



OmbudsmanSA

OPPORTUNITIES TO SAFEGUARD VULNERABLE PEOPLE MAY BE MISSED

ISG AUDIT REPORT: Assessing State Government Agencies' Implementation of the Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing

The ISG Audit Report follows a year long investigation into seven state government agencies' efforts to deliver on a direction by State Cabinet regarding a key policy initiative aimed at protecting some of South Australia's most vulnerable citizens.

The *Information Sharing Guidelines for Promoting Safety and Wellbeing* (ISG) defines a process for agencies to share information where there are current or anticipated threats to safety and wellbeing. The aim is that by agencies sharing information and working together at the first sign of risk, harm can be prevented.

In the report the Ombudsman stated that, in his view, agencies within the scope of the audit had only partially followed the direction issued by State Cabinet to implement the ISG, with the Department for Correctional Services efforts being "entirely inadequate". The Ombudsman has made a number of recommendations for improvement and set timeframes for agencies Chief Executives to report back to him on progress.

Misconceptions about privacy laws and when information can or should be shared are frequently discovered in serious case reviews, coronial inquests and Royal Commissions. The government's intention with the ISG is to remove confusion and privacy myths by providing a simple process for appropriate information sharing that applies across a huge mix of both adult and children's services.

In his two previous annual reports, Mr Lines flagged his concern that, despite the potential of the ISG to assist early intervention in child protection, homelessness, domestic violence and substance abuse, he was concerned that State Government agencies have not taken sufficient steps to train staff and apply the ISG in their work. The report finds that to be the case and concludes that potential opportunities to protect and safeguard some of the most vulnerable members of our community may be missed.

The report is on the Ombudsman SA website at www.ombudsman.sa.gov.au