



Education top of class for losing computers

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More than \$740,000 worth of laptop and palm computers and mobile phones were stolen or lost from Government departments last financial year.

Despite former premier Geoff Gallop ordering Department of Premier and Cabinet director-general Mal Wauchope to investigate phone and computer thefts and put department chiefs on notice in 2003, the number and value of missing phones and computers jumped last year.

In 2004-05, the value of missing mobile phones and computers was \$673,838 while this year it leapt nearly 10 per cent to \$740,184.

According to State Government figures, 2759 laptop and palm computers and mobile phones worth nearly \$3.3 million have been lost or stolen in the past four years.

So concerned is Premier Alan Carpenter, that eight days ago he issued a directive to all ministers to ensure their departments have appropriate measures in place to minimise the loss or theft of public property.

Deputy Opposition Leader Troy Buswell said with the State's burgeoning public service, those numbers will only get worse.

"These figures are another example of the shoddy financial management which is occurring in WA and the unfortunate result of all that is taxpayers having to foot the bill," he said. "The fact that it has jumped 10

per cent in a year must surely send alarm bells ringing. The fact this loss seems to be continuing unabated is a huge concern.

"When you are rolling in money, like (Treasurer) Eric Ripper and this State Government are, you don't focus on the little things."

The biggest culprit was the Department of Education and Training where 297 computers valued at \$446,000, the majority laptops as part of the 16,000 Notebooks for Teachers Program, were lost or stolen.

Only 14 laptops were recovered, with the balance covered by insurance. In 2004-05, 305 computers from the department were missing or lost. The same department was also responsible for 39 missing or lost mobile phones.

The Education Department is undertaking a trial of a Datadot security program in nine schools where specially coded dots, the size of a grain of sand which become visible only when exposed to ultra-violet light, are sprayed on to equipment with an aim to deter thieves.

All departments said that they reported lost and stolen computers to police, but not all did for mobile phones, although they said they did contact the service provider to ensure unauthorised call charges were not racked up.

The Department of Industry and Resources had a computer stolen from a trade stand in Paris.