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AUDITOR GENERAL FINDS LITTLE IMPROVEMENT IN AGENCY MANAGEMENT OF GIFTS

In his latest report released today, Auditor General Colin Murphy has found no significant improvement in agency management of gifts and benefits since his previous such report in 2012.

Mr Murphy said his latest report identified improvement opportunities at all eight agencies audited.

‘Specifically, agencies needed to provide more detailed guidance to employees through gift policies, improved practices for declaring gifts and in approval and recording of gifts, and better monitoring of trends and compliance with policies,’ he said.

‘Disappointingly, these issues largely reflect the findings of my similar audit in 2012.

‘Gift registers are an important transparency tool that help agencies manage potential conflicts of interest.

‘It is important that agencies have good processes in place to ensure that any decision to accept the gift is justifiable, authorised and transparent.’

Across the eight agencies, a total of 1 027 gifts were recorded as offered and 628 as accepted during the period of the audit. These included invitations to work related events, tickets to sporting events, movie and air tickets and general consumables such as food and beverages.

‘In some circumstances, accepting gifts can be appropriate, such as when they allow for useful networking or information sharing,’ Mr Murphy said.

‘However, some gifts may cause a real or perceived conflict of interest if the recipient has authority to influence agency decisions involving the person or company giving the gift.

‘This area poses an important and ongoing risk and I encourage all agencies to take note of the findings and recommendations of this report and act accordingly.’

The Auditor General’s report, *Agency Gift Registers* (Report 20 – October 2015), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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