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Auditor General tables opinions on Ministers not providing information to Parliament

The Auditor General today tabled 2 reports in Parliament that assessed the decisions of 2 Ministers not to provide information to Parliament.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said the provision of information to Parliament is fundamental to the principles of good governance, openness and accountability in our Westminster system of responsible government.

‘The default position of a Minister should be one of disclosure, when it’s not contrary to the public interest. This is also consistent with the aim of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*,’ Ms Spencer said.

In the first ministerial notification report, [Opinion on Ministerial Notification – Hotel Perth Campaign Reports](#), the Auditor General found the decision by the Tourism Minister not to provide Parliament with 5 post campaign performance reports in full and the number of people booking travel as a result of the Hotel Perth Campaign, was not reasonable and therefore not appropriate.

Ms Spencer said some of the information was publicly known or not commercially sensitive and, in some cases, there was no obligation of confidence. The Minister tabled redacted documents and the extent of redaction was not clear. There were numerous undisclosed redactions, resulting in a higher implied level of completeness and transparency than would have been apparent from the tabled documents.

‘Although the Minister followed the advice of Tourism WA, the advice was not correct as the Minister was not informed of the extent of redacted information. These issues are extremely concerning and reflect poorly on the work undertaken by Tourism WA on this occasion, which is usually of a higher standard in these matters,’ Ms Spencer said.

Ministers rely on entities to provide robust advice to assist them in making decisions, including in relation to providing information to Parliament. As such, entities have an obligation and responsibility to provide complete and accurate advice that properly assesses requests for information in line with the default position of disclosure. Entities need to foster a culture of transparency to Parliament and understand the implications for any advice to Ministers to withhold information.

In the second report, [Opinion on Ministerial Notification – Release of Schedule of Stumpage Rates](#), the Auditor General found the decision by the Forestry Minister not to provide Parliament with all the information used to calculate payments to sharefarmers was reasonable and therefore appropriate.

Report resources

- [Opinion on Ministerial Notification – Hotel Perth Campaign Reports](#)
- [Opinion on Ministerial Notification – Release of Schedule of Stumpage Rates](#)