



## **Office of the Auditor General Western Australia**

# **Use of CCTV Equipment and Information**

Report 9 – October 2011

### **Background**

CCTV can enhance public perceptions of safety but in reality it is more likely to be of benefit if it is part of a broader crime reduction strategy; is actively monitored; and if police can respond quickly to a developing incident. At the same time, CCTV can be expensive to implement, manage and maintain. Poorly designed systems or systems installed for the wrong purposes may be ineffective and expensive to correct.

Recorded CCTV images can help to identify or eliminate suspects and provide evidence for a criminal prosecution. Use of images and information collected from CCTV needs to be tightly controlled to protect privacy as citizens expect to be able to engage in lawful activities without being unduly monitored.

Some Western Australian government agencies and local governments have installed CCTV in public areas to create safer environments for members of the public and staff, and as an anti-terrorism measure.

Western Australian Police have sought to improve their information about, and access to, CCTV footage from systems owned by government and the private sector. Their Blue Iris Register, captures information about individual CCTV installations so police can readily access footage after an incident. Registration is voluntary except for cameras owned by state government agencies.

The focus of this audit was to assess whether decisions to install or access CCTV or to fund local government installations were adequately based and whether the facilities are properly managed and anticipated benefits realised. Five entities in total including three local governments were included in the audit.

## Conclusion

Installations and decisions to fund were based on the integration of CCTV into broader security strategies and most facilities we examined are well managed. The public can be reasonably assured that CCTV imagery is secured to protect the privacy of people going about normal lawful business.

Some entities could demonstrate clear benefits from use of CCTV. However there is a potential to realise greater benefits through better sharing and more strategic use of CCTV information by Police and local governments.

The significant potential of the Blue Iris system is not being realised. Better management, administration and commitment are needed from Police if it is to deliver coordinated and effective use of CCTV information.

## Key Findings

- Although initial installations at the entities we examined were piecemeal and experimental, more recent expansions to their CCTV systems have been integrated into broader security strategies. This increases the likelihood that their CCTV will assist crime prevention.
- All the entities had good controls in place to protect the privacy of individuals. We found no evidence of inappropriate use of CCTV.
- Most facilities we examined were well managed.
- Two entities had Memorandum of Understanding (MoU's) with Police and were using information gathered from CCTV surveillance to guide policing strategies. As a result they could demonstrate positive impacts from Police responses to CCTV intelligence.
- Two entities did not have MoU's with Police and their CCTV intelligence was not being used to guide or assess the impact of policing strategies.
- Police use of CCTV images could be improved by a functional, coordinated and integrated approach. The Blue Iris project was an attempt to fill this gap but its present form has proved unusable which means that there is still a risk that relevant images may not be available for investigations and court.