



## Collaboration and Access to Services

Engagement with key stakeholders is essential to the Office's achievement of the most efficient and effective outcomes. The Office does this through:

- Working collaboratively with other integrity and accountability bodies – locally, nationally and internationally – to encourage best practice, efficiency and leadership;
- Ensuring ongoing accountability to Parliament as well as accessibility to its services for public authorities and the community; and
- Developing, maintaining and supporting relationships with public authorities and community groups.

### Working Collaboratively

The Office works collaboratively with local, national and international integrity and accountability bodies to promote best practice, efficiency and leadership. Working collaboratively also provides an opportunity for the Office to benchmark its performance and stakeholder communication activities against other similar agencies, and to identify areas for improvement through the experiences of others.

#### Integrity Coordinating Group

**Members:** Western Australian Ombudsman; Public Sector Commissioner; Corruption and Crime Commissioner; Auditor General; and Information Commissioner.

#### Background:

The Integrity Coordinating Group (**ICG**) was formed to promote and strengthen integrity in Western Australian public bodies.

#### The Office's involvement:

The Ombudsman participates as a member of the ICG and the Office has nominated senior representatives who sit on the ICG's joint working party.

#### 2017-18 initiatives:

The Office was involved in the ICG's graduate program, which involves a graduate working in each of the member agencies over a two year period in total.

## International Ombudsman Institute

### Background:

The International Ombudsman Institute (**IOI**), established in 1978, is the only global organisation for the cooperation of more than 190 independent Ombudsman institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide. The IOI is organised in six regional chapters (Africa, Asia, Australasia & Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean & Latin America and North America). The IOI is governed by a World Board of which the Western Australian Ombudsman is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President.

### The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of the IOI. The IOI is governed by a World Board, of which the Ombudsman was elected 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President of the IOI in November 2016. The Ombudsman previously served as the Treasurer of the IOI from March 2014 to November 2016 and President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region (**APOR**) of the IOI from November 2012 to March 2014.

### 2017-18 initiatives:

In November 2017, the Office hosted the 29<sup>th</sup> APOR Conference, *Connections in our Australasian-Pacific Region*. Further details about the Conference are provided later in this section.

In January 2018, the Ombudsman undertook an official visit to the Office of the Chief Ombudsman of Thailand in Bangkok and also undertook investigation field visits in the Phuket province including participating in, and addressing meetings in relation to, two major Ombudsman investigations regarding the delivery of significantly cheaper electricity for the residents of Panyee Island and the provision of more effective and efficient transport for the people of Phuket and its many visitors.

In April 2018, the Ombudsman attended a meeting of the World Board of the IOI in Toronto, Canada.

Immediately prior to the meeting of the World Board of the IOI in Toronto, the Ombudsman attended the United Nations (**UN**) in New York to participate in a formal event between the IOI and the UN hosted by Ambassador Jan Kickert, Permanent Representative of Austria to the UN and Ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the UN.

The event also included recognition of the 40th anniversary of the IOI and was followed by IOI delegates being received at the Austrian Ambassador's residence, attended by a number of Permanent Representatives to the UN, including Her Excellency Gillian Bird, Permanent Representative of Australia to the UN. The Ombudsman also attended the offices of the Australian Mission to the UN and met with Her Excellency to discuss IOI work with the UN.

## Information sharing with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions

### Background:

Where appropriate, the Office shares information and insights about its work with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions, as well as with other accountability and integrity bodies.

### 2017-18 initiatives:

The Office exchanged information with a number of Parliamentary Ombudsmen and industry-based Ombudsmen during the year.

## Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association

**Members:** Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand.

### Background:

The Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**ANZOA**) is the peak body for Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand.

### The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of ANZOA. The Office periodically provides general updates on its activities and also has nominated representatives who participate in interest groups in the areas of Aboriginal complaints handling, first contact, business improvement, policy and research, and public relations and communications.

In 2017-18, ANZOA held their biennial conference in Wellington, New Zealand. In addition to staff attendance as delegates, the Acting Assistant Ombudsman Monitoring participated in the 'Innovation Showcase' panel session of the Conference, presenting on the Office's commitment to the Western Australian Parliament to examine and report to Parliament on the steps taken by government to give effect to recommendations arising from major own motion investigations not more than 12 months after the tabling of the investigation.

## 29th Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference

In November 2017, the Office hosted the 29<sup>th</sup> APOR Conference *Connections in our Australasian-Pacific Region*. Participants included the Ombudsman and senior staff of Ombudsman offices from Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Pacific Island nations of the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, the Kingdom of Tonga and Vanuatu.

The theme of the APOR Conference explored the present and future challenges and opportunities for the institution of the Ombudsman in the Australasian and Pacific Region in enhancing citizens' redress, undertaking major investigations intended to improve the administration of the laws of Parliament, supporting the rule of law as well as working collaboratively with developing nations in our region.

The APOR Conference was opened by Her Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC, Governor of Western Australia. APOR President and Ombudsman, Hong Kong, Ms Connie Lau JP provided an Opening Address, followed by an Opening Address by 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President of the IOI and Western Australian Ombudsman, Chris Field.

Importantly, the APOR Conference included a session on *Engagement with First Peoples*. This session considered the criticality of service delivery and engagement by Ombudsman offices that acknowledges, respects and supports the history, culture, and practice of First Peoples.

The Conference was part of a three day program, commencing with delegates being welcomed to Western Australia at a Reception at Parliament House hosted by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Honourable Peter Watson MLA on Monday 27 November 2017, followed by the Conference on Tuesday 28 November and a business meeting, an optional investigations training program and a tour of Kings Park for interstate and international delegates on Wednesday 29 November.

Copies of speeches and presentations, and photos of the event are available on the [Ombudsman's website](#).



Ombudsmen from the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region



Chris Field, Western Australian Ombudsman and 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice-President of the IOI (left), and Connie Lau JP, Ombudsman, Hong Kong and President of APOR (right), addressing the APOR Conference



APOR Conference delegates

## Providing Access to the Community

### Communicating with complainants

The Office provides a range of information and services to assist specific groups, and the public more generally, to understand the role of the Ombudsman and the complaint process. Many people find the Office's enquiry service and complaint clinics held during regional visits assist them to make their complaint. Other initiatives in 2017-18 include:

- Regular updating and simplification of the Ombudsman's publications and website to provide easy access to information for people wishing to make a complaint and those undertaking the complaint process;
- Ongoing promotion of the role of the Office and the type of complaints the Office handles through 'Ask the Ombudsman' on 6PR's Perth Tonight program; and
- The Office's Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program and Prison Program.

### Access to the Ombudsman's services

The Office continues to implement a number of strategies to ensure its complaint services are accessible to all Western Australians. These include access through online facilities as well as more traditional approaches by letter and through visits to the Office. The Office also holds complaint clinics and delivers presentations to

community groups, particularly through the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program. Initiatives to make services accessible include:

- Access to the Office through a Freecall number, which is free from landline phones;
- Access to the Office through email and online services. The importance of email and online access is demonstrated by its use this year in 66% of all complaints received;
- Information on how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman is available in 15 languages and features on the homepage of the Ombudsman's website. People may also contact the Office with the assistance of an interpreter by using the Translating and Interpreting Service;
- The Office's accommodation, building and facilities provide access for people with disability, including lifts that accommodate wheelchairs and feature braille on the access buttons and people with hearing and speech impairments can contact the Office using the National Relay Service;
- The Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program and Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program target awareness and accessibility for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians as well as children and young people;
- The Office attends events to raise community awareness of, and access to, its service, such as the Financial Counsellors' Association of WA conference in October 2017, and Homeless Connect in November 2017; and
- The Office's visits to adult prisons and the juvenile detention centre provide an opportunity for adult prisoners and juvenile detainees to meet with representatives of the Office and lodge complaints in person.

## Ombudsman website

The [Ombudsman's website](#) provides a wide range of information and resources for:

- Members of the public on the complaint handling services provided by the Office as well as links to other complaint bodies for issues outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction;
- Public authorities on decision making, complaint handling and conducting investigations;
- Children and young people as well as information for non-government organisations and government agencies that assist children and young people, including downloadable print material tailored for children and young people. The



youth pages can be accessed at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth);

- Access to the Ombudsman's reports such as the *Investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning*;
- The latest news on events and collaborative initiatives such as the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program; and
- Links to other key functions undertaken by the Office such as the Energy and Water Ombudsman website and other related bodies including other Ombudsmen and other Western Australian accountability agencies.

The website continues to be a valuable resource for the community and public sector as shown by the increased use of the website this year. In 2017-18:

- The total number of visits to the website has increased by 27% to 233,340 page visits compared to 184,221 page visits in 2016-17, and more than doubled since 2015-16;
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage and the Contact Us page) on the site were *The role of the Ombudsman* and *What you can complain about*; and
- The Office's *Effective Handling of Complaints Made to Your Organisation Guidelines* and *Procedural Fairness Guidelines* were the two most viewed documents. The Office's most recent reports also regularly featured in the top 10 most downloaded documents each month.

The total number of visits to the website has increased by 27% to 233,340 page visits compared to 184,221 page visits in 2016-17, and more than doubled since 2015-16.

The website content and functionality are continually reviewed and improved to ensure there is maximum accessibility to all members of the diverse Western Australian community. The site provides information in a wide range of [community languages](#) and is accessible to people with disability.

The youth pages can be accessed at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth).



## 'Ask the Ombudsman' on 6PR's Perth Tonight

The Office continues to provide access to its services through the Ombudsman's regular appearances on Radio 6PR's *Perth Tonight* program. Listeners who have complaints about public authorities or want to make enquiries have the opportunity to call in and speak with the Ombudsman live on air.

The segment allows the public to communicate a range of concerns with the Ombudsman. The segment also allows the Office to communicate key messages about the Ombudsman and Energy and Water Ombudsman jurisdictions, the outcomes that can be achieved for members of the public and how public administration can be improved. The Ombudsman appeared on the 'Ask the Ombudsman' segment in August and October 2017 and February, May and June 2018.

## Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during 2017-18. Two regional visits were conducted, to Bunbury, Busselton, Collie and Harvey in the South West Region in February and March 2018 and to Geraldton in the Mid West Region in June 2018. The visits included activities such as:

- Complaint clinics, which provided an opportunity for members of the local community to raise their concerns face-to-face with the staff of the Office;
- Meetings with the Aboriginal community to discuss government service delivery and where the agencies may be able to assist;
- Liaison with community, advocacy and consumer groups; and
- Liaison with public authorities, including meetings with senior officers and workshops for public officers on *Good Decision Making* and *Effective Complaint Handling*.

The Program is an important way for the Office to raise awareness of, access to, and use of, its services for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians.

The Program enables the Office to:

- Deliver key services directly to regional communities, particularly through complaint clinics;
- Increase awareness and accessibility among regional and Aboriginal Western Australians (who were historically under-represented in complaints to the Office); and
- Deliver key messages about the Office's work and services.

The Program also provides a valuable opportunity for staff to strengthen their understanding of the issues affecting people in regional and Aboriginal communities.

## Aboriginal engagement

In 2016-17, the Office developed the *Aboriginal Action Plan*, a comprehensive whole-of-office plan to address the significant disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The plan contributes to an overall goal of developing an organisation that is welcoming and culturally safe for Aboriginal people and meets the unique needs of the Aboriginal community it serves.

In 2018, the Office appointed two additional Aboriginal staff: a Senior Aboriginal Advisor that reports to the Office's Principal Aboriginal Liaison Officer and an Aboriginal Enquiry and Investigating Officer (both of which are identified s. 50(d) positions under the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*). The Office also engaged an Aboriginal artist to produce an artwork for the Office. The artwork is featured on the cover of this report and will be used as a theme for the Office's publications (see inside back cover for further details).

The Principal Aboriginal Liaison Officer and Senior Aboriginal Advisor attended events and meetings with government and non-government service providers to discuss particular issues affecting the Aboriginal community and raise awareness of the Office's role.

The Office also continued its engagement with the Aboriginal community through:

- Aboriginal community information sessions as part of its Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program;
- Visits to prisons and detention centres accompanied by Aboriginal staff and Aboriginal consultants, as part of its Prison Program; and
- Consultation with the Aboriginal community for major investigations and reports, including in relation to its function to monitor the Infringement Notices provisions of *The Criminal Code*. See further details in the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#).

The Principal Aboriginal Liaison Officer also coordinated cultural awareness information and events throughout the year, including a smoking ceremony attended by staff of the Office and offices of co-located agencies, and information to staff about culturally important dates and events being held in the community.

## Smoking Ceremony



Staff attending the Smoking Ceremony at Albert Facey House



From left: Alison Gibson, Principal Aboriginal Liaison Officer; Dr Richard Walley OAM; Nicole Casley, Senior Aboriginal Advisor; and Merinda Willis, Aboriginal Enquiry and Investigating Officer.

## Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office has a dedicated youth space on the Ombudsman Western Australia website with information about the Office specifically tailored for children and young people, as well as information for non-government organisations and government agencies that assist children and young people, and a suite of promotional materials targeted at, and tailored for, children and young people.

The Office continued its proactive visiting program to vulnerable groups of children in the child protection system. During 2017-18, the Office visited:

- The Kath French Secure Care Centre in June 2018;
- One residential group home in the Perth metropolitan area in June 2018; and
- Two family group homes and one residential group home in the South West Region in February and March 2018 and one residential group home in the Mid West Region in June 2018.

The Ombudsman has also continued regular visits to the Banksia Hill Detention Centre and engagement with community sector youth organisations in regional Western Australia under the Ombudsman's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.

The children and young people section of the Ombudsman's website can be found at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth).



## Prison Program

The Office continued the Prison Program during 2017-18. Eight visits were made to prisons and the juvenile detention centre to raise awareness of the role of the Ombudsman and enhance accessibility to the Office for adult prisoners and juvenile detainees in Western Australia.

## Speeches and Presentations

The Ombudsman and other staff delivered speeches and presentations throughout the year at local, national and international conferences and events.

### Ombudsman's speeches and presentations

- *Ethics, Professionalism and Confidentiality*, presented to University of Western Australia Legal Internship Students in August 2017;
- *The Ombudsman*, presented to University of Western Australia Foundation of Public Law Students in October 2017;
- *29<sup>th</sup> Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference*, Opening Address, in November 2017;

Speeches by the Ombudsman are available on the [Ombudsman's website](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au).

## Speeches and presentations by other staff

- *Ombudsman Western Australia*, to East Metropolitan Health Service Aboriginal Health Forum in July 2017;
- *The Western Australian Ombudsman* to members of the community in sessions held in collaboration with the Public Sector Commission and the Office of the Information Commissioner titled 'Building public trust: Integrity, accountability and transparency in the WA public sector', held in July, October, and November 2017;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman*, to the Independent Visitors Service Conference in October 2017;
- *The Role of the Ombudsman*, to the Aboriginal Legal Service Justice Conference in November 2017;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman*, to Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility staff in July 2017, Casuarina Prison staff in December 2017 and Acacia Prison staff in June 2018;
- *The Role of the Ombudsman*, to University of Western Australia administrative law students in February 2018;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman*, to staff at the City of Joondalup and the City of Stirling in April 2018; and
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman* to Edith Cowan University administrative law students in April 2018.

## Liaison with Public Authorities

### Liaison relating to complaint resolution

The Office liaised with a range of bodies in relation to complaint resolution in 2017-18, including:

- The Department of Justice;
- The Department of Transport;
- The Department of Education;
- The Department of Communities;
- Western Australia Police;
- The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services;
- The Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- The Corruption and Crime Commission; and
- Various local governments.

## Liaison relating to reviews and own motion investigations

The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its reviews of child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities and its own motion investigations.

See further details in the [Child Death Review section](#), the [Family and Domestic Violence Fatality Review section](#), and the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#).

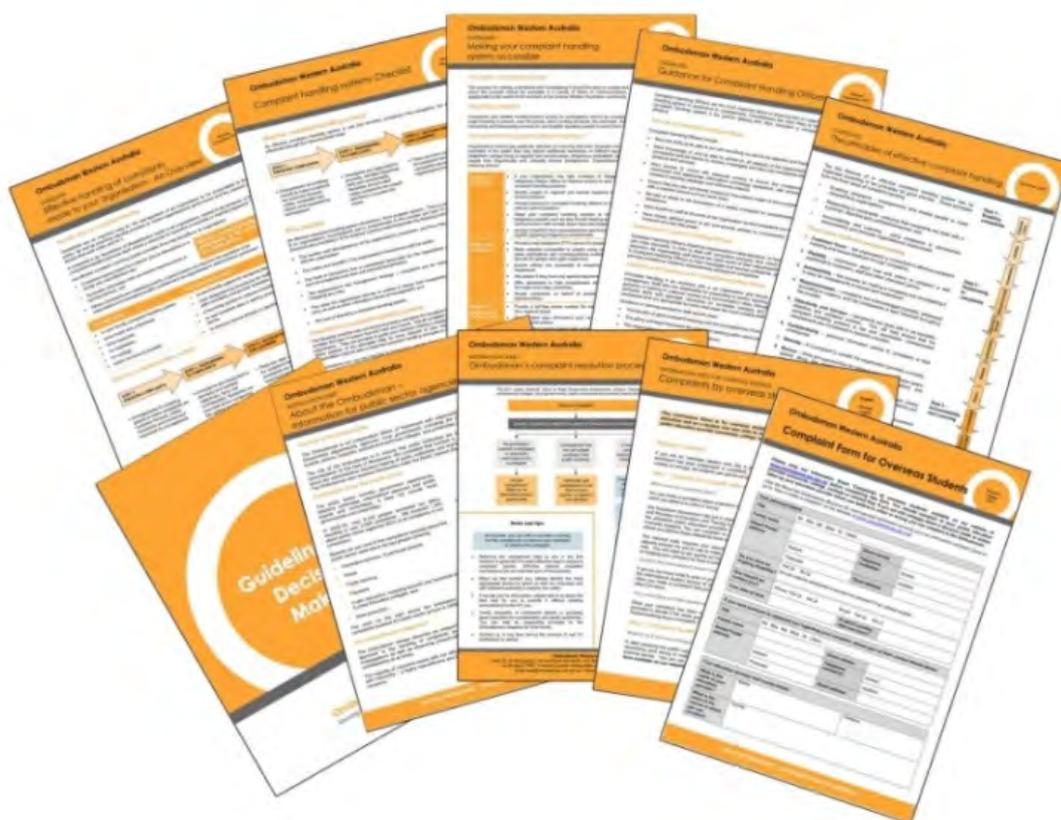
## Liaison relating to inspection and monitoring functions

The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its inspection and monitoring functions.

See further details in the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#).

## Publications

The Office has a comprehensive range of publications about the role of the Ombudsman to assist complainants and public authorities, which are available on the Ombudsman's website. For a full listing of the Office's publications, see [Appendix 3](#).



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