



Our ref: 75200

11 August 2015

Mr S.K. L'Estrange, MLA  
Chairman  
Public Accounts Committee  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr L'Estrange

**SUBMISSION TO THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE'S  
INQUIRY INTO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY  
PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACT MANAGEMENT**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the Public Accounts Committee (the Committee) with information relevant to its inquiry into information and communication technology (ICT) procurement and contract management. I note in your correspondence that the Committee is particularly interested in the role the Public Sector Commission (the Commission) plays in improving the skills of public sector staff in areas relevant to the delivery of ICT projects.

The ethical framework and good governance

The Commission's role in relation to capability development is a 'whole-of-government' general advisory role under section 21A of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (PSM Act). I also have a role, under section 21 of the PSM Act to assist CEOs to comply with high level principles of conduct outlined in sections 7, 8 and 9 of the PSM Act.

In accordance with the legislation, I establish the Western Australian Public Sector Code of Ethics, and a requirement for all public sector bodies to develop a code of conduct and to provide training to their employees and board members on accountable and ethical decision making (AEDM training). These instruments provide the foundation of the ethical framework under which the public sector operates.

AEDM training is the Commission's flagship ethics training package and while essential for all public officers, is particularly relevant to those with high levels of decision making authority, such as chief executive officers and contract managers, among others. It is designed to communicate conduct expectations through discussions on real ethical dilemmas in areas like 'the use of public resources', 'conflicts of interest and gifts and benefits' and 'communications and official information'.

The Commission developed and maintains the AEDM curriculum but the training is most effective when customised to reflect agency-specific conduct requirements and risks. AEDM gives public sector employees tools and information to develop skills to make appropriate and ethical decisions in their daily work. The ability to make sound and ethical decisions is particularly relevant when dealing with often complex, high-value procurement and contracting decisions, including ICT projects.

For agencies embarking on complex ICT projects, I expect a review of their AEDM training, or development of an AEDM refresher session for ICT and finance practitioners, would be a useful tool. These sessions should explore case examples that relate to the risks involved in large-scale procurement and contracting activities, and consider the ethical dilemmas that may be faced. Similarly I would expect to see agencies build robust governance systems around their procurement processes and practices to 'engineer out' many of the integrity risks associated with such activities.

#### Working in partnership to build capacity and capability of public officers

I am committed to building the capacity and capability of public officers to achieve efficient and effective public administration. I see our role to build capacity and capability, and promote ethical behaviour in the sector as a collaborative effort, particularly where the expertise lies within the sector.

In March 2015, Cabinet approved a plan to establish a \$25 million *ICT Renewal and Reform Fund* and the formation of the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO). The Commission provided administrative support to establish that office and the Government Chief Information Officer's (GCIO) role. I anticipate that although not a formal part of its mandate, a by-product of future work by the OGCIO will be a natural building of capacity and capability among government ICT professionals and better governance around ICT projects.

I have recently been in communication with GCIO and agreed we will work in partnership, through the Centre for Public Sector Excellence, to build the capacity and capability of ICT practitioners to provide better outcomes for Government and all Western Australians. I am also keen to ensure that an overlay of ethics and integrity in relation to ICT projects is considered and implemented. I expect the Department of Finance would also be involved in these discussions.

We have a solid history of building capacity and capability, recently focussing on several 'specialist' occupational groups being:

- Government human resources practitioners, through the Foundations of Government Human Resources Program and a cadetship in human resources
- Government policy practitioners, through the development of the policy capability framework and forums
- Government finance officers, through a cadetship in financial services.

These programs are built around capability development frameworks, aimed at filling existing skills gaps in certain occupational groups in the sector, and ensuring our emerging practitioners have the requisite and relevant skills and knowledge to advise their CEOs into the future. The model used has proved successful and I hope to build and expand on this approach with ICT practitioners, chief finance officers and other finance practitioners and government investigators over the coming year.

I trust this information will be useful to the Committee as it completes its research around the inquiry. Should the Committee have any further questions, I would be pleased to answer them.

Yours sincerely



M C Wauchope  
Public Sector Commissioner