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## **Auditor General finds not diverting young people from court is opportunity missed**

In his latest report tabled in Parliament today, *Diverting Young People Away from Court*, Auditor General Colin Murphy found the opportunity for positive intervention for young people who come into contact with police is being missed.

Diversion has been shown as an effective way to reduce repeat offending, reduces the cost to the state and better serves the young person.

Mr Murphy said for the last 5 years police divert less than half of offences from court, even though only 10% were ineligible due to the seriousness of the offence or the persons previous offending.

'We found diversion rates, which are made up of thousands of decisions by individual police officers, varied by region, district and police station with no clear pattern to indicate why,' Mr Murphy said.

Mr Murphy said unfortunately for most of the young people involved, diversion does not result in meaningful or needs-based help to address their offending.

'We found only a small portion of young people diverted receive any follow-up assistance, so many miss out on help that might make them less likely to offend in future.

'I have made a number of recommendations for WA Police, Department of Justice and other agencies to assist with improving the diversion of young people and access to services for young people.

'These include WA Police collecting more information about why police officers don't divert and using this to provide guidance to work through the complexities and understand the value of diversion.

'Police officers consider many complex factors when making diversion decisions and need more guidance and oversight to help them balance those factors and increase the diversion rate,' Mr Murphy said.

Mr Murphy also tabled his latest Opinion on Ministerial Notification, which found a decision by the Minister for Tourism not to provide Parliament with information on the State's financial contributions to the Drug Aware Margaret River Pro in 2015, 2016 and 2017 was reasonable and appropriate.

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 2 reports are available on the Office of the Auditor General website at [www.audit.wa.gov.au](http://www.audit.wa.gov.au)

ENDS

