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Audit reinforces the need for the public sector to improve employee screening practices

Western Australia's Auditor General, Ms Caroline Spencer, has called on all public sector entities to review their recruitment processes after an audit into employee screening practices at 8 local government entities mirrored the findings of a similar 2015 audit into state government entities.

The Office of the Auditor General's [Verifying Employee Identity and Credentials](#) report was tabled in Parliament today, and it identifies many instances where 8 audited local government entities were not checking new and existing employees' identity, right to work in Australia, employment history, qualifications or criminal backgrounds.

While this audit was not designed to identify individual cases of inappropriate appointments, it did reveal significant shortcomings in policy and practices. If not addressed, these control weaknesses could impact the quality of employees in, and the integrity of, the public sector.

The audit found employee screening practices for a sample of 306 employees across 8 local government entities had a range of important checks that were not performed, including:

- 89% of people did not have their right to work in Australia verified
- 52% of people did not have a reference check
- 26% of people did not have their identity checked prior to employment
- 63 employees at 5 entities required criminal background checks but the checks were not done.

'Entities need sound and consistent employee screening processes to confirm the identity, integrity, track record and academic credentials of potential employees prior to them commencing in the public sector', Ms Spencer said.

'Consistent and robust employee screening policies and procedures can reduce the risk of any inadequate recruitment practices, and protect the integrity of the public sector', she said.

'When these practices aren't performed on employees, it can undermine the reputation of all the dedicated, professional, hardworking public servants across the State'.

'Included in the report is a better practice checklist to assist entities to run their own hygiene checks. I encourage all entities, and not just those audited, to periodically assess themselves against these risks and controls on an ongoing basis', said Ms Spencer.

All of the audited local government entities accepted the report recommendations and confirmed that where relevant they either have amended policies and practices, or will improve their human resource processes.

You can read today's report at www.audit.wa.gov.au.

ENDS



Report resources

- [*Verifying Employee Identity and Credentials*](#) – PDF version
- [*Verifying Employee Identity and Credentials*](#) – summary video
- [*Verifying Employee Identity and Credentials*](#) – better practice principles
- [*Verifying Employee Identity and Credentials*](#) – 2 December 2015 report into state government entities