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Auditor General finds agencies are not effectively addressing risks of potentially contaminated Crown land sites

In her latest report, the Auditor General, Caroline Spencer, found that more needs to be done to identify and mitigate potential contamination on the State's unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves.

Ms Spencer said the report focused on the management of contamination on unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves, an area covering nearly 38% of the State, but potentially 'out-of-sight and out-of-mind'.

'Unfortunately, my audit found this was indeed the case,' she said.

'The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) has not effectively prioritised management of contamination risks on this land.

'Oversight and communication between DPLH and the Department for Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) has also been poor.

'This has led to long delays to identify and report contamination and address potential risks.'

Ms Spencer said at current rates it would take DPLH over 50 years to inspect all of the remaining 377 identified higher risk sites to determine if they are contaminated.

Further, DPLH's reporting of inspection results to DWER often takes years, adding to delays in investigation and, if necessary, remediation.

'Western Australia's *Contaminated Sites Act 2003* was introduced to protect human health, the environment and environmental values,' Ms Spencer said.

'While some progress has been made in response to the Act, DPLH still faces a significant task to assess, report and effectively manage remaining contamination risks on Crown land.

'Having a good understanding of the risks is vital in targeting remediation efforts to address the complexities of contamination.

'I trust the recommendations of this report will help to refocus efforts.'

The Auditor General's report, *Management of Crown Land Site Contamination* (Report 13 – June 2018), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

ENDS

