

Ombudsman participates in collaborative leadership program with Ombudsman Republik Indonesia

Ombudsman, Chris Field recently travelled to Jakarta, Indonesia between 3 and 4 July as part of a collaborative leadership program.

The Ombudsman, together with New South Wales Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave and Chief Ombudsman of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia, Danang Girindrawardana, participated in a leadership dialogue and training program over two days with Ombudsmen and senior staff of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia.

Mr Field gave two presentations as part of the program, titled:

- Challenges and opportunities in expansion; and
- Opportunities in working with other integrity agencies

The Ombudsman also met with Mr Greg Moriarty, the Australian Ambassador to Indonesia on the visit.

“Western Australia has vital economic, social and governance links with the Asia Pacific Region. As Western Australian Ombudsman, and President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region, I place great importance on our relationship with our Asia Pacific Ombudsmen colleagues,” said Mr Field.

“This was a unique opportunity to work with the Chief Ombudsman, Ombudsmen and senior staff of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia.”

This visit was part of a wider program of collaboration between the Commonwealth Ombudsman, New South Wales Ombudsman, Western Australian Ombudsman and the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia, commenced in 2005.

The overall aim of the program is to provide greater access across a larger portion of Indonesia to more effective and sustainable complaint management services.

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Message from the Ombudsman

An important area of our work is the undertaking of own motion investigations. You can read more about own motion investigations on pages 4 and 5. Our newest publication, *Guidelines for the Management of Personal Information*, is now available on our website to assist State Government agencies to implement good practices for managing personal information. You can read more about this on page 5. In March, we visited the South West as part of our Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program – a program commenced in 2009 to enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, our office for Aboriginal Western Australians and those living and working in regional Western Australia. You can read about the visit on page 3. Only recently, three other important initiatives took place. First, the annual Integrity Coordinating Group Forum, second, the inaugural Integrity Coordinating Group Regional Forum (see page 6), and, third, a visit of three Australian Ombudsmen (including myself) to Jakarta to work with our colleagues at the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (see page 1).



Chris Field

Assistant Ombudsman provides training for new staff of Ombudsman Republik Indonesia

In January, Sarah Cowie, Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution, together with Commonwealth Ombudsman representatives, visited Ombudsman Republik Indonesia and provided training to newly recruited staff.

“Last year, Ombudsman Republik Indonesia opened 15 new representative offices in various provinces across Indonesia and we provided the training program to 34 new staff in Jakarta and to 11 new staff in Bali,” Ms Cowie said.

“The program covered modules on conducting investigations, dealing with complaints and complainants as well as agency relationships. In addition to the training, there were also many opportunities for participants to discuss issues as they arose.”

Mr Field said developing international cross-institutional relationships and linking Ombudsman offices with the international Ombudsman community has been a key focus of the program.

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



Above: Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution, Sarah Cowie with Chief Ombudsman of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia, Danang Girindrawardana in January.



South West success for regional awareness program

Staff from the office of the Ombudsman met with, and provided training to, nearly 80 representatives from public sector and local government agencies in the South West region as part of the Ombudsman's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during March.

The office of the Ombudsman and Energy Ombudsman were joined on the visit with representatives from the Office of the Information Commissioner and Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (**HaDSCO**).

A number of training, information sessions and complaint clinics were conducted over four days in the towns of Harvey, Collie and Bunbury.

The Ombudsman said strengthening our relationships with regional and Aboriginal communities was a key priority for the office.

"Our office had identified that these two particular groups were historically under-represented among our complainants," he said.

"Regional visits provide an opportunity for public sector and local government staff, as well as members of the community, to speak to officers from a number of accountability agencies face-to-face."

"Together with HaDSCO, our office coordinated a number of complaint clinics where members of the public could bring concerns that they were unable to resolve with public authorities or health and disability services directly to staff from our offices."

"Collaborating with other key accountability agencies such as HaDSCO and the Office of the Information Commissioner to facilitate the Program allows us to ensure the maximum benefit from these visits for the community."

The Ombudsman's four day Program also included:

- A series of liaison sessions with Aboriginal communities in Collie and Bunbury;
- Complaint clinics in Collie, Bunbury and Harvey;
- A seminar for public sector agencies and local governments with presentations by the Ombudsman, Information Commissioner and Director of HaDSCO;
- An expo for community groups in Bunbury;
- A meeting with the Bunbury Youth Advisory Council; and
- Training sessions for public sector agencies in good decision making and effective complaint handling.

If you would like to know more about our Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program, visit [our website](#) or contact us on 9220 7555.



Above: Participants engage in a written activity as part of a workshop on Effective Decision Making hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman.



Own motion investigations

Own motion investigations are one of the key areas of the Ombudsman's work. In this feature we speak to Kim Lazenby, Assistant Ombudsman Administrative Improvement to look at own motion investigations, how the Ombudsman decides which issues to investigate and the types of investigations that are undertaken.

Own motion investigations explained

The majority of Ombudsman investigations arise from complaints made to our office. But not all investigations arise directly from complaints. 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 in Western Australia that are evidence-based, proportionate, practical and consider the costs, as well as the benefits, of proposed improvements," said Ms Lazenby.

The selection process

According to Ms Lazenby, administrative improvement topics are selected on the basis of a number of criteria.

"Key criteria include the number of complaints received by the Ombudsman, patterns and trends arising from child death or family and domestic violence fatality reviews, the likely public interest in the identified issues of concern and the number of people likely to be affected," she said.

"We also look at whether other investigations of the issue have been done recently or are in progress and if the investigation has potential to improve administration across the public sector. We also consider whether the chosen topic to investigate is the best and most efficient use of our resources."

"Own motion investigations are intended to result in improvements to public administration in Western Australia that are evidence-based, proportionate, practical and consider the costs, as well as the benefits, of proposed improvements."

The investigation process

After a topic has been identified, the office of the Ombudsman will firstly carry out preliminary research to assist in planning the scope and objectives of the investigation.

"Our office will then inform the agencies involved about the project and consult regularly with staff at all levels to ensure that the facts and our understanding of the issues are correct and any findings are evidence-based," said Ms Lazenby.

Investigation methodology will differ with each investigation but may involve:

1. Literature reviews
2. Comprehensive studies of other agencies, including interstate and international agencies
3. File and other documentation reviews
4. Field work
5. Interviews



“We also ensure that agencies are provided with regular progress reports of the investigation with a formal opportunity to comment on draft findings and any proposed recommendations. Recommendations for administrative improvements are based on evidence gathered during investigations, and are designed to be a proportionate response to the findings made during the investigation.”

Completed investigations

Our three most recently completed own motion investigations are:

- [Investigation into ways that State Government departments can prevent or reduce sleep-related infants deaths \(2012\)](#)
- [Planning for children in care: An Ombudsman's own motion investigation into the administration of the care planning provisions of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 \(2011\)](#)
- [The management of personal information – good practice and opportunities for improvement \(2011\)](#)

Current topics of investigation

The office is currently undertaking:

- An investigation into ways that State Government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide of young people; and
- An investigation into local government collection of outstanding rates.

For more information about the Ombudsman's own motion investigation function, or to view a copy of any of the reports, please visit http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Improving_Admin/Improving_Pub_Admin.htm.

New guidelines give advice to agencies on managing personal information



Following an own motion investigation of the management of personal information in three state government agencies, the Ombudsman has published a new guideline detailing good practice principles to assist agencies on how to effectively manage personal information.

Ombudsman, Chris Field, said that the good practice principles in the new guidelines detail how and when personal information can be collected, how it should be used and disclosed, and storage and security of electronic, paper and sensitive information. “The good practice principles also detail how individuals should be able to access that information and have it corrected if it is wrong and how agencies can ensure transparent management of personal information. The self-assessment checklist assists agencies to check their own management of personal information against the good practice principles,” he said.

The Ombudsman Western Australia *Guidelines for the Management of Personal Information* can be downloaded from our website. Requests for hard copies or alternative formats can be made to our office on (08) 9220 7555 or email mail@ombudsman.wa.gov.au.



Integrity Coordinating Group Forum 2013



The Integrity Coordinating Group's (**ICG**) annual Forum was held on Tuesday 2 July 2013 at the Duxton Hotel, Perth.

The ICG is comprised of the Public Sector Commissioner, Auditor General, Corruption and Crime Commissioner, Ombudsman and Information Commissioner.

ICG members discussed a series of hypotheticals around the offer, acceptance and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality, and responded to questions from attendees.

The ICG also launched its new integrity product, *Gifts, benefits and hospitality: A guide to good practice* at the Forum.

Above: The ICG members form a panel and respond to questions from attendees around the offer, acceptance and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality at the ICG Forum.

The Forum was attended by 280 public sector, local government and university leaders.

For more information on the work of the ICG, visit www.icg.wa.gov.au

ICG visits Geraldton

The Ombudsman joined his ICG colleagues in Geraldton during May for the inaugural ICG Regional Forum (**the Forum**).

More than 50 representatives from State Government agencies and local governments attended the Forum.

The Forum provided attendees with information on the roles of each of the ICG members as well as discussion on conflicts of interest and the offer, acceptance and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality.



ICG members from left: Mr Colin Murphy, Auditor General; Mr Chris Field, Ombudsman; Mr Mal Wauchope, Public Sector Commissioner; Mr Mark Herron, A/Corruption and Crime Commissioner; and Mr Sven Bluemmel, Information Commissioner.



Ombudsman presents WA Police with complaint handling award



Above: Ombudsman, Chris Field presents WA Police with the Complaint Handling Award at the W.S Lonnie Awards.

The Ombudsman presented Western Australia Police with the Complaint Handling Award at the recent 2012-13 W.S. Lonnie Awards.

The W.S. Lonnie Awards recognise excellence in annual reporting.

Upon presenting the award to WA Police, the Ombudsman, Chris Field, said the annual report is an important vehicle for a public sector organisation to account for its handling of complaints.

“One of the key factors in maintaining confidence in the public sector is agencies responding well to client difficulties with service delivery,” said Mr Field.

“Annual reports provide an invaluable opportunity for organisations to talk about the successes, as well as the challenges and opportunities for improvement, in complaint handling.”

Ombudsman Western Australia

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