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Review finds WA Health is effectively planning for a surge in COVID-19 testing

The Auditor General's [COVID-19: Status of WA Public Testing Systems](#) has been presented to Parliament today. This was a limited assurance review assessing if WA Health is effectively prepared to provide pathology testing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said so far, Western Australia has had a relatively low number of COVID-19 cases, and our pathology systems have not been overloaded.

'To maintain community confidence and wellbeing, which in turn may help support steady and proportionate responses by government and others, it is important that the public sector is prepared to deal with any surge in COVID-19 cases while still providing the ability to test for other health conditions.

'Our review found nothing to indicate that WA Health is not effectively preparing to deal with an increase in demand for COVID-19 testing.

'WA Health is preparing for a surge of around 20,000 COVID-19 tests per day, and the State's PathWest laboratories have planned and prepared to meet surge needs and test processing times have improved. Public laboratories will process up to 8,750 COVID-19 tests alongside their normal pathology operations, with private providers processing the rest.

'PathWest and private laboratories are also meeting their reporting requirements and PathWest has maintained delivery of its other services,' Ms Spencer said.

The review identified a few unaddressed risks, including that PathWest does not have enough physical space to process tests in the event of a surge, especially at its Fiona Stanley Hospital laboratory.

Ms Spencer said while we observed PathWest's laboratories functioning well, with sufficient equipment to meet the surge plan, we identified some potential risks around swabbing and space to register incoming test samples. WA Health has commenced actions to address these risks.

This is the Auditor General's second limited assurance review on WA Health's preparedness to manage COVID-19, providing more rapid independent scrutiny to assist Parliament and the public understand actions taken in response to the pandemic, and to support public sector transparency and accountability. The first was tabled in Parliament in September and is available at www.audit.wa.gov.au.

Report resources

- [PDF version](#)
- [summary video](#)