, Chair. ...*²⁹

The Committee finds that the Office of the Coordinator-General surveyed operating proponents in 2024 and 2025, with the response rate increasing from 50 per cent to 71 per cent. The feedback has been used to update investment and employment data and improve understanding of market conditions affecting proponents.

The Committee acknowledges the value of maintaining contact with operating proponents and documenting outcomes that may differ significantly from original estimates.

The Committee finds, however, that the follow-up activity described was principally a proponent questionnaire and data-update exercise. The evidence did not demonstrate a structured evaluation of:

- whether proponents achieved their original objectives
- whether projects continue to align with each of the seven guiding principles
- actual environmental, cultural, social and regional outcomes
- whether original risks and predicted benefits were realised, or
- specific changes made to assessment guidance or decision-making as a result of lessons learned.

The Committee considers Recommendation 10 partially implemented and subject to continuous delivery.

Committee Findings

F16. Recommendation 10 has been partially implemented through surveys and ongoing contact with proponents, but there is no demonstrated systematic evaluation of operating projects against their original objectives and the seven guiding principles.

²⁹ See [Public Hearing \(5 February 2026\) - Min Ellis and Min Duigan](#), p.13-14

Committee Recommendations

- R6. The Office of the Coordinator-General, jointly with the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, establish a structured post-implementation evaluation program for operating Tourism EOI projects. Evaluations should:
- a. compare actual outcomes with the original proposal, stated objectives and seven guiding principles
 - b. consider economic, employment, environmental, cultural, social and regional outcomes
 - c. include compliance and monitoring information held by the Parks and Wildlife Service
 - d. seek views from affected stakeholders where appropriate, rather than relying solely on proponents
 - e. identify lessons and required changes to guidance, assessment or monitoring arrangements, and
 - f. publish aggregated findings while protecting legitimate commercial information.
-

Attachments

Attachment A Minister for Business, Industry and Resources response to Committee
(10 October 2025)

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
Minister for Skills and Jobs

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FOLLOW-UP OF AUDITOR-GENERAL REPORT NO.3 OF 2020-21 – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST FOR TOURISM INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Dear Mr Scott

I am responding to the request from the Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts dated 29 May 2025.

As requested, please find a response to the questionnaire covering the Auditor-General's recommendations contained within [Report No. 3 of 2020-21 – Expressions of Interest for Tourism Investment Opportunities](#). This response has incorporated input from the Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to those matters for which they are responsible.

The response has been delayed by the Tasmanian State election and the consequent application of caretaker conventions and has been updated to contain relevant recent information.

The Auditor-General handed down his independent assurance report on the Tourism Expression of Interest (EOI) process on 22 September 2020.

The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the EOI process for the development of sensitive and appropriate tourism experiences and associated infrastructure in our national parks, reserves and Crown Land.

The audit assessed whether the Office of the Coordinator-General (OCG) and Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) handled the EOI process effectively by analysing data, performing audit procedures on selected EOI applications, examining and verifying internal and external reports, reviewing strategic planning processes and documents and discussing the EOI process with relevant staff, members of the assessment panel and proponents.

The audit concluded that:

- the EOI process, as measured against the audit criteria, was in all material aspects implemented and administered effectively and, in a manner, consistent with the Government's policy objectives

- there was no evidence to support allegations of undue secrecy of the EOI process
- the publication of information on recommended proposals had been sufficiently timely and appropriately handled
- the process and guiding principles are fundamentally sound and well supported by reference to authoritative guidance on eco-tourism
- staff were knowledgeable and diligent in relation to relevant issues pertaining to proposal and adequate advice was sought, obtained and considered from qualified experts
- the EOI process has been successful in contributing to the objectives of economic growth that were the purpose of its instigation by the Government.

The audit made ten Recommendations to further improve the effectiveness of the EOI process and the PWS Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) processes. Several of the areas for continuous improvement that were included in the findings had already been recognised and acted upon prior to the audit report.

The OCG, PWS, and the EOI Assessment Panel conducted a detailed review of the audit report and its recommendations, leading to the responses summarised below.

Please note that – in addition to responding to all of the Auditor-General's Report recommendations – the administration of the Tourism EOI process applies a continuous improvement approach and continues to seek ways in which the process can be strengthened.

Recommendation	Action	Status
1 Explore and implement options, for improving the format and structure of stakeholder consultation so that it is more robust and objective. This should include PWS input into stakeholders selected for consultation and appropriately defining and communicating how the EOI process and the CVS system interface, including removing any references to "EOI Round 2".	The OCG has undertaken a comprehensive review of each of the process documents for the EOI and updated the suite of documents, including: • Application form • Guidelines • Probity Guidelines • Conditions • Online material Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRET) through PWS will continue to work closely with the OCG to review the guiding advice and documents to ensure a robust and thorough approach to areas like stakeholder consultation.	Complete
2 Increase the rigour of the public consultation as part of the RAA process to improve the level of transparency or objectivity.	NRET – through PWS – has implemented a new RAA process whereby public consultation on significant projects occurs via the PWS website .	Ongoing

Recommendation	Action	Status
	In this new process, proposals identified at level 3 are available for public comment for a minimum of 28 days. At the end of the comments period, PWS reviews comments and prepares an Environmental Assessment Report which describes how PWS will address issues raised. This report is then made public on the PWS website.	
3 Make stronger guidance available to potential proponents which more clearly outlines the process beyond the EOI stage once ministerial approval has been given. This information should include general information such as likely costs, timeframe and potential hurdles needing to be negotiated before the project can commence.	The OCG has undertaken a comprehensive review of each of the process documents for the EOI and updated the suite of documents, including: • Application form • Guidelines • Probity Guidelines • Conditions • Online material. These updates provide clearer guidance to proponents, confirming that their Expression of Interest (EOI) application will be evaluated by the EOI Assessment Panel solely as a concept. Based on this assessment, a recommendation—either in support or otherwise—will be made to the relevant Minister(s). Input from other stakeholders will be sought as appropriate to inform the process.	Complete
4 Modify the Assessment Panel Evaluation Report to include documentation of the Panel's considerations to clearly indicate how the assessment panel view the proposal's alignment with each of the seven guiding principles.	The OCG has modified the Assessment Panel Evaluation Report to effectively document how the Assessment Panel has viewed each individual proposal against the three Criteria as well as the seven Guiding Principles.	Complete
5 Review the composition of the EOI Assessment Panel, specifically to obtain broader representation of community stakeholders, including those representing conservation and Tasmanian Aboriginal interests.	The OCG undertook a review of the composition of the Assessment Panel. The EOI Assessment Panel has been reshaped to ensure that there are no potential and perceived conflicts, such as replacing the Secretary of NRET due to this position having a regulatory role in decision making later in the	Complete

Recommendation	Action	Status
	RAA process. This position has been replaced by an independent Panel member. Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania (AHT), and where appropriate, the Aboriginal Heritage Council, are provided the opportunity to input on every proposal, early in the assessment process. This builds on the existing process where the Panel can seek additional advice from AHT, MRT, Crown Law, and PWS on any proposal as required and allow further discussion on: • Site impact and location-specific risks and issues relating specific reserve status and the zone within a reserve. • Locality specific access and operational impacts related to visitation such as rubbish, sewage and related amenities. • Visual amenity considerations. • Cultural significance of the project locality, including Aboriginal heritage and other flora and fauna considerations.	
6 Seek advice from the Solicitor-General, as part of the EOI assessment process, to enhance legal understanding, help mitigate potential risks and provide valuable insight for subsequent recommendations made to the Minister.	If a new or novel legal issue arises, advice will be sought from the Solicitor-General's Office. In most cases, Crown Law is the appropriate area within the Department of Justice for obtaining advice regarding a project. As previously noted, this matter is typically addressed by PWS as part of the lease/ licence drafting stage.	Complete
7 Exclude the contractor appointed to provide the Probity Advisor role from providing any external advice to the EOI process to remove any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.	The company appointed in the Probity Advisor role has been precluded from providing external advice to the Tourism EOI Panel on matters pertaining to the individual proposals.	Complete
8 Include a question on the EOI application form as to whether the proposal has been previously put forward and reasons for it not progressing at that time. Where a proposal has previously been considered and rejected by PWS, prior to being put forward in the EOI	The EOI application form has been updated as part of the OCG's comprehensive review of the process documents. The updated documentation now includes a specific question asking proponents to declare the status of their proposal—an addition that addresses a gap in the existing systems, which previously dealt with the matter indirectly but did not explicitly request this information	Complete

Recommendation	Action	Status
process, consideration should be given to not progressing the proposal past the initial assessment if circumstances have not changed.		
9 PWS better document RAA post-approval reviews and ongoing monitoring of leases and/or licences.	PWS continues with activities already underway to review and monitor compliance actions with respect to each EOI/lease/license condition to ensure all activities meet the requirements of legislation, plans and policies as spelled out in the RAA. The OCG provides input, if required.	Complete
10 OCG take the opportunity to learn from successful projects by reviewing those currently operating to assess the extent to which proponents have achieved their objectives and how the operating project aligns with the original guiding principles of the EOI.	In September 2024, proponents with projects that had commenced commercial operations were invited to complete a short online questionnaire. The survey explored their experiences with the Tourism EOI process, subsequent approvals, and current operations. A follow-up was conducted two weeks later. Fifty per cent of proponents responded. In September 2025, all proponents with ongoing commercial operations were contacted again. The responses received have helped the OCG update project data, including investment levels and employment figures. The process also serves as a mechanism to remind operators of their responsibilities under the EOI framework. Follow-up with remaining proponents is ongoing to continue learning from their experiences and updating EOI proponent information and assessment processes as required. Updated information from the proponents is put onto the Tourism EOI website.	Ongoing

Thank you for your interest in the EOI process, and the work that has been done to ensure it remains robust. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate the Office of the Coordinator-General via email ([REDACTED]) or telephone ([REDACTED]).

Yours sincerely



Hon Felix Ellis MP

Minister for Business, Industry and Resources

10/10/2025