



Significant Issues Impacting the Office

This section provides information on the significant issues impacting the Office.

- [Timely Complaint Resolution](#)
- [Own Motion Investigations](#)
- [Providing Awareness of, and Access to, Ombudsman Services](#)
- [Diversity of Functions](#)



Significant Issues Impacting the Office

The significant issues impacting the Office are:

- Timely complaint resolution is a significant factor in providing effective and efficient assistance to complainants and improvements to the standard of public administration. In 2015-16, 95% of complaints were resolved within three months, and as at 30 June 2016, the average age of complaints was 27 days (compared to 173 days at 30 June 2007).
- The Office undertakes important roles in relation to the review of certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. In 2015-16, the Office tabled in Parliament a major own motion investigation report, *Investigation into issues associated with violence restraining orders and their relationship with family and domestic violence fatalities*, that contained 54 recommendations to four government agencies about ways to prevent or reduce family and domestic violence fatalities. The Office also undertook work on a major own motion investigation into ways to prevent or reduce child deaths by drowning.
- The Office has continued with its program to enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, its services by Aboriginal and regional Western Australians through a range of strategies, including the Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility program. In addition, in 2015-16, the Office has continued work on a program to enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, its services for children and young people. The Office also continues to engage effectively with public authorities to strengthen their capacity in complaint handling and decision making through a range of mechanisms.
- In addition to investigating complaints, reviewing certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities, and undertaking own motion investigations, the Office undertakes a range of additional functions, including the inspection of telecommunication interception records and overseas student appeals. In recent years, the trend has been for an increasing range of functions to be undertaken by the Office, including the Ombudsman's functions under the *Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012*, commencing in 2013-14, and the Ombudsman's function to monitor the Infringement Notices provisions of *The Criminal Code*, commencing in 2014-15.

Timely Complaint Resolution

A principal function of the Ombudsman is to provide a means by which Western Australians can resolve their complaints about the actions of public authorities. Critical principles for the Ombudsman in undertaking complaint resolution are to provide timely, inexpensive and informal resolution processes that provide, where appropriate, remedies for complainants and identify and investigate systemic issues and create improvements in public administration.

In 2007-08, the Office introduced a major complaint handling improvement program with an initial focus on the elimination of aged complaints. Building on the program, the Office developed and commenced a new organisational structure and processes in 2011-12 to support the early resolution of complaints.

As a result of the program, the Office has reduced the average age of complaints from 173 days at 30 June 2007 to 27 days at 30 June 2016. At the same time, the average cost per finalised allegation has reduced by a total of 36% from \$2,941 in 2007-08 to \$1,886 in 2015-16.

Own Motion Investigations

One of the ways that the Office endeavours to improve public administration is to undertake investigations of systemic and thematic patterns and trends arising from complaints made to the Ombudsman and from child death and family and domestic violence fatality reviews. These investigations are referred to as own motion investigations.

Own motion investigations are intended to result in improvements to public administration that are evidence-based, proportionate, practical and where the benefits of the improvements outweigh the costs of their implementation. The Office is currently undertaking a number of investigations as shown in the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#) of the report.

Each of the recommendations arising from own motion investigations is actively monitored by the Office to ensure its implementation and effectiveness in relation to the observations made in the investigation.

Providing Awareness of, and Access to, Ombudsman Services

The Office continues to seek to ensure its services are accessible to all Western Australians, with a particular focus on regional and Aboriginal Western Australians, through a range of strategies including the Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program. In addition, in 2015-16, the Office has continued work on a program to enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, its services for children and young people. The Office also has a number of other strategies to promote awareness of, and access to, the Ombudsman's services, as shown in the [Collaboration and Access to Services section](#) of the report.

The Office is continuing to undertake a range of strategies to engage effectively with public authorities to strengthen their capacity in complaint handling and decision making through a range of mechanisms, as shown in the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#) of the report.

Diversity of Functions

In recent years the Office has increased the diversity of functions it undertakes. In addition to investigating complaints and undertaking own motion investigations, the Office undertakes a range of other functions, including reviewing certain child deaths, reviewing family and domestic violence fatalities, inspection of telecommunications interception records, overseas student appeals and undertaking the role of the Western Australian Energy and Water Ombudsman.

In the last two years, there has been an increased diversity of statutory inspection and monitoring functions, including:

- Functions under the [Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012](#); and
- Monitoring the Infringement Notices provisions of [The Criminal Code](#).



This page has been intentionally left blank.

