

## Ombudsman tables report in Parliament on investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people

The Western Australian Ombudsman recently tabled in Parliament an own motion investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people.

“Of child death notifications received by the office of the Ombudsman since the commencement of the child death review jurisdiction, nearly a third related to children aged 13 to 17 years old. Of these children, suicide was the most common circumstance of death, accounting for nearly forty per cent of deaths,” said Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field.

“Furthermore, and of serious concern, Aboriginal children were very significantly over-represented in the number of young people who died by suicide.

“For these reasons, I decided to undertake a major own motion investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people,” said Mr Field.

The Ombudsman’s investigation found that State government departments and authorities have already undertaken a significant amount of work that aims to prevent and reduce suicide by young people in Western Australia, however, there is still more work to be done.

The Ombudsman has identified practical opportunities for individual agencies to enhance their provision of services to young people.

“Critically, as the reasons for suicide by young people are multi-factorial and cross a range of government agencies, there is further work to be done on the development of a collaborative, inter-agency approach to preventing suicide by young people,” said Mr Field.

In addition to the findings and recommendations, the comprehensive level of data and analysis contained in the report will, the Ombudsman believes, be a valuable new resource for government departments and authorities to inform their planning and work with young people. In particular, the analysis suggests this planning and work target four groups of young people that have been identified.

“Suicide by young people is a tragedy. Government agencies, through collaborative policy development and service provision, have a vital role to play in preventing youth suicide. Ultimately, my investigation, and this report, is intended to enhance and improve the way that government agencies undertake this vital work.”

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## Message from the Ombudsman

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter for 2014. The first half of the year has been positive and productive for the office. As you will read in this edition, on 1 January a new water jurisdiction commenced, with my role as Energy Ombudsman changing to that of the Energy and Water Ombudsman. Also in this edition, we feature a wide range of our work, including the tabling in Parliament of a major own motion investigation report into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people, and planning for our regional visit to Kalgoorlie as part of our ongoing Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.



Chris Field

## Ombudsman tables report in Parliament on investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people

*Continued from page 1*

“I extend my deepest personal sympathy to the parents, families and communities that have been personally affected by youth suicide,” said Mr Field.

The report of the investigation, which makes 22 recommendations about ways that State government departments and authorities can reduce or prevent suicide by young people, can be found at: [Investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people](#).





## Regional awareness program to take place in Kalgoorlie

The office of the Western Australian Ombudsman will be visiting Kalgoorlie-Boulder between 30 July and 1 August as part of the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.

The offices of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Information Commissioner, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and the Commissioner for Victims of Crime will join the visit.

Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field said that improving awareness of the Ombudsman's role, and strengthening relationships with regional communities, continue to be key priorities for his office.

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

The events taking place in Kalgoorlie-Boulder include:

- Complaints clinics, which provide an opportunity for members of the local community to raise their concerns face-to-face with the staff from the agencies;
- A seminar for regionally-based public sector agencies and local governments to discuss good administrative practice, effective complaint/dispute resolution and appropriate access to information;
- Individual meetings with Aboriginal community members to discuss government service delivery and where the agencies may be able to assist; and
- Training and workshops for regionally-based public sector agencies and local governments.

"The Program is an important collaborative opportunity that allows multiple agencies to efficiently, and effectively, reach out to the communities that we serve," said Mr Field.

For details of events for Kalgoorlie-Boulder and information on how to register to attend, visit:

[http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/CPS\\_Info/RAAP.htm](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/CPS_Info/RAAP.htm)

**Kalgoorlie Program of Events**  
30 July - 1 August 2014

Events for the public	Events for public authorities and local governments	Registration details/ further information
<b>Complaints Clinics</b> <b>Thursday 31 July</b> 12:00 - 2:00pm and 4:30 - 6:00pm John Forrest Room Railway Motel, 51 Forrest St, Kalgoorlie <b>Friday 1 August</b> 8:30 - 10:30am John Forrest Room Railway Motel, Kalgoorlie	<b>Public Authority Workshops</b> <b>Wednesday 30 July</b> Workshop 1: Good Decision Making 9:30am - 12:45pm & Workshop 2: Effective Complaint Resolution 1:15 - 4:30pm	All events are <b>FREE</b> and available to everyone.  Registration is essential for Workshops and Seminar.  Phone: (08) 9220 7556 Fax: 1800 117 000 Email: <a href="mailto:ombudsman.wa.gov.au">ombudsman.wa.gov.au</a>

**Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program**  
Kalgoorlie  
30 July - 1 August

The Program is an initiative of:

- The Western Australian Ombudsman serves Parliament and Western Australians by resolving complaints about the decisions made by public authorities and improving the standards of public administration.
- The Western Australian Ombudsman is also the Energy and Water Ombudsman. The Energy and Water Ombudsman receives and resolves complaints about electricity, gas and water services providers.

In collaboration with:

- The Information Commissioner deals with complaints made about the decisions made by agencies in respect to access to information or applications to amend personal information.
- The Commonwealth Ombudsman considers and investigates complaints from people who believe they have been treated unfairly or unreasonably by Australian Government agencies.
- The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office contributes to the improvement of health and disability services through the impartial resolution of complaints about government and non-government health and disability services.
- The Commissioner for Victims of Crime champions the interests of crime victims, advising how relevant services can be improved, and ensuring that government agencies who deal with victims of crime do so with respect and fairness.

The Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program is coming to Kalgoorlie and brings together a range of public sector complaint resolution and accountability agencies including:

- The Western Australian Ombudsman;
- Energy and Water Ombudsman;
- Information Commissioner;
- Commonwealth Ombudsman;
- Health and Disability Services Complaints Office; and
- Commissioner for Victims of Crime

A series of free events hosted by the above agencies will be taking place during the visit.

See overleaf for event and registration information.

Enhancing awareness of and access to accountability agency services for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians



## New water services jurisdiction commenced 1 January 2014

Following the passage of the *Water Services Act 2012*, the Energy Ombudsman Western Australia has become the Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints concerning the provision of services by electricity, gas and water services providers.

### What the Ombudsman can investigate

The types of energy and water issues that the Ombudsman can consider include:

- Provision or supply of electricity, gas or water;
- Billing;
- The administration of credit and payment services;
- Alleged or disputed debts and the recovery of debts;
- Disconnection and restriction of supply and refundable advances;
- Service standard payments;
- Marketing of services;
- The exercise of powers in relation to land, neighbouring land or property;
- Damage or loss due to supply issues; and
- Complaints by a person other than a customer who is affected by a water service.

### Who can complain to the Ombudsman

Electricity, gas or water services customers and other people affected by a water service.

Before contacting the Ombudsman, customers should try to resolve the complaint with the electricity, gas or water services provider first.

### What the Ombudsman cannot investigate

The Ombudsman cannot investigate:

- The setting of prices or tariffs or determining price structures;
- Commercial activities that are outside the scope of the electricity, gas or water service licence;
- The content of Government policies;
- Complaints under consideration by, or previously considered by, any court or tribunal; or that the Ombudsman considers should be dealt with by a court or tribunal;
- Any matter specifically required by legislation, codes, licences and orders to be handled by another authority; and
- Issues to do with bottled gas.

### More information

A full list of the electricity, gas and water services providers that the Ombudsman can investigate, and more information including how to make a complaint, is available on the Energy and Water Ombudsman website at

[www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/energyandwater](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/energyandwater).





## WA to host Fourth Australasian Conference on Child Death Inquiries and Reviews

The office of the Ombudsman and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support will jointly host the Fourth Australasian Conference on Child Death Inquiries and Reviews to be held in Perth on 6 and 7 November 2014.

Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field said that the Conference provides an opportunity for delegates from across Australia and New Zealand to share innovations that have strengthened child protection services and child death review practices.

“The Conference will discuss an important range of topics through both keynote and panel discussions,” he said.

More specifically, topics of discussion will include:

- Child death review - achieving outcomes that make a difference;
- Prevention of youth suicide;
- Child death - the impact of family and domestic violence on Aboriginal women, children and families; and
- Issues and challenges for family and domestic violence fatality review jurisdictions and agencies.

For more information about the Conference visit [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Events.htm](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/Publications/Events.htm).

## Ombudsman addresses 2014 ANZOA Conference

In May, the Ombudsman addressed the 2014 Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**ANZOA**) Conference in Wellington, New Zealand. The conference theme was ‘*Ombudsmen rising to the challenge: What lies ahead?*’ with the program featuring a number of presentations and workshops over three days. ANZOA is the peak body for Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand.

“I was particularly delighted to address the conference delegates with a presentation titled *Meeting the challenge: How successful have operational reforms been for Ombudsman offices?*,” said Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field.

“My presentation focused on the work of our office in improving complaint resolution to make it more effective and efficient.”

The Ombudsman was also a panelist on a plenary session examining the Ombudsman and integrity in government.

Mr Field said the biennial conference was an important opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with fellow Ombudsmen.

“Among other things, ANZOA acts as a network for consultation and discussion among Ombudsmen and their staff on areas of interest, concern and common experience,” he said.



## New Deputy Ombudsman appointed

Western Australian Ombudsman Chris Field is very pleased to welcome Ms Mary White to the position of Deputy Ombudsman.

Appointed for a term of five years from 1 April 2014 by His Excellency Malcolm McCusker, AC CVO QC, then Governor of Western Australia, Ms White will also be the Deputy Energy and Water Ombudsman.

Ms White's most recent role was the Principal Assistant Ombudsman and she has been employed at the office of the Ombudsman since August 2006. Prior to this, she held a number of senior positions in the (then) Office of the Public Sector Standards Commissioner.

Mr Field said that Ms White is a highly qualified appointment, "Ms White has over 25 years of public sector experience, primarily in strategic and corporate leadership roles. Over the last eight years, most recently as Principal Assistant Ombudsman, she has made an outstanding contribution to the work of the office of the Ombudsman".

"I look forward to continuing to work with Ms White in her new role."

Ms White has a Bachelor of Science, a Diploma in Education and a Post Graduate Diploma in Arts (Policy).



### Ombudsman Western Australia

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