

# Western Australian Ombudsman

Edition 5 - June 2009

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## Goldfields-Esperance visit improves access and awareness in the region

Over three days in early May, the Western Australian Ombudsman and Energy Ombudsman held a series of seminars, workshops and complaints clinics in Kalgoorlie.

The purpose of these events was to meet with community members, community groups, Indigenous groups, government agencies, local governments and others to resolve complaints and promote good administrative practice.

The event was organised with the Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, Office of Health Review, Freedom of Information Commission and Commonwealth Ombudsman who joined the Ombudsman's office on the visit.

Western Australian Ombudsman, Chris Field, said the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program visit was an important priority for the agencies.

"We want to ensure that the services of our agencies are as accessible as they can possibly be to Western Australians living and working in regional areas," said Mr Field.

"We want to go to the regions and learn from the community what we can do to better serve their needs".

During the visit, the accountability agencies held a number of Complaints Clinics.

"We were very pleased to be able to offer quick, informal resolution to the concerns community members had about government services," Mr Field said.

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Pictured from left to right: Dr Ruth Shean, Commissioner for Public Sector Standards, Anne Donaldson, Director of the Office of Health Review, Grace Grandia, Projects Officer from the Office of the Information Commissioner, Chris Field, Western Australian Ombudsman and Sandra Pelham, Investigations Office from the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office.

## Message from the Ombudsman

In this edition, we are pleased to announce the release of our Strategic Plan. The development of the Strategic Plan follows a process of organisational change over the past 18 months that has laid the foundation for the years ahead. The Strategic Plan defines the vision, mission and values of our office and guides the direction of our activities and initiatives for the next three years.



We also report on our successful regional visit to Kalgoorlie-Boulder. The regional visit gave us the opportunity to meet with community members, community groups, Indigenous groups, government agencies and local governments to discuss issues that matter to the region and raise awareness of, and accessibility to, our services.

We look forward to the continuing success of the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program with our next regional visit to take place in Geraldton at the end of this month.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Field'. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Chris Field

### *Helpful Information*

## Understanding who we are and what we do

Two new Information sheets are available to give complainants and agencies a quick and easy to understand overview of the jurisdiction and functions of the Ombudsman and the process for assessing and investigating complaints:

- For complainants, *Information for Complainants - Ombudsman Western Australia* summarises the role of the Ombudsman, what our office can and cannot investigate, how complaints are made and a flow chart shows how the complaint assessment, investigation and reporting process works. The Information Sheet is available on our website at <http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/publications/guidelines.htm>.
- For agencies, *Information for agencies - About the Ombudsman* summarises the role and functions of the Ombudsman and includes a flow chart showing how complaints are assessed, investigated and reported. This Information Sheet is also available on our website at <http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/publications/guidelines.htm>.



# New Strategic Plan released for 2009-2011

We are very pleased to announce the Ombudsman Western Australia Strategic Plan 2009-2011. The development of the Plan has involved significant consultation and builds on ongoing improvements in the way we do our work.

“The development of the Plan follows a process of organisational change over the past 18 months that has laid the foundation for the years ahead,” notes Ombudsman Chris Field. “The Plan articulates our values – to be fair, independent and accountable and incorporates our recently enhanced role and functions. Ultimately, the Plan reflects our commitment to serving the Western Australian Parliament and public in the most efficient, effective and responsible manner possible.”

The Ombudsman Western Australia Strategic Plan 2009-2011 defines the vision, mission and values of our office and guides the direction of our activities and initiatives for the next three years.

## Our Vision

Fair, accountable and responsive decision making and practices by public authorities.

## Our Mission

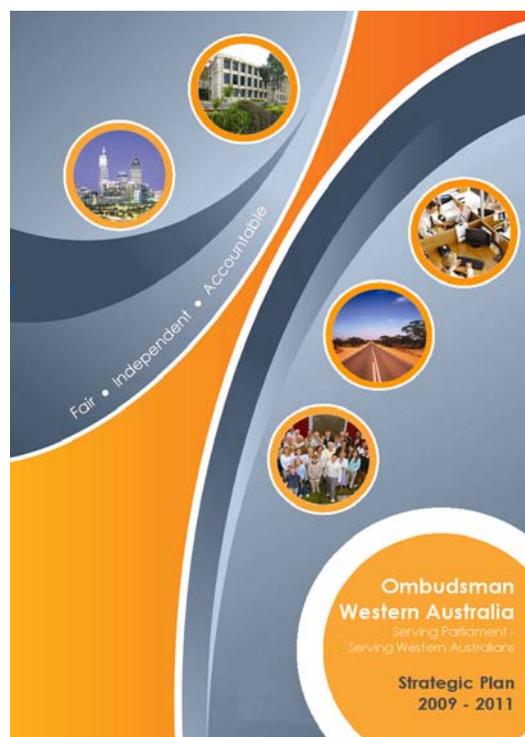
To serve Parliament and Western Australians by:

- Resolving complaints about the decision making of public authorities; and
- Improving the standard of public administration.

## Our Values

We value being:

- **Fair:** We observe procedural fairness at all times, use a ‘no surprises’ approach in all of our work and provide our services equitably to all Western Australians.
- **Independent:** The Ombudsman is an officer of the Parliament, independent of the Government of the day and independent of all parties in dispute.
- **Accountable:** We should be, and are, accountable for our performance and proper expenditure of taxpayers’ money. Being accountable means being:
  - **Rigorous:** We undertake work that is important and is supported by appropriate evidence.
  - **Responsible:** All recommendations for change to public administration must be practical and proportionate to the problem identified and must demonstrate a net public benefit.
  - **Efficient:** We undertake our work in a timely way at least cost. We value working with other agencies that further good public administration but we should never duplicate their work.



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## Our Strategic Direction

Over the next three years, our operational and strategic activities will focus on five key areas:

- Complaint resolution;
- Improved public administration;
- Child death review and investigation;
- Audit of telecommunications intercepts and review of statutory compliance in relation to appeals by overseas university students; and
- Good governance and maintaining a skilled and valued workforce.

We will assess these activities against key measures of success set in the Strategic Plan and report on the outcomes in our Annual Report and other publications.

The full Strategic Plan is available on our website at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au).

## Goldfields-Esperance visit improves access & awareness in the region *continued from Page 1*

“We want to ensure that the community is aware of the services that we provide, how to access these services when needed and that the services are provided in a timely and effective way.”

In addition to resolving people concerns, the office was also able to give advice, information and referral. The Ombudsman’s Complaint Resolution team will be following up on all concerns raised to ensure they are appropriately addressed.

The Ombudsman’s office will maintain contact with the Goldfields-Esperance community to ensure ongoing awareness of, and accessibility to, the Ombudsman’s services and looks forward to future visits to the region.



Ombudsman Chris Field presents in Kalgoorlie.

## Case Study

# Regional Complaints Clinic quickly resolves issue for local resident

At one of our recent Complaints Clinics in the Goldfields-Esperance region, a complainant sought our assistance with an issue relating to the renewal of a licence required for him to undertake his work. The complainant had been unable to work for six weeks due to the delay taken in renewing his licence by the relevant public authority, and this was having a significant financial impact on the complainant and his family.

The complainant had provided the public authority with proof of his compliance with licensing requirements, payment and had made numerous telephone calls to try to resolve the delay.

The Ombudsman's office contacted the public authority concerned immediately to request prompt action to resolve the issue and within four hours the complainant contacted our office to say thank you as the matter had been resolved and he was able to resume work the next day.

The complainant was very grateful that the regional Complaints Clinic had given him the opportunity to talk to someone in person, be listened to, and have his complaint resolved so quickly.

*This case highlights the benefits of the regional Complaints Clinics and how our assistance can achieve a quick, informal resolution to benefit the complainant.*

*While some complaints may take some time to resolve, the Ombudsman's office endeavours to seek early, informal resolution, where possible and can often assist complainants quickly and efficiently both from our Perth office and on our regional visits around the State.*

## Ombudsman's regional visit to Geraldton

The Ombudsman's next regional visit as part of the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program will take place in Geraldton on 30 June, 1 and 2 July 2009.

The events taking place as part of the Geraldton regional visit include:

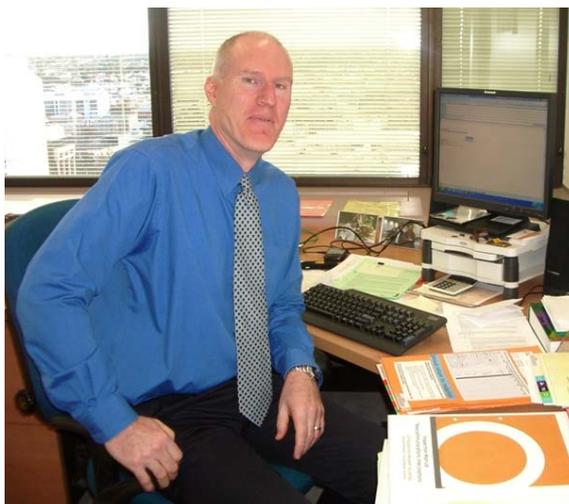
- Complaints clinics, that will provide an opportunity for the public to raise concerns face to face with the staff of the Western Australian Ombudsman, Energy Ombudsman, Office of Health Review and Freedom of Information Commission;
- A seminar and issues clinic for regionally-based public sector agencies and local governments to discuss good administrative practice, effective complaint/dispute resolution, ethical conduct and appropriate access to information;
- A seminar for community groups to discuss the role of the accountability agencies and how they can assist in complaint/dispute resolution;
- A workshop with Indigenous community groups on issues of interest to them and ways to improve accessibility to the accountability agencies; and
  - Individual meetings with key regional stakeholders.

A full program of events for the visit to Geraldton is available on the Ombudsman's website at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/raap.html](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/raap.html). To register your interest in attending one of the events listed above, phone the Program Coordinator on 9220 7555 or 1800 117 000 (toll free for country callers) or email [outreach@ombudsman.wa.gov.au](mailto:outreach@ombudsman.wa.gov.au).

## Staff Profile

### Andrew Harvey Assistant Ombudsman, Complaint Resolution

Andrew Harvey has been appointed to the role of Assistant Ombudsman, Complaints Resolution. Prior to joining the Ombudsman's office in March 2005, Andrew worked in a diverse range of senior management roles in Commonwealth and State public sector agencies, including as a Senior Manager at the Australian Bureau of Statistics and at the Office of the Auditor General where Andrew led teams managing compliance, control and accountability audits. He also managed the licensing of Western Australia's water, electricity and gas service providers at the Economic Regulation Authority. Andrew holds a Bachelor of Arts (Politics and Anthropology) and a Masters in Criminal Justice.



Andrew managed the Ombudsman office's investigation team from March 2005 until November 2007, when he became responsible for managing the introduction of the office's new case management system, Resolve. The new system provides significant benefits over the previous system in terms of greater flexibility, ease of use, improved searching facilities and better management of information. The new system is assisting Andrew and his team to further improve on timeliness and effectiveness in complaint and investigation handling through improved case management capabilities.

Andrew is looking forward to his role in continuing the significant improvements the Ombudsman's office has made in the past two years in the handling of complaints.

"The team has achieved very significant improvements to the timeliness of our complaint handling but we are excited about improving these even further, while at the same time continuing to concentrate on conducting high quality investigations," said Andrew.

## Ombudsman Western Australia

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