



Media contact: Natasha Farrell

Mobile: 0427 953 993

Email: [natasha.farrell@audit.wa.gov.au](mailto:natasha.farrell@audit.wa.gov.au)

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## **Hotel quarantine, a complex program that developed quickly, was generally well administered, but with lessons for future incidents or emergencies**

The Auditor General's report, [\*Requisitioning of COVID-19 Hotels\*](#), tabled in Parliament today.

The report provides information to Parliament and the public on the State Government's hotel selection and reimbursements, hotel damage and compensation claims, and traveller payments as part of the COVID-19 hotel quarantine program.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said it was a complex program that developed quickly and involved multiple stakeholders working in a high pressure, evolving and uncertain environment. The program was generally well administered albeit with some opportunities to improve record keeping to further demonstrate accountable decision making on some key aspects.

The program housed more than 86,000 people over 30 months, with roughly \$475.5 million paid to hotels and security services. Of this, \$92 million has been recouped from travellers and another \$9 million is outstanding.

Ms Spencer said her Office had done a number of reports specifically examining matters relating to the COVID-19 response to provide transparency and assurance on aspects of public administration and performance by entities.

'It is important that we understand what went well and what we could have done better, so that the right lessons are learned for any future extended emergency or public health response.

'Our review of this program found that in many cases the rationale behind key decision-making was not captured and record keeping systems were inadequate.

'The Department of Health (DoH) could not explain why certain hotels were selected and others were not, how the daily rate paid to hotels was determined or how it would provide fair and reasonable compensation to private operators. As existing financial records are not detailed, DoH has limited insight into the cost of individual components of the program, on which to inform learnings.

'As noted in our recent review of the procurement of rapid antigen tests, during emergency responses it is reasonable to expect some condensed decision-making and less comprehensive documentation than normal.

'While this may be more understandable in the earliest and uncertain parts of a crisis, the hotel quarantine program operated for 2.5 years.

'I would like to acknowledge the hard working health and hotel staff who faced uncertainty and disruption while delivering and implementing the program under short time frames and ever-changing health advice,' Ms Spencer said.

The Auditor General also tabled an [\*opinion\*](#) on results of the periodic assessment of Synergy's compliance with segregation obligations for the period ending 31 December 2022. Following a change to the Electricity Corporations (Electricity Generation and Retail Corporation) Regulations 2013 this is the first time the Auditor General has tabled the audit opinion, as it was previously tabled by the Minister.



## **Report resources**

### *Requisitioning of COVID-19 Hotels*

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

### *Electricity Generation and Retail Corporation (Synergy)*

- [PDF version](#)