

Calls to cut ties with KPMG

Rob Inglis

Call to review state dealings in wake of scandal

As major accounting firm KPMG is engulfed by a deepening scandal over its misuse of confidential data, the Tasmanian government is being urged to review its existing contracts with the company.

A Sunday Tasmanian analysis of aggregated government procurement records has found the state currently has five active contracts with KPMG at a combined value of about \$1.3m.

These include a three-year, \$542,171 agreement with the state's Superannuation Commission for "taxation advisory services", as well as a similar Department of Justice contract for "actuarial services" related

to asbestos and workers' compensation schemes.

Public tender documents also show the Department of Treasury and Finance engaged KPMG to conduct a review of performance measures for government business enterprises on June 5.

The contract, which runs until August 28 this year and won't involve the handling of sensitive commercial information, is valued at \$115,000 (including GST) and was awarded via a competitive process on the same day the Australian Securities and Investments Commission confirmed it was investigating "al-

legations about the conduct" of several KPMG auditors.

A week earlier, the firm's chief executive, Andrew Yates, resigned over the mishandling of whistleblower claims that have thrown KPMG into turmoil and since led to the resignations of chairman Martin Sheppard and other senior personnel.

Greens Treasury spokesman Vica Bayley said the Tasmanian government had a "clear responsibility" to review all its existing contracts with KPMG, prohibit any new agreements from being signed, and "seek assurances" that staff currently under investigation were not

involved with active projects.

"Given the federal government paused any procurement of new work from KPMG in mid-June because of this unfolding professional scandal, there would be serious questions for the Rockliff government to answer if they have recently entered into new contracts for KPMG work," he said.

Considered one of the world's big four accounting firms, KPMG is accused of improperly handling confidential data belonging to one of its clients, Lendlease, in a bid to win new business, as well as mis-

treating the whistleblower airing the claims.

A spokeswoman for the state government said Treasury had written to KPMG's Tasmanian office "seeking more detail and written assurances" that the "behaviours of concern" were not occurring here and that staff involved in alleged misconduct were not working on local projects.

The spokeswoman did not say when exactly Treasury wrote to the firm and noted that a response was "pending".

"(The response) will inform advice to the Treasurer on whether further action by the government should be consid-

ered," she said. "It has been made clear to KPMG that these are serious issues and that full and timely disclosure is expected."

The damaging allegations about the firm were first aired publicly under parliamentary privilege by Labor senator Deborah O'Neill in March.

KPMG has since admitted to a federal parliamentary committee that its staff leaked Optus confidential information to auditors bidding for a Telstra contract.

A spokesman for KPMG said the firm had improved its governance in the wake of the scandal, while also engaging "proactively" with Tasmania about the ongoing investigation into whistleblower allegations.

No kidding, it's the goat escape

Ruby Stewart

When it comes to yoga, these goats aren't kidding around.

South Australia's Barossa Palms Motel owner and goat enthusiast Elizabeth Hoyt adopted her adorable herd of miniature and pygmy goats last November.

The motel owner was inspired by her time living in the US and the goat yoga craze to create her own

"goat wellness program".

"Goat yoga just blew up (in the US) because goats are so silly and playful," Ms Hoyt, 44, said. "I just thought it would be so fun to combine my love of yoga and my love of animals together at the motel."

The initiative, which will launch on Wednesday, will allow motel guests to get up close and personal with Ms Hoyt's goats and do yoga with them, practise mindfulness or just enjoy their company.

"We're all a bit burnt out and stressed ... and playtime with goats is just the reminder that we all just need to take time and pause," she said. "We want people to know that is it playful and lighthearted." The trained yoga teacher bought the Nuriootpa motel in 2024 and has spent the past few years renovating the venue.

Barossa Palms Motel owner Elizabeth Hoyt with Sage; and (inset) with son Grayson and Basil, Storm and Sage. Pictures: Brenton Edwards

Vapes not cool for heart

A key vaping ingredient found in dozens of flavours could disrupt the heart's rhythm and even raise cardiac arrest risk, claim scientists.

Research by the University of Louisville in Kentucky suggests there are dangers in the chemicals that produce a cooling effect in the vape.

These are commonly used to make the vapour less harsh to inhale but little is known about their health effects.

They are typically found in menthol or "ice" flavoured cigarettes.

Tests on mice and human heart cells in a lab found they reacted badly to the chemicals. They showed that the ingredients changed heart rate variability, which is the gap between heartbeats.

That increased the likelihood of an irregular heartbeat, with pumps following too soon or too late after one another.



Kylie Minogue and Madonna.

Kylie's special serve for Madge

Jack Hardwick

Pop superstars Madonna and Kylie Minogue get into the groove as they film a comedy bar sketch for Madge's special with Graham Norton.

Madonna, 67, invited Kylie, 58, to take part in the top-secret filming last month, having admired her career for more than a decade.

A source said: "Madonna and Kylie have long been fans

of each other, so when Kylie got the call to make a cameo in the BBC special, it was a no-brainer. Rather than a performance, Kylie actually appears in the show in a light-hearted skit.

"She plays a barmaid, though, awkwardly, Madonna doesn't like the drink Kylie gives her. It's all very lighthearted."

The London Sun reports the pair have discussed hitting the

studio together. The TV special, Madonna & Graham, was filmed in Camden at Koko, where Madonna performed for the first time in the UK for just 200 people in 1983 when it was called the Camden Palace.

Kylie made a surprise guest appearance at Madonna's The Celebration Tour in LA in 2024. They performed Gloria Gaynor's 1978 hit I Will Survive in a nod to Kylie's 2005 breast cancer battle.