

## About the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial officer who reports directly to Parliament. The Ombudsman receives, investigates and resolves complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities, undertakes own motion investigations, reviews certain child deaths, reviews family and domestic violence fatalities and undertakes inspection and monitoring functions.

The Ombudsman concurrently holds the roles of Energy and Water Ombudsman and Chair, State Records Commission.

## Ombudsman's Overview

A principal role of the Ombudsman is to investigate and resolve complaints from Western Australians. In 2017-18, we received 13,831 contacts, comprised of 11,596 enquiries and 2,235 complaints.

Complaints must be resolved effectively and efficiently. In the last year, 94% of complaints were resolved within three months. The average age of complaints as at 30 June 2007 was 173 days. As at 30 June 2018, it is 33 days. In that same time, the cost of resolving complaints has reduced by 36%, from \$2,941 in 2007-08 to \$1,879 in 2017-18.



A critical role undertaken by the Ombudsman is the review of certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. In 2017-18, we made 39 recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. Timely review processes have resulted in nearly two-thirds of all reviews being completed within six months. In 2017-18, we tabled in Parliament the report on a major own motion investigation, *Investigation into ways to prevent or reduce child deaths by drowning*, that contained 25 recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning.

At the completion of investigations and reviews the Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations. In 2017-18, for the eleventh consecutive year, 100% of my recommendations were accepted. A critical additional step is provided for in the Ombudsman's legislation to give confidence to Parliament about the steps that have been taken to give effect to these recommendations.

In April 2014, we tabled in Parliament a report titled *Investigation into ways that State Government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people*. In 2017-18, we undertook significant work on *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people*, to be tabled in Parliament in 2018-19.

Further still, for the first time, we have included a review of the steps taken to give effect to the recommendations arising from the review of child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. This initiative will now be a permanent part of our reporting to Parliament.

In addition to investigating complaints, reviewing certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities, and undertaking major own motion investigations, we undertake a range of other statutory functions. In 2017-18, in accordance with *The Criminal Code*, my Office provided *A report on the monitoring of the infringement notices provisions of The Criminal Code* to the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police. The report was tabled in Parliament by the Minister for Police on 30 November 2017. At over 400 pages in length, across five volumes, this scrutiny, importantly, included review of the impact of the operation of the provisions on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Overall, I found that considerable positive work has been undertaken by Western Australia Police (**WAPOL**) to implement Criminal Code infringement notices effectively. At the same time, I identified opportunities for further work to be undertaken by WAPOL. The report makes 34 recommendations relating to proposed amendments to the relevant regulations made under *The Criminal Code* as well as the proposed introduction of, or amendments to, other legislation, schemes, policies, procedures and other measures. I am very pleased that WAPOL accepted each of the recommendations directed to them.

The Ombudsman serves all Western Australians living and working in our vast State. To enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, our services by Aboriginal Western Australians and those living or working in the regions, we visited Bunbury, Busselton, Collie and Harvey in February and March 2018 and Geraldton in June 2018.

My Office has a profound commitment to listening to, working with, and for, Aboriginal Western Australians. This year we continued implementation of our inaugural *Aboriginal Action Plan* which includes a wide range of strategies and actions to enhance our services for, and engagement with, Aboriginal Western Australians.

My Office is also strongly committed to enhancing awareness of, and accessibility to, our services for children and young people. This year this included a dedicated visiting program to vulnerable groups of children and young people in the child protection system and a range of strategies and activities to enhance awareness of, and access to, our services for children and young people.

I am deeply grateful to my Deputy, Assistant Ombudsmen and staff team for their singular commitment to serving Parliament and citizens. Their level of professionalism, integrity and commitment to public service is of the very highest level.

The information we provide in our annual report is designed not just to ensure transparency of our work, but information that can contribute to improving the administration of the laws of the Western Australian Parliament. As Western Australian Ombudsman, and an officer of the Western Australian Parliament, it is a privilege to present the report of our work in 2017-18.



Chris Field  
**Ombudsman**