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OPERATING THEATRES COULD BE USED MORE EFFICIENTLY: AUDITOR GENERAL

In his latest report released today, Auditor General Colin Murphy found across a sample of five hospitals in 2014, that at least 3 000 hours of operating theatre time was feasibly available to treat many more patients.

Mr Murphy said this lost time was equivalent to staffing two theatres for almost a year without treating any patients.

'The efficiency of our public hospital operating theatres is just one of many important and complex issues that the Health system must manage,' Mr Murphy said.

Western Australia has 112 operating theatres within 32 public hospitals, plus additional theatres at two privately operated public hospitals. Over 81,000 elective surgery cases as well as thousands of emergency surgery cases were performed in public hospitals in 2014-15.

'Operating theatre time is primarily lost because many surgical sessions start late or finish well before their scheduled end and there are a large number of cancellations on the day of surgery,' Mr Murphy said.

'Efforts by the hospitals to improve operating theatre efficiency tended to be ad hoc with limited analysis of existing data to guide decisions.

'Better scheduling of surgery would allow more available time to be used, and reduce the need for and cost of staff working overtime.

'Improved direction and guidance from the Department of Health to hospitals would also bring a more determined approach to improving operating theatre efficiency.

'Efficient theatres save money and help hospitals to minimise the time patients have to wait for surgery.

'The Department of Health recognises that it can improve operating theatre efficiency and is taking steps to do so, welcoming the recommendations and findings of this report.'

The Auditor General's report, *Operating Theatre Efficiency* (Report 25 – November 2015), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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