



Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts

Media Advisory

Thursday, 19 October 2023

Final Report:

Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: Business Support and COVID-19 Check-in App

The Parliamentary Standing Committee of Public Accounts (Committee) finalised its targeted inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's continuing response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The Committee tabled its third and final report (Report 3 of 3) in Parliament relating to the Government's business support and COVID-19 Check-in TAS App.

Business Support

The Report describes the financial support provided by the Tasmanian Government to businesses negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tasmanian Government provided targeted COVID-19 support to Tasmanian businesses of over \$160 million in grants and support packages since March 2020.

This Report has a particular focus on financial support provided to businesses negatively impacted by restrictions and/or workforce challenges related to the isolation and quarantine directions related to the border re-opening. The Committee also considered support provided to businesses impacted by the three-day lockdown direction on 15 October 2022 prior to the re-opening of the border as this support was not subject to scrutiny in previous Public Accounts Committee inquiries into the Government's COVID-19 response.

Following the Government announcement of 15 December 2021 as the date the border would re-open, the Department of State Growth:

- established a high level COVID-19 Recovery Coordination Group, which met regularly to discuss emerging issues and coordinate a response;
- appointed a Director of COVID-19 Recovery to coordinate appropriate responses; and
- established a grants implementation framework to allow the Department of State Growth to rapidly roll out any business support as required.

The work of the COVID-19 Recovery Coordination Group informed the business financial support programs/rounds that were made available prior to, during and after 15 December 2021.

Committee Chair, Hon Ruth Forrest MLC stated: “The Committee acknowledges the financial support provided to Tasmanian business and the importance of this support.” Ms Forrest further stated: “in light of the relative success of the business financial support and notes the Committee recommends the Government review the design and implementation of the various business support programs to inform the design of any future programs.”

COVID-19 Check-in Tas App

The COVID-19 Check-in TAS app was developed as a tool to assist in contact tracing and intended to support suppression of COVID-19. The app was licensed under agreement with the ACT Government.

Prior to the re-opening of the border, the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app was a key resource in pursuing an elimination/containment strategy for COVID-19.

Following the re-opening of Tasmania’s border, mandatory requirements for use of the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app became futile with the emergence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. Public Health focussed on use in high-risk venues and events, to support ongoing management of COVID-19.

The total expenditure by the Tasmanian Government on the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app to 15 February 2022 was \$113,499.13 (ex. GST). As at 17 March 2022, the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app had been downloaded 1,149,262 times on to Apple and Android devices, with 1,242,896,393 check-ins across a total of 56,942 registered locations/businesses in Tasmania and 408,469 Tasmanians linked their vaccination certificate to the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app.

The Department of Health rebranded the ACT developed app and enabled it to store collected data in Tasmania’s contact tracing database. Importantly, no data collected through the COVID-19 Check-in TAS app was shared with external bodies.

Ms Forrest stated: “The Committee acknowledges the value of digital contact tracing and recommends the Government maintain the capacity for effective digital contact tracing for future pandemics.”

A copy of our Report is available on the Committee’s Inquiry webpage: [Tasmanian Government’s Continuing Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

The Members of the Committee are:

Legislative Council

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair)
Hon Meg Webb MLC
Hon Josh Willie MLC

House of Assembly

Ms Lara Alexander MP
Dr Shane Broad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Dean Young MP

Further information about the Committee is available on the [Committee website](#).

Ends

Further information: Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair) – 0419 879 524