

About VAGO

This fact sheet provides information about the Auditor-General and VAGO's work.

The Auditor-General's role

The Auditor-General is an independent officer of the Victorian Parliament. They provide assurance to Parliament and the Victorian community on the Victorian public sector's performance and accountability.

The *Audit Act 1994* governs the Auditor-General's powers and functions, including their power to access information during the course of an audit or assurance review and the standards that we must meet.

As an independent officer of Parliament, the Auditor-General is not subject to control or direction by Parliament or the government.

VAGO's role

The Auditor-General heads the Victorian Auditor-General's Office under section 16 of the *Public Administration Act 2004*.

Our staff, who are assisted as needed by contracted individuals and firms, undertake an annual program of financial and performance audits and assurance review engagements. We report the results of these engagements to Parliament.

Financial audits

Our financial audits provide independent assurance to Parliament and the public that the information contained in public sector agencies' financial reports is reliable, relevant, presented fairly and in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and other relevant legislation.

Performance audits

Our performance audits provide independent assurance that public sector agencies or programs are achieving their objectives effectively, economically, efficiently and/or in compliance with all relevant legislation.

Why we audit

State and local government bodies spend close to \$90 billion of public money each year to deliver a range of services for all Victorians.

We help maintain public trust in the government by enhancing the transparency of, and accountability for, public sector agencies' financial and operational performance.

Who we audit

We audit more than 600 public sector organisations, including:

- government departments
- public bodies
- government business enterprises
- superannuation funds
- health services
- universities and TAFE institutes
- local governments
- water corporations.

The Auditor-General can also audit non-government organisations to determine if they have spent payments to deliver public services economically, efficiently, effectively and as intended.

Our audit method

All of our audits and assurance reviews share the same underlying audit principles and approaches.

Independence

Independence is the cornerstone of auditing. Accordingly, auditors must avoid situations where their objectivity could be compromised or where bias could influence their judgement.

Evidence

We rely on high-quality evidence to form our audit and assurance review conclusions. Our auditors gather information and evidence from a range of sources, including:

- agency records
- data analysis
- interviews and surveys
- physical inspections.

Audit and assurance review standards

We conduct our work in accordance with the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board's standards, which carry the full force of the law. Auditors in both the public and private sectors must comply with these standards.

The standards cover the planning, communication, conduct, evidence, quality assurance and reporting aspects of an audit and assurance review. The *Audit Act 1994* allows the Auditor-General to apply additional standards if we disclose it in our annual report.

Full and free access

The *Audit Act 1994* gives the Auditor-General and VAGO staff wide ranging powers to access required information during an audit or assurance review, notwithstanding restrictions on disclosure that other legislation imposes. This includes statutory secrecy provisions and Cabinet or any other 'in-confidence' restrictions.

Balancing these powers, the Auditor-General and VAGO staff are required to maintain the confidentiality of any information we gather from audited agencies.

The Auditor-General can also search the premises of a public sector entity and compel individuals to provide information.

Our accountability

We are responsible for undertaking our work efficiently, effectively, in compliance with legislation and to high standards.

We have a number of internal and external quality control and accountability mechanisms to help us better meet the needs of Parliament and audited agencies.

These include peer and expert reviews of our audits and self-assessing our organisation and processes against a framework produced by the Australasian Council of Auditors-General.

In addition to an external audit of our annual financial statement, the Public Accounts and Estimates Committee coordinates an independent performance audit of VAGO every four years.

The Victorian Inspectorate oversees our use of coercive powers when we compel agencies to provide information or entry to their premises.

Victoria's integrity system

As an independent officer of Parliament, the Auditor-General is part of Victoria's integrity system. The core agencies that make up Victoria's integrity system are:

- Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC)
- Victorian Ombudsman
- Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO).

The work of these three agencies helps to ensure that the Victorian Government continues to operate in the best interests of Victorians and is free from fraud and corruption.

Suggest an audit or assurance review topic

The Auditor-General regularly receives topic suggestions from members of parliament, government and non-government agencies and the Victorian public. We review these topics based on their related risk, materiality and public interest. Any topics selected as performance audits are detailed in our annual plan.

If you would like to make a topic suggestion, you can do so by filling in the form on our [website](#). We will notify you if we include your suggested topic.