


**Government Submission in response to Auditor General Report No 5 of 2004
Compliance Report – Leave Management**

	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
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Subject

Auditor General Report No 5 of 2004 Compliance Report – Leave Management

Introduction

The audit examined compliance with the legislative framework for the leave management activity for ACT Public Service staff in ACT Government departments and a number of statutory entities or sub-agencies.

Findings

The audit found that although many agencies managed leave satisfactorily:

- attendance was not managed well in some areas, leading to risks of staff being absent without leave;
- 6% of recorded absences were not reflected in leave records;
- 9% of leave application forms could not be found, meaning it is difficult to check the accuracy of information in the leave records;
- 10% of leave applications were not properly approved; and
- there are opportunities to improve leave management through more comprehensive analysis of leave patterns on a whole of government basis and for each agency.

Issues

The audit made ten recommendations. These recommendations and Government responses are detailed below.

Recommendation 1

Agencies should ensure management of attendance is satisfactory by means such as briefings to supervisors on the significance of this task, conduct of frequent random audits of flex forms and other attendance records, and counselling of those who are not adhering to timekeeping or certification requirements.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 2

CMD should reconsider Public Management Standard 3 to remove the exemption from recording hours of attendance for senior officers who take advantage of flexible hours schemes, including access to flex-time, credit hours, or time off in lieu absences.

Response

Agreed. In practice senior officers who participate in flex-time schemes and take time off in lieu absences are already required to record hours of work/attendance.

Certainly Standard 3, Part 11 Rule 6 can be reworded to explicitly require senior officers who participate in these schemes to record their attendance.

Recommendation 3

Agencies should ensure that all relevant absences are covered by leave applications by means such as:

- a. briefing staff on the importance of correct use of leave in conjunction with any training on fraud and integrity policy;
- b. instructing all supervisors to certify that all absences are covered by leave applications before signing attendance records such as flex sheets;
- c. instructing supervisors to submit all leave forms directly to personnel rather than handing paper-based leave forms back to staff; and
- d. providing supervisors with a summary of leave taken by employees on a regular basis and asking them to certify that it is consistent with their records of staff absences.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 4

Each agency should ensure a sound system of leave delegations by:

- a. briefing all supervisors on the extent of their delegated power to approve leave, and the need to ensure leave forms are approved by an authorised delegate; and
- b. ensuring that personnel staff reject leave applications that are not properly approved, and only exercise any delegated powers to approve leave after consultation with the line area.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 5

CMD should create a template for remaining paper-based leave forms and advise agencies on the need to comply with legislative and policy requirements through proper leave form design.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 6

Agencies should, where necessary, take steps to improve the timeliness of submitting leave forms

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 7

Agencies should develop clear and consistent policy on the use and approval of leave in special circumstances (part of personal leave), and promulgate this to all staff.

Response

Agreed. Approval of leave in special circumstances is discretionary and is available to staff to be used in special and extraordinary circumstances eg when childcare becomes unavailable at very short notice. The Chief Minister's Department will provide guidance for agencies on the examples of special circumstance leave.

Recommendation 8

Agencies should review the adequacy of the current filing arrangements and improve them where necessary.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 9

Management should take steps to increase accuracy of input from leave forms to the Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS), such as regular peer and supervisory checks.

Response

Agreed.

Recommendation 10

The Chief Minister's Department should review leave patterns across the service, and agencies should review their own patterns of leave, with a view to enabling more effective management of leave, consistent with occupational health and safety standards and workplace productivity.

Response

Agreed in principle. The Template Agreement stipulates that employees will be encouraged to use their annual leave entitlement within the year that it accrues and that Managers and Supervisors should approve applications by employees to take their leave in the accrual year. The Template Agreement also provides guidance on the management of excessive working hours. Deeming provisions are subject to certified agreement negotiations with unions. It is agreed that agencies should regularly monitor and review excessive leave credits and invoke deeming procedures and/or discuss the need to take regular leave breaks with staff.

Future Action

The Chief Minister's Department will ask all Government agencies to ensure that all measures identified within the Government's Submission to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts are implemented as a matter of urgency.