12 May 2021

Weaknesses in local government information systems

The Auditor General today tabled in Parliament the *Local Government General Computer Controls* report.

The report summarises the results of our 2020 annual cycle of information systems audits across a selection of 50 local government entities.

Auditor General Ms Caroline Spencer said information systems underpin most aspects of operations and services and hold information about the public and community that is confidential and needs to be protected.

'It is important that entities implement appropriate controls to maintain reliable, secure and resilient information systems.

'We found all entities need to improve their general computer controls and reported 328 control weaknesses to the 50 entities, 10% rated as significant and 72% as moderate.

'As these weaknesses could significantly compromise the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information systems, the entities should act promptly to resolve them.

'We performed an in-depth capability maturity assessment in 11 of the 50 entities to see how well-developed and capable their established IT controls are.

'None of the entities met our benchmark in the information security category and 79% of entity results across all 6 categories were below our minimum benchmark,' Ms Spencer said.

The report includes 8 case studies to highlight the risks associated with weak information system controls with real life examples of how poor controls can result in system breaches, loss of sensitive and confidential information, and financial loss.

Selected poor practices shown in the case studies include a system administrator password that had not been changed since 2002 and visitor cards allowing access to the server room.

The audited local government entities have not been identified so as not to expose their systems to additional risks. We provided each entity with detailed findings so they can address identified shortcomings**.**

Ms Spencer said all local government entities, including those not sampled in this audit, need to carefully consider the recommendations in this report to improve information security practices and protect the confidentiality, integrity and availability of information and systems.

Report resources

- PDF version
- summary video