



Media Contact: Rachel Edwards

Mobile: 0439 261 366

Email: rachel.edwards@audit.wa.gov.au

29 June 2017

Auditor General raises ongoing concerns with agency information systems

In his annual **Information Systems Audit Report**, the Auditor General has expressed his disappointment that agencies were still not taking simple steps to protect their IT systems.

The 2-part report tabled in Parliament today looked at general computer controls across 46 government agencies and the controls around 5 key business applications.

Mr Murphy said the report was important because it revealed common information system weaknesses that could seriously affect the operations of government and potentially compromise sensitive information held by agencies.

'I continue to report the same common weaknesses year after year and yet many agencies are still not taking action,' he said.

'This is particularly frustrating given that many of the issues I've raised can be easily addressed - including poor password management and ensuring processes to recover data and operations in the event of an incident are kept updated.'

Mr Murphy said agencies' executive management needed to engage with information security, instead of regarding it as a matter for their IT departments.

'As recent high profile malware threats have shown us, no agency or system is immune from these evolving and ongoing threats.'

'The risk to agency operations and information is real and needs to be taken seriously.'

Mr Murphy stressed that the report was not all bad news.

'In the first part of this report, I identified some good practice and improvements across 5 key business applications. And in the second part of this report I was pleased to identify 3 agencies that have consistently demonstrated good management controls.'

'This report contains recommendations that address common weaknesses across agency IT systems and as such, I encourage all agencies, not just those audited, to take note and act on the findings of this report.'

'By naming those agencies that have demonstrated good practice and including case studies that show how agencies' security had been compromised, I hope to encourage improvement across the sector.'

Mr Murphy today also tabled his latest **Opinion on Ministerial Notification** which found decisions by the former Minister for Water not to provide Parliament with business cases for the Water for Food project were not reasonable, as a significant amount of the information was already publicly available.

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'I was however satisfied that the Minister followed an appropriate process in that her decisions were consistent with the advice she was provided and the advice was from a proper source and sufficiently convincing,' Mr Murphy said.

'The Department of Water's advice to the Minister was nevertheless incorrect in that it failed to advise the Minister that much of the business case was already publicly available and that these components could be released.'

Under legislation, the Auditor General on receipt of a notification is required to express an opinion as to whether it is reasonable and appropriate for a Minister not to provide information to Parliament.

The Auditor General's reports, *Opinion on Ministerial Notification and Information Systems Audit Report* (Report 11 and 12 – June 2017), are available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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