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# Appendix two – About the audit

## Audit objective

This audit assessed whether the Department of Communities and Justice is effectively supporting the efficient operation of the District Criminal Court system.

## Audit criteria

We addressed the audit objective with the following criteria:

1. Does the Department effectively collect and report performance information relevant to court efficiency and use it to identify and act upon barriers to efficiency?
  - a) The Department has a balanced set of performance indicators for court efficiency and reports against these internally and externally.
  - b) The Department has systems to measure identified performance indicators and other information relevant to efficiency.
  - c) The Department undertakes quality assurance over its data and ensures consistent, accurate and timely data entry.
  - d) The Department uses performance data to identify potential efficiencies and acts upon areas for improvement.
2. Does the Department effectively provide technology to support the efficient working of the courts?
  - a) The Department regularly evaluates technology needs in each courthouse.
  - b) The Department meets the technology needs in each courthouse.
  - c) The Department monitors the usage rates of technology in each courthouse.
  - d) The Department provides effective technical support to meet court users' needs.
3. Does the Department have effective plans, governance and monitoring for the Early Appropriate Guilty Pleas (EAGP) reform?
  - a) The Department has implementation plans in place and reports progress to senior management against these plans.
  - b) The Department is monitoring implementation of EAGP against established plans and timeframes.
  - c) The Department communicated widely with stakeholders about EAGP and incorporated their feedback in implementation plans.
  - d) The Department has effective governance practices in place for EAGP.
  - e) The Department has clearly defined expected benefits from EAGP and is measuring and managing the realisation of these benefits.

## Audit scope and focus

In assessing the criteria, we looked at:

- the criminal branch of the District Court
- performance information from the previous five years
- data kept in the Department's data collection systems
- the processes in place to ensure that EAGP is governed effectively, as well as progress against plans
- the work of the Department of Justice to provide the above.

## Audit exclusions

The audit did not seek to:

- audit the Local and Supreme Courts, except where services overlap with the District Court
- audit the civil branch of the District Court
- audit the conduct of the Judiciary
- audit Statutory Bodies within the Justice cluster
- audit data maintained by other Statutory Bodies
- audit other reforms outside EAGP
- audit ICT security or controls of any system
- audit other support functions provided by the Department
- question the merits of government policy objectives.

However, we have commented on these issues where they affect our findings or to provide context.

## Audit approach

Our procedures included:

1. Interviewing staff, including:
  - staff responsible for creation of dashboards
  - staff responsible for data collection systems
  - staff responsible for data analysis
  - staff responsible for identifying technology needs
  - staff responsible for delivery and maintenance of technology
  - staff responsible for technical support delivery
  - staff involved in EAGP project management
  - other senior management in the Department of Communities and Justice.
2. Examining documentation, including:
  - department strategies and plans
  - processes and procedures
  - relevant reviews
  - dashboards
  - briefing notes
  - good practice guides
  - agency performance indicators
  - data collection systems and data from those systems
  - manuals for data entry, including data dictionaries
  - Meeting agendas and minutes
  - EAGP business case, implementation plans and reports/monitoring against those plans
  - other governance documentation, e.g. risk registers.
3. Analysing performance data from the review period, including technical support incident logs.

The audit approach was complemented by quality assurance processes within the Audit Office to ensure compliance with professional standards.

## **Audit methodology**

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standard ASAE 3500 Performance Engagements and other professional standards. The standards require the audit team to comply with relevant ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance and draw a conclusion on the audit objective. Our processes have also been designed to comply with requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983* and the *Local Government Act 1993*.

## **Acknowledgements**

We gratefully acknowledge the co-operation and assistance provided by the Department of Communities and Justice.

## **Audit cost**

The total cost of the audit is \$241,086.