



# Executive Summary

Report No 4, June 2004

This Second Public Sector Performance Report for 2004 brings to notice issues associated with legislative compliance, financial management and control and the results of a Follow-up Examination that assesses agency responses to previously reported matters.

### LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE

#### Management of Food Safety in Western Australia by the Department of Health

The Department of Health (DoH) has overall responsibility for administering and coordinating food safety in the State. This includes responsibility for monitoring the activities of local governments which ensure regulatory compliance through on-ground monitoring and surveillance programs within their districts. Whilst Western Australia (WA) has a good safety record compared to other States, we found that the Department should provide greater support and coordination of food safety activities of local governments.

The examination of the operations of DoH found:

- ❑ Only about eight per cent of local governments are consistently submitting required food safety reports to DoH. The sampled local governments commonly questioned the value of food safety indicators they are required to report on. Without consistent and meaningful reporting from local governments, DoH is unable to provide assurance that food safety standards are being applied consistently across the State.
- ❑ There is no coordinated approach or guidance given to local government on when, what or how often food samples should be tested for contamination. Despite all local governments participating in and paying for an analytical service scheme, about 44 per cent fail to conduct any food sampling and analysis.
- ❑ Less than half of the 142 local governments have had their food surveillance programs assessed by DoH since 1995. DoH has not used risk based criteria when

selecting local government food surveillance programs for assessment (such as the lack of food sampling and analysis).

- ❑ DoH's assessment of local government food surveillance programs is undermined by lengthy delays in reporting the findings to the local governments and by a failure to monitor and/or enforce implementation of the recommendations.

#### Records Management in Government – A Preliminary Study

The *State Records Act 2000* aims to strengthen public sector accountability through effective recordkeeping. Government agencies were required to submit a Recordkeeping Plan (RKP) for the approval of the State Records Commission by March 7, 2004 and thereafter to manage their records in accordance with the plan. The preliminary study has looked at the progress that four agencies are making towards the implementation of their RKP. These four agencies were amongst the first to take up the challenge to adopt better recordkeeping practices.

The key findings were:

All four agencies are making progress towards the implementation of good recordkeeping practices though some key steps still need to be taken:

- ❑ Training of staff about records management had been provided at three of the four agencies. Nevertheless, employees were not consistently applying the required procedures particularly in regard to emails.
- ❑ Only limited formal monitoring of compliance was undertaken and little specific feedback was given to management and employees.
- ❑ Varying levels of improvement to user access, passwords and monitoring of the network and document management system were required at three of the four agencies in order to maintain the integrity, confidentiality and availability of the system.



## FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

### The Administration of Grants

State Government agencies provide grants to individuals and organisations for purposes consistent with their role and objectives. Whilst the actual yearly amount is unknown, it is estimated that it would be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. In providing these grants, agencies need to ensure that grant moneys are provided for the correct purpose, funds are provided equitably and accountability requirements are met.

The key finding was:

- ❑ All four agencies were adequately managing their grant schemes. Availability of grant funding was properly publicised, applications were impartially assessed against clear eligibility guidelines and grant moneys were being suitably acquitted.

## FOLLOW-UP PERFORMANCE EXAMINATION

### A Tough Assignment – Teacher Placement in Government Schools

This report is a follow-up to the October 2000 performance examination *A Tough Assignment: Teacher Placements in Government Schools*. This follow-up focused on four main areas; the response to *A Tough Assignment*, developments in staffing since 2000, key staffing issues and trends and variations in school staffing.

The key findings were:

- ❑ It is not possible to conclude whether the overall staffing of schools has improved or deteriorated. Detailed objectives and measures that were recommended in the 2000 *A Tough Assignment* report have not yet been developed by the Department of Education and Training.
- ❑ The Department has made some useful changes to staffing practices since 2000. However, for greater effectiveness these need to be linked to system wide goals and performance objectives.
- ❑ The future staffing of schools will depend heavily on how the Department addresses a number of key issues, such as centralised or school based selection, tenure and incentives to work at less favoured schools.
- ❑ There are large variations between schools in age profile, gender balance, turnover rate and other factors that are likely to affect school performance.