

MEDIA RELEASE

23 September 2020

Corruption investigation reveals rorts and protects the public safety of Western Australians

The Corruption and Crime Commission has tabled its *Review of an investigation by Western Power into serious misconduct* in State Parliament today.

The report has lessons for all agencies about the serious risks associated with minimal supervision of employees, particularly in regional locations.

The maintenance of power pole assets by Western Power is an important and critical role. The consequences of not performing this function are severe and could be fatal. In recent times, these matters have been publicly raised in many forums following destructive bush fires in several areas of WA.

Thanks to an anonymous whistle-blower who provided information in August 2019, Western Power was able to identify, investigate, and ultimately dismiss an employee who had been trusted to inspect maintenance work on assets including power poles.

If not for the whistle blower reporting the matter, it is unknown how long the conduct would have continued.

Instead of doing their work properly, the employee spent a significant amount of time at home and used the work vehicle to engage in recreational activities – and falsified time sheets and other records in a bid to avoid detection. In some instances, the same photograph had been submitted as evidence of power pole inspections in different locations.

Western Power audited the work carried out by the employee between July and September 2019. The audit revealed more than 200 falsified inspections, 53 fraudulent timesheet entries and 51 instances of the work vehicle being misused. Recognising the systemic nature of the employee's conduct, Western Power expanded the audit back to January 2018.

The Commission conducted an assessment, and on the information available, referred three allegations (in relation to the falsification of documents and corrupt conduct used to gain a personal benefit) to Western Power for action.

Western Power has since introduced new audit regimes for employees responsible for safety and compliance, including power pole inspections. This, coupled with timesheet and technology advancements, has enabled greater scrutiny over employees who are not always located in the same region as their supervisors, and improved Western Power's ability to proactively detect similar fraudulent conduct.

Contact the Corruption and Crime Commission

Today's report is an important reminder that matters of suspected misconduct or fraud should be reported to the Commission in a timely manner, and reporting any suspicions of what may be criminal conduct to the WA Police Force at an early stage is also prudent.

Western Power has committed to ensuring public safety by rectifying the compromised inspections of the employee.

The Commission is of the view that Western Power's investigation and actions were adequate, and it has made no formal recommendations.

ENDS

Read the report

[*Review of an investigation by Western Power into serious misconduct*](#)

Media contacts

Marie Mills: (08) 9421 3600 or 0418 918 202

Louisa Mitchell: (08) 9421 3600 or 0434 308 208