



ACT AUDITOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

PA 07/18

26 June 2008

Performance Audit Report

Records Management in ACT Government Agencies

The ACT Auditor-General, Mrs Tu Pham, has today presented a Performance Audit report titled '**Records Management in ACT Government Agencies**', to the Speaker of the ACT Legislative Assembly.

The audit examined the extent to which the recordkeeping procedures and practices of selected agencies met the requirements of the relevant legislation, Government policies and accepted recordkeeping standards and principles. The audit covered selected agencies, including the Territory Records Office, the Department of Treasury, the ACT Public Cemeteries Authority, the ACT Planning and Land Authority (ACTPLA), and the Department of Education and Training, with a focus on schools.

Key Audit Findings

All audited agencies had taken action to comply with the legislative requirements of the *Territory Records Act 2002* (the Records Act), but progress towards full compliance varied between agencies.

Each of the audited agencies was at a different stage in addressing their recordkeeping responsibilities. All audited agencies required improvement in the development of their recordkeeping framework, and the implementation of recordkeeping policies and procedures.

None of the audited agencies consistently demonstrated better practice in records management. Some fell significantly short of this mark.

Key findings included:

- The Director of Territory Records and the Territory Records Office had taken appropriate action to discharge the functions under the Records Act. However, the Territory Records Office was unable to perform all tasks required under the Records Act mainly due to limited staff numbers and other competing requirements of the Office.
- The Director of Territory Records had not examined and assessed any audited agency's operation of, and compliance with, its Records Management Program, as provided by the Records Act.

- There is currently no single agency solely responsible for records management in the ACT public sector, resulting in inefficiencies in the provision of recordkeeping services.
- Progress in complying with their Records Management Program varied between agencies. ACTPLA and the Cemeteries Authority had progressed further towards compliance than the Department of Treasury. The Department of Education and Training had a well established framework for the Department but did not yet fully apply this to schools.
- Records management tools used in audited agencies were often unable to provide assurance that full and accurate records were captured and maintained over time.
- Not all audited agencies had developed policies and procedures to improve the protection of records, leading to a risk of damage to, or loss of, Territory records.
- Records management policies and programs were not implemented consistently across business units in all agencies, resulting in poor records management in some areas.
- Various digital business records were managed through systems that did not meet the Territory Standard for recordkeeping systems. Records maintained under these systems may not meet the required criteria for the capture and preservation of a digital record.
- Current storage facilities within certain audited agencies were not sufficient to ensure the protection of records. Some audited agencies stored unclassified files in unsuitable locations such as disused toilet blocks, basements and in boxes outside office restrooms.
- Training and communication of recordkeeping guidance material within agencies was not sufficient, often resulting in staff expressing a lack of confidence in their record keeping knowledge and ability to meet legislative requirements.
- No agency had implemented a system to formally and regularly monitor and review their recordkeeping practices, systems, policies and procedures.

Recommendations

The audit made eleven recommendations to address the issues raised. Agencies agreed, or agreed in principle, with all recommendations as outlined in the report.

Further Information

For further information, please contact Rod Nicholas, Director, Performance Audits and Corporate Services on 6207 0833. Copies of the report are available from the ACT Auditor-General's Office (Level 4, 11 Moore Street, Canberra City) and from its website, www.audit.act.gov.au.