

# Newsletter of the Western Australian Ombudsman



Edition 13 – August 2012

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## Raising awareness and accessibility in the Pilbara

Now in its fourth year, the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program seeks to ensure that the office of the Ombudsman is accessible to people living and working in regional Western Australia as well as Indigenous communities.

In August, the Program will be conducted in the Pilbara region, including South Hedland and Karratha.

The Ombudsman, Energy Ombudsman and Information Commissioner will be joined by members of their staff.

Ombudsman, Chris Field, said an important feature of the Program is collaboration between agencies.

“Strengthening our relationships with regional communities is a key priority for our office and regional visits provide an opportunity for staff in the public sector and local government as well as community members to speak to officers from a number of agencies face-to-face.”

The Program includes a series of liaison sessions with Indigenous communities as part of our initiative to improve access to our services for Indigenous Western Australians.

The Program will also feature:

- A seminar for public sector agencies and local governments aimed at strengthening the links between accountability agencies and the regions;
- A similar seminar for community groups; and
- A number of complaints clinics where members of the public may bring us their concerns that have not been able to be resolved with agencies.

Agencies will also have the opportunity to attend a separate workshop facilitated by Ombudsman staff on topics including good decision making and complaint resolution.

**If you would like to know more about our visit to the Pilbara, contact us for details on 9220 7567, 1800 117 000 (toll free) or email [outreach@ombudsman.wa.gov.au](mailto:outreach@ombudsman.wa.gov.au)**



Above: Ombudsman Chris Field with Principal Indigenous Liaison Officer, June Councillor, discussing Indigenous outreach strategies for the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.

## Message from the Ombudsman

In May I attended the 2012 Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association Conference where we recognised 50 years of Ombudsman services across Australia and New Zealand and discussed how we are planning to meet key challenges in the future.

I am pleased to welcome our new Director Energy, Marcus Claridge, and Communications Manager, Erin D'Mello, and I am looking forward to a number of important events we have coming up including the fourth year of our Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program which this year will take place in the Pilbara region during August.

Finally, I encourage you to take note that we have recently relocated to Albert Facey House and our new contact details can be found on page 7.

I hope you find this edition of the Ombudsman newsletter both informative and engaging.



Chris Field



## Ombudsman reappointed for further five year term

In March 2012, the Ombudsman, Chris Field, was reappointed for a further five year term, having commenced office in March 2007.

“It is a great privilege to have been reappointed for a further term of five years and to continue to lead my outstanding team of staff.”

“The Ombudsman is an accessible source of administrative justice for Western Australians and also contributes to improving public administration through recommendations that arise from resolving complaints and from undertaking major own-motion investigations about matters of public importance.”

Chris Field said the office of the Ombudsman is recognised as one of the key integrity and accountability agencies in government.

“We also have an important role in protecting and promoting the rule of law,” he said.

“We are committed to ensuring that our office continues to provide services to the Parliament and the people of Western Australia that are of the highest quality,” said Mr Field.



# Inaugural Government Accountability unit at the University of Western Australia

Earlier this year, the Ombudsman co-coordinated with Professor Simon Young, Faculty of Law, University of Western Australia a five day intensive unit 'Government Accountability – Law and Practice.'

Following an opening address by the (then) Treasurer and Attorney General, The Honourable Christian Porter MLA, the course explored the history and development of:

- the role of government in the modern State and the how and why of government accountability;
- the theoretical underpinnings, development, evolving law and practice, and regulation of accountability agencies; and
- the rule of law and the role of accountability agencies in its protection and promotion.

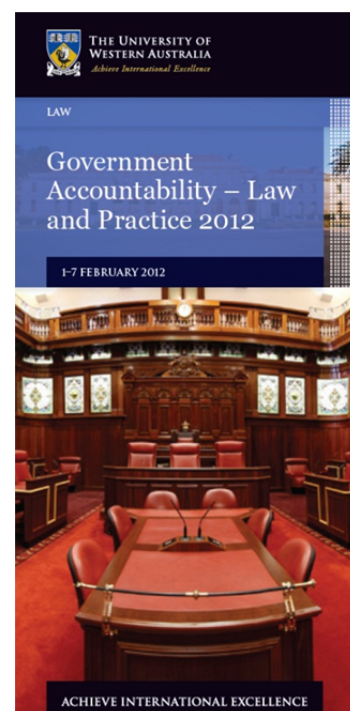
Along with presentations from the Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman and Simon Young, the course was also a unique opportunity for students to hear guest presentations from public sector leaders, including leaders of key accountability agencies, namely:

- Sven Bluemmel, Information Commissioner;
- Roger Macknay, Corruption and Crime Commissioner;
- Neil Morgan, Inspector of Custodial Services;
- Colin Murphy, Auditor General;
- Sue Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, Water Corporation;
- Sharyn O'Neill, Director General, Department of Education;
- Lyndon Rowe, Chairman, Economic Regulation Authority;
- Winthrop Professor, Chris Steytler, (then) Parliamentary Inspector of the Corruption and Crime Commission; and
- Mal Wauchope, Public Sector Commissioner.

"The unit has been designed to develop thinking among students about the evolution, law, practice and future of government accountability," said Ombudsman Chris Field.

"The generosity of the Treasurer, the heads of key accountability agencies and other public sector leaders in preparing for, and speaking at, the unit was greatly appreciated by Simon, myself and students."

Feedback received from those who participated in the unit was extremely positive.



# Knowledge sharing with Indonesian counterparts

In March, the Indonesian corruption watchdog, KPK, visited Western Australia and met with the Assistant Ombudsman, Complaint Resolution, Sarah Cowie to learn about the role of the Ombudsman.

Hosted by the Corruption and Crime Commission, the Indonesian KPK visited Western Australia as part of an information and knowledge sharing experience.

Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field, said maintaining strong links with our local, national and international integrity and accountability agencies is a priority for the office.



Above: Information sharing session with Indonesian KPK delegates.

“Accountability and transparency in the public sector is wider than the office of the Ombudsman,” said Mr Field. “I welcome opportunities like these to collaborate and share information with our overseas counterparts.”

Ms Cowie’s presentation to the Indonesian delegates gave them insight into the Ombudsman’s role in handling complaints and promoting accountable and transparent decision making in the public sector.

“The presentation provided an opportunity to further strengthen our relationship with Indonesia through sharing and exchanging information and mutual experiences about complaint handling and investigation practices,” said Ms Cowie.

Ms Cowie said the Office has maintained strong links with our Indonesian counterparts since 2005.

“The Office has been part of the Indonesian Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program, funded through the Australian Government’s AusAID program, under the AusAID Government Partnership Fund for the last six years,” she said.

“Developing international cross-institutional relationships and linking Ombudsman offices with the international Ombudsman community has been a key focus of this program.”

The Office has contributed to the program through placement activities in Indonesia and hosting Indonesian Ombudsman staff placements in Perth.

***“The presentation provided an opportunity to further strengthen our relationship with Indonesia through sharing and exchanging information and mutual experiences about complaint handling and investigation practices,” said Ms Cowie.***



## Staff profiles

### Director Energy, Marcus Claridge

We are pleased to welcome Marcus Claridge to the role of Director, Energy Ombudsman.

Marcus said the work of the Energy Ombudsman was both exciting and challenging.

“The Energy Ombudsman receives, investigates and helps resolve complaints from residential and small business customers about their electricity or gas provider,” said Marcus.

“From these complaints we identify systemic and emerging issues, as well as monitor the outcomes of complaints and report these issues and outcomes to relevant bodies.”

“We also undertake outreach, education, liaison and other activities to ensure awareness and accessibility to the Energy Ombudsman.”

Marcus has over ten years experience with the Royal Hong Kong Police in criminal investigation and intelligence and 17 years with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission.

Marcus holds qualifications in financial planning and management.



### Communications Manager, Erin D’Mello



We also welcome Erin D’Mello who commenced in April as Communications Manager.

Erin brings with her varied experience gained across a number of communications roles in the public and private sectors including strategic communications, publications management, online communications, events management, education, copywriting and editing.

Prior to commencing at the office of the Ombudsman, Erin worked as a communications consultant at Western Power where she was editor of the organisation’s internal and external magazine.

Erin has also worked in similar roles at the Department of Corrective Services, Department of Commerce and WorkCover WA.

Erin said she looks forward to adding strategic value and utilising her strengths for the growth and development of the office’s communications.

“I hope to continue to raise awareness of the Ombudsman’s functions through internal and external communications that are both accessible by the Western Australian community and deliver effective results.”



## Celebrating excellence in annual reporting

The office of the Ombudsman has been recognised at the W.S. Lonnie Awards for excellence in annual reporting, winning the bronze award in the 'Agencies Less than 100 FTE' category.

We also received special commendations in the Department of Treasury Award for Performance Reporting category and the Public Sector Commission Award for Good Governance category.

The awards are held annually and recognise excellence in annual reporting across the Western Australian public sector. All annual reports compiled by agencies within the sector are eligible to win a Lonnie Award.

Ombudsman Chris Field said that it was very pleasing to be recognised as having a good practice annual report.

"It is particularly pleasing to receive this award as the Ombudsman is an officer of Parliament and our Annual Report is one of the most important mechanisms for us to account to Parliament regarding our work," he said.

## New home for the office

The office of the Ombudsman has recently relocated to Albert Facey House, adjacent to the GPO building in Forrest Place.

Albert Facey House co-locates the following independent agencies: the Ombudsman, the Auditor General, the Economic Regulation Authority, the Information Commissioner, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and the Inspector of Custodial Services.

Our new contact details are below.



Above: View of Albert Facey House from the Perth train station overpass.

## Ombudsman Western Australia

### Contact Us

To subscribe to this newsletter or give feedback on its contents, email [newsletter@ombudsman.wa.gov.au](mailto:newsletter@ombudsman.wa.gov.au)

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