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MEDIA RELEASE

NSW AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT Efficiency of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

This morning the Auditor-General of New South Wales, Peter Achterstraat, released a report on the efficiency of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP).

The ODPP is independent of the government. This does not, however, remove the need for it to manage public resources appropriately and demonstrate value for money" said Mr Achterstraat.

In the course of the audit we noted that the ODPP has developed a sound reputation for its prosecutorial integrity among the legal profession.

Key findings

The ODPP could not demonstrate it was efficient" says Peter Achterstraat. "The ODPP's caseload fell by about one third and its budget increased by more than 40 per cent in the five years to 2007. The ODPP says that the increased amount of work required on matters offset the lower caseload. Without better supporting evidence we cannot either refute or support this."

The ODPP does not have good enough information on the cost of its services, which is a significant barrier to good management. It also needs to improve its efficiency indicators, establish targets, and compare its performance over time and to others. It then needs to use this to support decision making and enhance reporting.

"Despite the inadequacy of performance information, our investigations identified some significant opportunities for the ODPP to improve its management practices" said Mr Achterstraat.

These include better managing Crown Prosecutors, monitoring and improving staff satisfaction, and reporting more transparently to stakeholders. The ODPP also needs to make sure it has the right number of prosecutors at the right level to minimise costs while delivering quality services.

Our research into practices in prosecution services elsewhere suggests changes to how the ODPP allocates and processes cases could lead to savings. It is not possible, however, to be sure without better information on current costs and services.

Several reviews of the ODPP over the last decade have made similar findings to us.

“The ODPP has not demonstrated a capacity to keep pace with reforms to public sector and legal practice management and accountability” said Peter Achterstraat. “It needs a very senior, professional manager with a clear mandate to improve resource management and accountability right across its operations.”

The ODPP’s response

Peter Achterstraat has welcomed the ODPP’s detailed response to the report. The ODPP has accepted most of the Auditor-General’s recommendations, but has taken issue with aspects of the audit process and the need for a very senior specialist manager.

“I have carefully considered the points the ODPP has raised, but I am completely comfortable with the fairness of our procedures” said Mr Achterstraat. “I also stand by our findings and recommendations. In particular, I remain resolute in my view that the ODPP needs a very senior specialist manager to achieve best value for taxpayers.”

Further Information

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The full report is available on the Audit Office's website: www.audit.nsw.gov.au