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Audit reveals that local governments have approved recordkeeping plans, but they are poorly implemented

The Auditor General for Western Australia, Ms Caroline Spencer, has today presented a report in Parliament that looked at the recordkeeping plans of 146 local governments, and examined the recordkeeping practices of 4 local governments.

Good recordkeeping practices are a cornerstone of good governance. They support local governments in transparent decision-making, allow for effective business practices, and can improve accountability and efficiency in the WA public sector.

Today's report on [Records Management in Local Government](#) confirmed that all of the 146 local governments we checked have recordkeeping plans approved by the State Records Commission, as required under the *State Records Act 2000*.

However, the report also identified that all of the 4 local governments examined in more detail did not have effective policies and procedures in place to implement their recordkeeping plans.

Ms Spencer said that the audit is not intended to be representative of the entire local government sector, but it highlights common themes amongst entities. 'Our audit reveals a trend where recordkeeping is not front of mind or adequately embedded into local governments' day-to-day business practices,' she said.

The Office of the Auditor General has audited records management at state government entities several times in the past few years, and previous audits consistently found that government entities are not prioritising good recordkeeping practices.

'Too often records management is treated as an additional task rather than being integrated into normal business practice. Unfortunately, this audit tells a similar story.' Ms Spencer said.

The key findings in [Records Management in Local Government](#) include:

- recordkeeping plans are approved but lack supporting policies and procedures
- implementation of recordkeeping plans is poor
- important records are not properly managed
- protection of records was mixed.

Local governments can differ in size, complexity, and the resources they have available for records management. However, the basic principles of good recordkeeping should not require a resource intensive approach.

'All local governments should check if they provide appropriate training for staff, if staff recordkeeping practices are regularly reviewed, whether records are disposed of in a timely manner, and if digital records are effectively protected,' Ms Spencer said.

Local governments can use the [better practice principles](#) within the report as a self-assessment guide to review their recordkeeping practices.

Records Management in Local Government is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au.



Report resources

- [Records Management in Local Government – PDF version](#)
- [Better practice principles – a recordkeeping self-assessment guide for local governments](#)
- [Video – summary of Record Management in Local Government](#)

Previous records management reports by the Office of the Auditor General

- [Managing the Accuracy of Leave Records](#) – 13 June 2015
- [Records Management in the Public Sector](#) – 19 June 2013