

Public Sector Performance Report 1998

Report 12 – December 1998

This Performance Report addresses issues related to public sector performance in 1998. It includes:

- five follow-up reports which review and assess the impact of previous performance examinations;
- three small performance examinations of effectiveness and efficiency issues in relation to monitoring and reporting on the environment, public sector recruitment practices and the management of a single fishery; and
- an overview of performance examinations reported to Parliament since 1992.

Follow-Up Performance Examinations

The five follow-ups conducted during 1998 found that most agencies have responded to the overall recommendations of the initial performance examinations conducted in 1996 with initiatives designed to improve performance.

Improving Road Safety – Speed and Red Light Cameras and the Road Trauma Trust Fund (RTTF)

Major structural and operational improvements have been made and these have translated into some significant benefits for road safety in Western Australia. The Enhanced Traffic Enforcement Project has been developed and implemented as a whole of government approach to managing camera operations. The allocation of funds from the RTTF is based on broadly defined priority areas as well as specific target groups and problems, and includes special projects considered important for improving road safety.

Guarding the Gate – Physical Access Security Management

All sites surveyed, demonstrated an increased awareness of security risks leading to enhanced security management. For example, most sites are now using data about security incidents to improve security measures and better identify risk areas. There is scope at some sites to better use information to identify trends and assess future risks.

For the Public Record – Managing the Public Sector's Records

The agencies surveyed have all made improvements over the past two years in the overall management of public records. The management of electronic public records provides ongoing challenges and opportunities for agencies. There is a continuing need for a new legislative and management framework covering public records. The introduction in Parliament of the State Records Bill 1998 in October 1998 provides Parliament with an opportunity to consider this issue.

Learning the Lessons – Financial Management in Government Schools

The Education Department of Western Australia is addressing the capacity and support needs of schools. Most schools are now doing a good job of resolving issues identified by school audits. However, there is a continuing need for schools to improve their practices in the areas of purchasing, asset management, asset replacement, and the reporting of school performance indicators. The collection of fees and charges by schools continues to be an issue, although proposed legislation is intended to provide greater clarity and direction to schools on this matter.

Order in the Court — Management of the Magistrates' Court

Changes have been made which reduce trial waiting-time and improve Court utilisation. Nevertheless, average trial waiting-time continues to be long and to vary considerably between Courts across the State.



Office of the Auditor General Western Australia

Performance Examinations

Monitoring and Reporting the Environment

Monitoring the environment provides necessary information for assessment and improvement of policies and strategies by environmental agencies. It also provides for accountability to the Parliament and the community, as well as to national and international agencies under various agreements and treaties.

A preliminary examination found that efficient and effective monitoring and reporting is sometimes made difficult by unclear responsibilities and competing needs for information from numerous community groups and state, national, and international agencies.

Recruitment Practices in the Western Australian Public Sector

Recruitment of suitable people is critical to an agency's performance. An examination of public sector recruitment practices identified that current measures of recruitment performance primarily focus on cost and compliance with policies and processes. Greater focus is required on measuring and improving the effectiveness of recruitment.

The examination also found that the monitoring of the recruitment Standard results in agencies applying bureaucratic processes for the purpose of meeting compliance tests. The impact of these processes on the achievement of merit, equity and probity in recruitment needs to be more clearly defined.

The Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery

An examination of management of the small Northern Demersal Scalefish Fishery found that Western Australia's Fisheries Department and major permit holders consider the interim management of the fishery to be sustainable, flexible and economically viable. The development of the fishery has been difficult, and there are a number of opportunities for improved management and administration practices.

Overview of Performance Examinations since 1992

A tabulation of the 97 performance examination items tabled in Parliament since 1992 indicates that a broad coverage across the public sector has been achieved. This is a result of conscious decisions to provide both a breadth and depth of coverage. Topics are selected to be value adding and consideration is given to the risks and benefits to the community, the significance of the services involved and provision of a broad coverage of the public sector.