

28 February 2013

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT TO PARLIAMENT MANAGING DRUG EXHIBITS AND OTHER HIGH PROFILE GOODS

POLICE EXHIBITS HELD SECURELY BUT FOR TOO LONG

Some drug exhibits and other high profile goods, such as firearms, ammunition, vehicles and vessels, are held longer than necessary by NSW Police, increasing health and safety risks and storage costs.

In 2011-12, NSW Police collected over 313,000 exhibits and other goods. Around 58,000, or almost 20 per cent, of these were drug exhibits and other high profile goods.

"I am pleased to find that drug exhibits and other high profile goods are well managed. They are kept securely in NSW Police storage facilities, routinely audited and there are few recorded instances where they have gone missing or been damaged," said Mr Achterstraat.

"However, NSW Police is holding onto some drug exhibits and other high profile goods longer than needed," he added.

Around 60 per cent of drug exhibits, firearms and ammunition items collected in 2011-12 were held for longer than six months and many have been held well beyond this timeframe.

"We found that over 3,600 drug exhibits and other high profile goods had been on hand for more than two years," said Mr Achterstraat.

NSW Police must hold onto some drug exhibits until a court order is obtained for their destruction. This practice is unlike most other Australian jurisdictions where drug exhibits are destroyed without a court order as soon as they are independently analysed. NSW Police is looking to adopt this practice.

"Some drug exhibits could pose a significant risk to the health and safety of officers and this risk may increase over time," said Mr Achterstraat.

"The practices used in other jurisdictions reduce the risks to officers' health and safety. There are benefits in this approach and I encourage NSW Police to continue its efforts to introduce such a model," he added.

Drug exhibits, as well as the samples taken from the exhibits for analysis, are currently moved around the State tying up police resources.

"We estimate these trips take police officers away from frontline duties for the equivalent of 2,000 days each year," said Mr Achterstraat.

"Drug exhibit samples are not entirely used up in testing and the remainder has to be collected and returned to police storage facilities, creating additional administration and transport costs," he added.

The Auditor-General has called on NSW Police to review all drug exhibits and other high profile goods on hand for more than two years and dispose of any no longer required.

"NSW Police also needs to review the sampling procedure for drug exhibits to ensure there is nothing left of the samples to be returned to NSW Police storage facilities," added Mr Achterstraat.

Further information

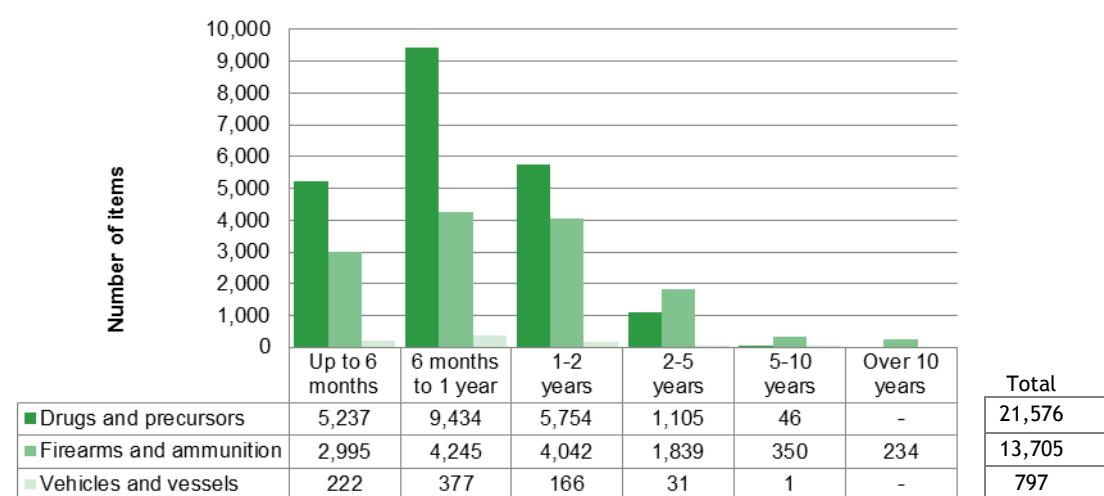
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Exhibits and other items collected by NSW Police 2011-12

	Number collected	Percentage of total	Number still held at 18 Oct 2012
High profile goods			
Drug exhibits	39,887	12.7%	18,083
Firearms and ammunition	15,887	5.1%	9,026
Vehicles and vessels	2,044	0.7%	685
Total high profile goods	57,818	18.4%	27,794
Other items	256,145	81.6%	137,671
Total all exhibits and other items	313,963	100%	165,465

Source: NSW Police Force 2012.

Age of drug exhibits and other high profile goods on hand at 18 October 2012



Source: NSW Police Force 2012.

Note: This data was extracted from NSW Police's EFIMS system on 18 October 2012, and includes drug exhibits, firearms, ammunition, vehicles and vessels recorded in EFIMS with a collection date on or before 30 June 2012. This data excludes drug exhibits, firearms, ammunition, vehicles and vessels not recorded in EFIMS.

Items collected in 2011-12 and disposed of within 180 days (six months)

	Number collected	Number disposed of within 180 days	%	Number not disposed of within 180 days	%
Drugs and precursors	39,887	16,495	41	23,392	59
Firearms and ammunition	15,887	5,863	37	10,024	63
Vehicles and vessels	2,044	1,267	62	777	38
Total	57,818	23,625	41	34,193	59

Source: NSW Police Force 2012.

Note: This data was extracted from NSW Police's EFIMS system on 18 October 2012.