



AUDITOR GENERAL
for
Western Australia

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SECOND PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE REPORT 2002

Report No. 8 – December 2002

This Second Public Sector Performance Report for 2002 brings to the notice of Parliament matters of accountability and performance that, in the opinion of the Auditor General, are significant and warrant attention.

CONTROL, COMPLIANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY AUDITS

Management of Confidential Personal Information in Government Electronic Databases

Western Australian Government agencies gather and maintain large amounts of personal and sensitive information about private individuals. There is a clear public assumption that personal information provided to public sector agencies is given in confidence, is used only for purposes for which it was provided and is properly secured to prevent unauthorised disclosure.

The audit assessed the management of personal information at five agencies, the Communicable Disease Control Branch of the Department of Health, the Department for Community Development, the public rental area of the Department of Housing and Works, the Government Employees Superannuation Board and the South East Metropolitan College of TAFE. The audit found that:

- agencies are still developing an appreciation of privacy related risks in respect to information system security. Improvements needed include, undertaking risk assessments in relation to personal information held, implementing appropriate logging and monitoring of access made to personal data, and ensuring that personal information is wiped from obsolete equipment;
- all five agencies were collecting personal information lawfully and for purposes related to their function;
- four of the five audited agencies were disclosing personal information to contractors and outsource companies without having fully managed the associated privacy risks; and
- none of the agencies had procedures for making well known to individuals their capacity to access and correct records about themselves.

Management of Intellectual Property by the Department of Agriculture: A Case Study of a New Apple Variety

Intellectual property (IP) is derived from the knowledge and experience (intellectual capital) that is invested in the development of a process or product. Benefits to the State can be lost if agencies fail to take appropriate steps to protect, preserve and commercialise their IP.

The Department of Agriculture (DAWA) is one of the State's main IP rich agencies. A 1999 audit found that DAWA could have better managed the IP and commercialisation of the Cripps Pink apple variety. This follow-up audit looked at the IP management and commercialisation of a new apple variety, ST23/74.

The audit found that since 1999, DAWA has developed a more rigorous and formalised approach to address recognised shortcomings in its IP management process for breeding, evaluating and commercialising apple varieties.

PERFORMANCE EXAMINATION

Family Centres: A Case Study In Evaluating Asset Effectiveness

The public sector has over \$6 billion invested in building assets which have been acquired over a long period of time. However, the need for assets changes over time, as population demographics and service delivery strategies change. Consequently, buildings acquired in the past may not necessarily be effective in meeting the needs of the present.

The examination raises a number of issues about managing building assets effectively, and illustrates why agencies should regularly evaluate the contribution made by existing assets to achieving agency outcomes.

While this case study focuses on family centres, which are unique to the Department for Community Development (DCD), the issues raised may also be relevant to other agencies. In particular the study highlights the need for all agencies to regularly review the purpose and role of their building assets and to ensure management information on asset suitability, utilisation, and operating costs is systematically collected and analysed.

In relation to family centres, the examination recommended that DCD:

- determine the particular role that family centres are intended to perform in order to satisfy community needs in line with agency outcomes;
- ensure the types of groups using family centres are consistent with the purpose that DCD has identified for the centres;
- determine the appropriate level of utilisation of centres and regularly monitor whether this is being achieved;
- identify and address the factors limiting utilisation of selected centres; and
- develop and implement appropriate systems so that family centre expenditure, as well as DCD's own expenditure on centres, is recorded and used in the management of centres.