

GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES, COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

1252. Hon. C.L. Edwardes to the Deputy Premier; Treasurer; Minister for Energy

I refer to the report of the Auditor General No 9, October 2001, entitled Righting the Wrongs: Complaints Management in the Western Australian Public Sector and ask -

- (a) which of your agencies or departments have in place and operating a Complaints Management System (CMS);
- (b) how many of your agencies or departments have not got a CMS in place;
- (c) of those agencies or departments that have got a CMS in place, does the CMS comply with the essential elements of the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling;
- (d) if not, which elements are not being complied with;
- (e) since the operation of the CMS have audits been undertaken of individual complaint files;
- (f) since the operation of the CMS, have surveys of staff, consumers and complaints been undertaken; and
- (g) since the operation of the CMS what assessment has been undertaken of the database?

Mr RIPPER replied:

Treasury and Finance

- (a) A formal complaints management system has not yet been developed for the Department of Treasury and Finance. The former Treasury Department had little direct contact with the general public and so opted to handle complaints management on an informal, and generally, issue/project basis. For example, the introduction of a new information management system, Treasury Information Management System (TIMS), generated a series of customer complaints for which the department set up a logbook to register, and a team of officers to deal with, the complaints.

A similarly informal complaints management process operates in the former State Revenue Department (now the Office of State Revenue). For example, complaints by the public to Members of Parliament in relation to taxation matters are recorded in a formal register which is used to ensure that such complaints are dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. The register includes the source of the complaint, which allows the office to determine the level of complaints about any particular matter. Formal complaints made direct to the Commissioner are recorded on an administration file for each tax type, and referred to a senior officer who has complaint handling skills. This ensures the matter is dealt with in a timely and efficient manner. Complaints of a serious nature are almost always dealt with personally by either the Commissioner or an Assistant Commissioner.

The merger of Treasury and the State Revenue Department has provided added impetus to the development of a formal complaints management policy and process by virtue of the extent of OSR's contact with the general public. The development of a formal complaints management policy and process has been scheduled into the department's 2001/02 workplan. It will be consistent with the Australian Standard on Complaints Handling.

- (b) The department does not yet have a formal complaints management process in place.
- (c)-(g) Not applicable.

Office of the Auditor General

- (a) The Auditor General has a Complaints Management System (CMS).
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c)-(d) The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) has limited contact with the public. However, the CMS complies with the essential elements to the extent necessary.
- (e) The Complaints Management System was formalised in 1999 and insufficient complaints have been received to date to justify a formal audit.
- (f) The OAG's main clients are Members of Parliament and public sector agencies. Surveys of both are undertaken regularly to assess satisfaction with quality and timeliness of service delivery.

- (g) The Complaints Management System was formalised in 1999. The main database of enquiries and complaints was re-configured last year and has not yet been reviewed.

Office of Energy

- (a) The Office of Energy has a CMS including a brochure for clients and policies and procedures for staff.
- (b) Not applicable.
- (c) Yes.
- (d) Not applicable.
- (e) No.
- (f) Not in relation to the CMS.
- (g) No assessment of the database has been undertaken