



Media contact: Vanessa Sprunt  
Mobile: 0427 953 993  
Email: [vanessa.sprunt@audit.wa.gov.au](mailto:vanessa.sprunt@audit.wa.gov.au)

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## Inconsistencies in maintenance and testing of air-handling and water systems

The Auditor General's report [\*Regulation of Air-handling and Water Systems\*](#) tabled in Parliament today.

The audit assessed if the Department of Health and local government entities effectively regulate air-handling and water systems to minimise the risk of Legionella.

Legionella is a bacteria that can grow in large, complex water-based systems (like cooling towers, evaporative air conditioners and warm water systems in hospitals and office buildings) and can lead to the rare but potentially life-threatening lung infection, Legionnaires' disease.

Acting Auditor General Ms Sandra Labuschagne said thankfully WA has not experienced an outbreak of Legionnaires' disease, however this doesn't mean that it can't or won't occur.

'Our audit found inconsistencies in how owners maintain and test their systems and that the existing regulatory framework requires improvement. There is limited monitoring of air-handling and water systems so it is not clear if low case numbers are the result of good practice by system owners, environmental factors or both.

'The Department completed a review of the current regulatory arrangements in 2021 and has recommended new legislation that would update the regulatory approach in WA and see the Department take on responsibility for high-risk settings and State-owned buildings.

'However, the legislation forms part of a broader reform program and may take some time to introduce and implement. Rather than await new legislation, I encourage all State and local government entities that own these systems to maintain and test in accordance with standards,' Ms Labuschagne said.

The report also includes a series of recommendations for the Department including that it should implement an education program to increase awareness and support owners to better manage their systems and it should create a central register of all air-handling and water systems in WA to aid identification and investigation of Legionella cases.

Local government entities are recommended to develop ways to gather information on air-handling and water systems to feed into the central register and consider a risk-based monitoring/compliance process for systems in their areas.

### Report resources

- [PDF version](#)
- [summary video](#)