



Media contact: Rachel Edwards

Mobile: 0439 261 366

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

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Auditor General finds \$300 million State Art Collection growing, but not well preserved or made accessible

In the latest report tabled in Parliament today the Auditor General found the State Art Collection, managed by the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA), is at risk of damage or loss due to storage, conservation and monitoring issues.

Acting Auditor General, Sandra Labuschagne, said AGWA was growing the State's \$300 million art collection but struggles to preserve the Collection and make it accessible to the public.

'A significant shortage of appropriate storage space places artworks at risk of damage from not being stored appropriately, and limits access to the Collection for conservation work and public engagement,' she said.

'A large number of artworks in storage do not receive the conservation attention they need to preserve their value and AGWA does not have a plan to ensure all artworks are conserved.

'Establishing a plan is particularly important given the limited resources AGWA has available to carry out this work.'

The report found that AGWA could not be certain of the location or condition of all works in the Collection, as its database was poorly documented, key records were incomplete and inconsistently maintained, and it had not completed a stocktake since 2010.

Ms Labuschagne said AGWA also had a responsibility to do more to enable public access to the Collection, particularly in regional areas of Western Australia.

'AGWA has taken steps to attract visitors to the gallery through its exhibitions, education programs and social media campaigns,' she said.

'But, these efforts focus on attracting visitors to the Perth gallery, with little opportunity for regional Western Australians to view artworks in person or online.

'For over 120 years, the Collection has successfully grown to include important works by Australian and international artists, providing a unique link to our history.

'While fixing the issues will not be easy in a time of restrained government spending, the AGWA staff we met showed a dedication and passion to finding ways to address the issues.'

The Auditor General's report, *Management of the State Art Collection* (Report 9 – May 2018), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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