

Protecting people's rights

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Complaint resolution

Our role

Resolving complaints is central to our work. Every year, thousands of people contact us with concerns about the actions and decisions of Western Australian State Government departments and authorities, and local governments (public authorities).

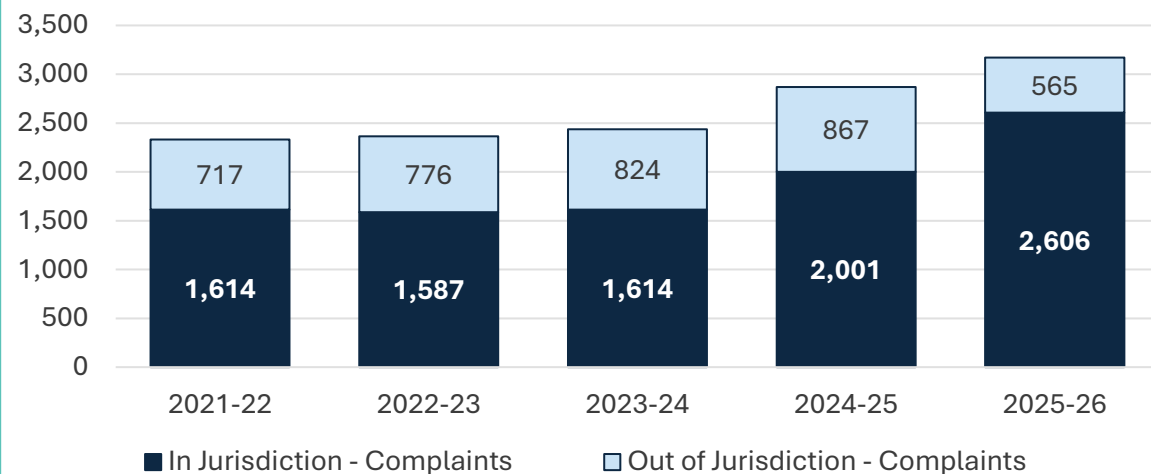
Our work promotes accountability and fairness in public administration. We provide a free, impartial service to help people navigate public systems. We listen, assess, and help resolve complaints – whether it's guiding someone to the right agency or investigating a complex issue, we're here to ensure fairness, accountability, and transparency in government decision-making. We also educate the public about their rights and responsibilities.

We experienced a 61% increase in complaints about public authorities over 2 years

Our focus has been on improving people's journey through the complaint process by ensuring accessible, fair and safe processes. Helping complainants get to the right place to resolve their complaints at the right time has been a priority. This has ensured more effective use of our resources and a better experience for complainants.

While efficiencies and changes to business processes have enabled us to manage increasing demand, complaint growth continues to exceed historical trends. Maintaining timely resolution of increasingly complex complaints will require continued investment in frontline complaint handling capability and the systems and corporate services that support it.

Complaints received in the last 5 years

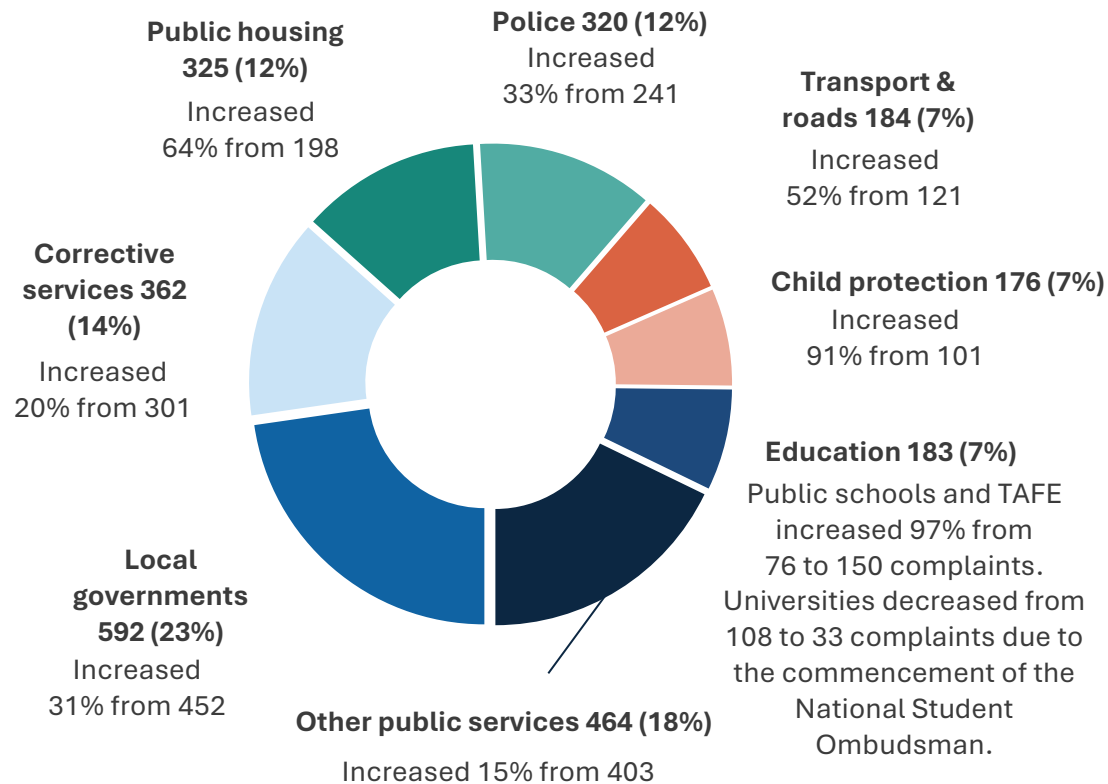


Increasing complaints across all government services

We experienced an increase in complaints across nearly all state government services as shown in the chart below.

A further breakdown of the number of complaints by government services is provided in [Appendix 1](#).

Complaints received in 2025-26 by government service, showing number and percentage of in-jurisdiction complaints and increase or decrease compared to 2024-25



Complaint themes

In 2025-25, the main complaint themes raised about WA government services were:

- the agency's complaints management process
- conduct of public officers
- public housing rental operations
- the policies or procedures of the agency
- poor communication and quality of services
- investigation and prosecution decisions

The main complaint themes raised about local government services were:

- environment and public health issues
- development, planning and building decisions
- fines, infringements and enforcement action
- rates
- the local government's complaints management process

“Thank you again for your help and advice. I would not have achieved this outcome without your input.”
- A complainant

Challenges for our resolution of complaints

We experienced significant increases in complaints across all types of government services as shown on the previous page.

We experienced a 30% increase in complaints following a 24% increase the year before. We successfully reduced out of jurisdiction complaints, leaving more in jurisdiction and complex work to be performed.

The increased volume and complexity of complaints affected our timeliness as it took longer to allocate cases for early resolution and investigation. However, system improvements to our complaint handling processes meant the average days to finalise complaints remained consistent at 42.7 days, compared to 40 days in the past two years.

This average was maintained due to increased efficiencies, improved customer service and complaint-handling practices and a greater focus on early resolution.

More complaints were resolved than were received in 2025-26 resulting in a more cost-effective service.



Thank you very much for your prompt response. I sincerely appreciate your quick turnaround, which has been significantly better than most of my dealings while following up on this issue.
- A complainant



The impact of quicker resolution and finalisation of a greater proportion of complaints led to an increase in the average age of complaints on hand. The proportion of complaints on hand that were over three months are more complex, require higher levels of technical expertise and require more resources. As a result, there has been an impact on the timeliness for more complex complaints resulting in a higher proportion of aged complaints.

This volume increase is a risk to timely complaint resolution that we will have to manage strategically through 2026-27.

AI in complaints

Whilst AI enables accessibility for some members of the public to complain effectively to us by translating, summarising or articulating their concerns, the use of AI can also disrupt complaint-handling systems by adding a layer of complexity. We are receiving complaints with complex legal

terms and misinterpretations of policy and legislation which is adding to the complexity of assessment for case officers. We are developing guidelines for agencies on how to respond to complaints generated by AI.

Challenging complainant behaviour

We also experienced an increase in complainants with unreasonable demands or who showed unreasonable behaviours. These contacts influence staff well-being and measures to better support staff with this psycho-social hazard are being strengthened.

The Complaint Resolution branch prioritised supporting staff through targeted training to help manage these challenges and to deliver a trauma-informed service. This included Mental Health First Aid, Managing compassion fatigue, burnout and vicarious trauma and plain English to support clear and concise communication.



How we handle complaints

We apply a streamlined and responsive complaint handling process:

Triage and assessment

We assess all incoming matters to determine jurisdiction, risk and whether matters could be priority allocated and resolved quickly by referring them back to an internal resolution process with the public authority or where an early resolution outcome appears likely.

We received 10,311 contacts in 2025-26, including 3,171 complaints. Most people reach out by phone, email or online. We are seeing a steady increase in people using our online complaint form, particularly since we introduced our new website and online complaint form. For complaints within our jurisdiction, we assess the issue and decide the best way forward, whether that's early resolution, full investigation, or referral to another body, including warm referrals where possible.

Early Resolution

Many issues are resolved quickly through an early resolution approach. It allows us to work directly with public authorities to fix issues quickly and avoid lengthy

investigations. We often work with public authorities on the phone for timely responses. In 2025-26, 85% of our investigations were resolved through our early resolution approach. Timeliness matters: we finalised 84% of allegations within three months, helping people get answers and outcomes faster.

“ I would like to thank your office for your assistance in resolving my complaint, as I strongly believe that the successful outcome would not have been possible without your intervention.
- A complainant ”

Investigation

Where required, we undertake formal investigations. This can involve significant evidence-gathering including requesting reports and documentation from public authorities, and a procedural fairness process before making a finding.

Resolution and feedback

We provide clear outcomes to both the complainant and the public authority. We have improved our communication by introducing plain English guidelines for case officers and ensuring our outcomes are

accessible. Where appropriate, we can make recommendations to the public authority to provide a remedy to the complainant or improve public sector administration. More commonly, we achieve an agreed outcome from the public authority during the investigation process without the need for a formal recommendation. We monitor agencies' implementation of agreed outcomes and our recommendations.

We also track recurring issues to identify broader areas for systemic improvement and engage with public authorities outside of the complaints process to help them improve their practices.

“ Many thanks for all your help and for persuading [the local government] to at least investigate the flooding issue. For more than 12 years, [the local government] has done everything it can to claim there is no problem, and that if there is a problem, it is not [the local government's] fault.
Thank goodness for the Ombudsman.
- A complainant ”

Public Interest Disclosures

The Ombudsman is a designated proper authority under the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003* (WA), which is commonly referred to as the State's whistleblower legislation, for certain types of public interest disclosures (PIDs). PIDs enable people to report serious wrongdoing in the public sector, and the Act provides protections for individuals who make an appropriate disclosure. When we receive a disclosure, we assess whether the disclosure meets the requirements of the Act and whether the Ombudsman is the proper authority to receive and deal with it.

During the year, we experienced a significant increase in contacts about the PID process. Many of these contacts appeared to come from people who had used artificial intelligence tools that suggested they lodge a disclosure in the public interest with the Ombudsman. We also received approaches from people seeking to use the PID process after becoming dissatisfied with the way an agency had responded to a complaint, employment-related matter or grievance.

We received 49 PID-related contacts during the year. Of these, 30 were recorded as

enquiries. Following assessment, 18 matters were found not to be appropriate disclosures under the Act, and one matter was assessed as an appropriate disclosure.

The one appropriate disclosure involved allegations of a substantial risk to public health and safety. Our investigation resulted the relevant public authority making several significant improvements, including strengthened governance, oversight and monitoring processes.

These figures highlight the continuing need to improve community understanding of the purpose of the PID framework and the circumstances in which it can be used, while supporting the framework for the examination of significant public interest issues.

In response, we invested considerable time in helping people understand what constitutes a PID and, where appropriate, assisting them through our regular complaint-handling process. We are also developing new guidance and processes to make the PID framework easier to understand and access. This includes providing clearer information about the PID process, alternative avenues

for raising concerns, and the information required to assess a disclosure effectively.

In response, we invested considerable time in helping people understand what constitutes a PID and, where appropriate, assisting them through its general complaint-handling functions. We are also developing new guidance and processes to make the PID framework easier to understand and access. This includes providing clearer information about the PID process, alternative avenues for raising concerns, and the information required to assess a disclosure effectively.

Public interest disclosures play a vital role in promoting accountability and supporting the early identification of serious wrongdoing. As demand for information about the PID scheme continues to grow, we remain committed to ensuring the scheme is accessible, well understood and used for its intended purpose.

Who do we assist

We assist anyone who is dissatisfied with an administrative action or decision made by a public authority. This may extend to people who are living interstate or overseas, and it includes residents of the Indian Ocean Territories.

Our work involves helping people who face systemic barriers and experience personal hardships because of these barriers. Many are experiencing family violence, financial hardship, physical or mental health issues

and homelessness or risk of homelessness. This often means working to remove barriers and increase access to government systems for children and young people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability and impairments, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and those who live in regional and remote towns and communities.

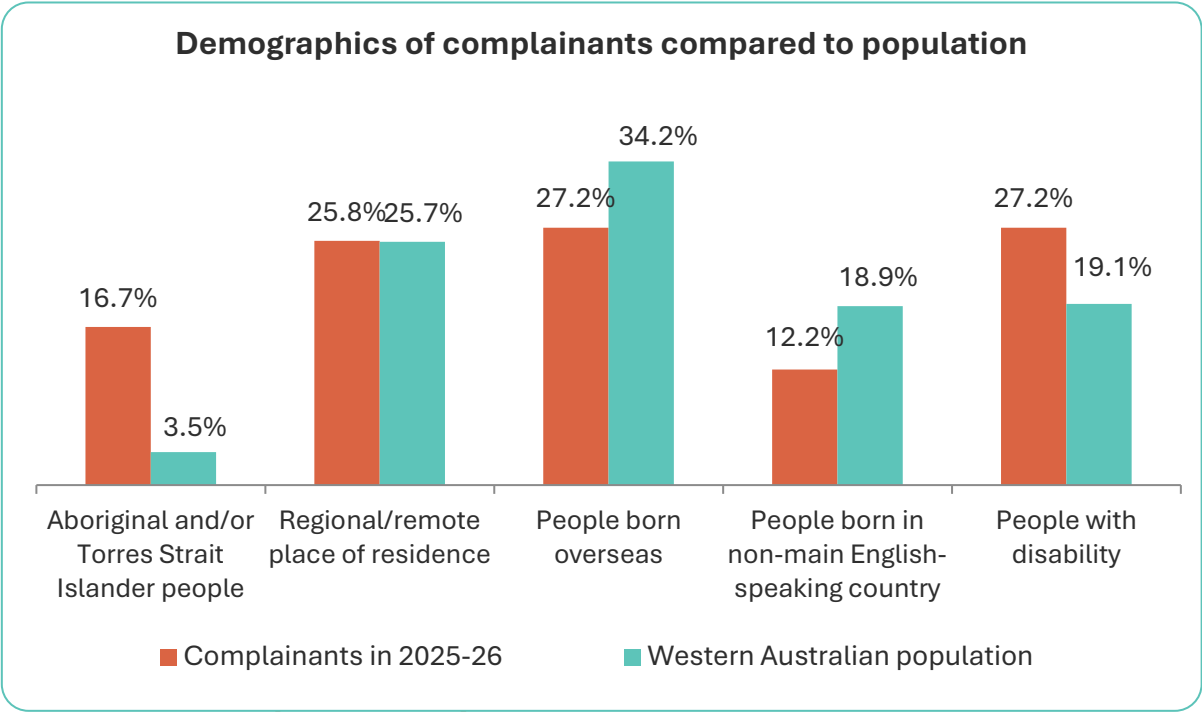
The chart overleaf shows that people from diverse backgrounds are using our service.

We are also conscious that these groups are often disproportionately using some public services and may be less able to resolve the problems themselves. It is important we continue to connect with marginalised groups. In particular, we need to improve engagement with people from a non-English speaking background who are currently underrepresented in complaints.

We also help people who are in custodial environments including prisons, prison work camps and farms and youth detention facilities.

In 2025-26, we undertook more community and stakeholder engagement and focussed on building more meaningful connections with communities.

“ I saw [the complainant] on Friday and advised him of the outcome. This was a big relief for [him], and we would both like to thank you for the time you've taken into considering [his] complaint. - A support worker ”



Connecting with Aboriginal people – Moorditj Wirrin

We welcomed 3 Aboriginal staff members in 2025-26 to our Complaints team. Our Moorditj Wirrin ('Strong Spirit' in Noongar language) team are working with us to improve our accessibility, cultural safety and connection and engagement with Aboriginal people. We are developing guidelines for staff and partners that cover cultural considerations and protocols to build trust and work safely with Aboriginal communities.

We are progressing a priority phone line for Aboriginal people to have the opportunity to yarn with us so that we can help them get to the right place at the right time, and so that we can take their complaint verbally.

Importantly, Aboriginal people now have the option to have an Aboriginal person investigating their complaint or providing cultural insights to a non-Aboriginal investigator.

Connecting through outreach with people where they are

Improving accessibility and equity of access is also about meeting people where they are. In 2025-26, Complaint Resolution case officers participated in outreach visits and community events across metropolitan, regional and remote Western Australia.

This year, we became more focused on building ongoing and meaningful relationships with communities and stakeholders. By travelling to regional and remote communities, case officers who are directly involved in complaints learn about local issues, daily life and people's experiences accessing and navigating government services. Returning to regions over time allows case officers to follow up on issues previously raised and reconnect with stakeholders and build relationships in the community.

We recognise that some people may feel more comfortable seeking assistance in-person, and within their own community. Outreach provides opportunities to engage with people who may not otherwise access our services, increase awareness of our role and build trust. One staff member who visited Geraldton and Pinjarra reflected on

the importance of our in-person presence in regional areas:

“It's really important that our rural and remote communities are able to access our service, and I think that begins with genuine face-to-face engagement to ensure they understand what our office does, and trust us enough to help them.
- Case officer”

Case officers consistently reflected on the value of learning directly from the communities they visited. We can learn about community priorities and the cultural context of the people we serve and use this to inform our work. Following a visit to Newman and Jigalong, one staff member reflected:

“I am using this connection and experience from Newman to handle complaints from Aboriginal people in a more culturally safe way.
- Case officer”

For our case officers, outreach strengthens their connection to the purpose of their work. During a visit to a remote Aboriginal Community, Warmun in the East Kimberley, one case officer unexpectedly met a complainant from a complaint she had recently finalised:



When I recognised her name, introduced myself and said, ‘I’ve spoken to you on the phone before’, she looked surprised and smiled. It was a powerful reminder of the human aspect of our work and how valuable it can be to connect on a personal level with the people we serve.
- Case officer



By meeting people where they are, we can build trust and relationships that go beyond individual complaints and visits. These experiences help us better understand the communities we serve and inform our ongoing efforts to improve the accessibility, responsiveness and cultural safety of our services.

CASE STUDY

Improving remote community housing maintenance and explaining transfer options

An Aboriginal woman from a remote Aboriginal community spoke with an Investigating Officer from Ombudsman WA during a Regional Accessibility and Awareness Program visit. She was a public housing tenant in the remote community and was living with family members. She was concerned that their home was overcrowded and too small and that some maintenance remained outstanding. She had been unable to obtain clear answers about housing responsibilities and how to seek a larger property.

Following the Ombudsman’s involvement, the public authority inspected the property, escalated two outstanding maintenance items and issued a work order with a target completion date. The woman was also advised that she could apply for a priority transfer to seek a property more suitable for their household. The authority introduced a planned maintenance register for remote community housing so routine maintenance requests could be reviewed and grouped by trade and region. The matter demonstrated the value of clear advice about housing options and effective systems for tracking and progressing maintenance.

CASE STUDY

Ombudsman regional visit improves accessibility and leads to action on long-outstanding repairs

An elderly Aboriginal woman living in public housing in a remote community was concerned about a front fence at her property that had been damaged from an incident outside of her control. She was concerned that it had not been repaired for an extended period after raising it with the public authority. She raised the issue at one of the Ombudsman's regional visits to their community.

Following the Ombudsman's involvement, the public authority escalated the repair works that had been outstanding for two years. The public authority also issued a priority work order and maintained regular communication with the woman and her family, including apologising for the delays. The fence and gates were subsequently replaced. This case restored the security of the person's front yard and highlighted the importance of monitoring maintenance requests to ensure repairs are completed within a reasonable timeframe.

Connecting with Children and Young People

We receive complaints from and on behalf of children and young people. We continue to share de-identified information with the Commissioner for Children and Young People (CCYP) about complaints received and outcomes achieved. During 2025-26, 34 complaints commonly related to youth detention facilities, including concerns about staff conduct, conditions within facilities, placements and transfers, and access to services and supports. Complaints were also received about child protection services and interactions with other public authorities.

Children and young people remain underrepresented among complainants. Our experience suggests that they may face barriers to accessing our services including limited understanding of our role, lower literacy levels, communication difficulties and uncertainty about how their concerns will be addressed. When we receive a complaint from a young person, we contact them directly to explain our processes, discuss available options and ensure they understand why a particular approach is being taken. We may undertake a monitored

referral where we oversee the agency's response and assess whether the complaint has been appropriately addressed. Through monitored referrals, agencies have undertaken investigations, reviewed concerns raised by young people and, in some instances, taken action to address issues identified through the complaint process.

As part of our commitment to Principle 6 of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, we have an ongoing focus on improving how we are accessible, responsive to and understood by children and young people and their representatives. These efforts include analysing complaints received from young people, developing guidance to assist staff in handling these complaints and exploring opportunities for targeted education and awareness activities. Our aim is to ensure that children and young people are aware of their right to raise concerns and can access our services in a way that is safe and inclusive.

More on community engagement

Go to the [Supporting Vulnerable Communities](#) section for more information.

CASE STUDY

Improved communication with young people about case management

A young person complained to the Ombudsman about a public authority's communication with them and their younger siblings during its intervention with the family. They were concerned about a staff member's comments, whether their siblings were receiving appropriate support and whether a different case manager would be appointed to their siblings' case.

Following the Ombudsman's involvement, the public authority contacted the young person to clarify their concerns. It then wrote to provide the new case manager's contact details and confirm that counselling had been offered to the young person's siblings. The Ombudsman contacted the young person by phone, and they confirmed they were satisfied with the outcome. The outcome provided the young person with clarity about their siblings' support arrangements and ensured they had a direct point of contact for future communication.

Who do we work with

We work closely with a wide range of public authorities, including government departments and agencies and local government authorities through our assessment and investigation processes.

Connection with complaint agencies

We also work closely with other external dispute resolution services, including complaint organisations like Consumer Protection, Equal Opportunity Commission, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) and other ombudsman services like the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman and Australian Financial Complaints Authority. We collaborated with these agencies for a range of community engagement: go to the [Connecting with the WA community section](#).

We also connected more strongly with a broad range of advocacy and legal services, including the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, Legal Aid WA, Aboriginal Family Legal Services, community legal centres, financial counsellors, family violence advocacy and other organisations. This helps ensure members of the community, particularly

those from vulnerable and diverse backgrounds, are made aware of and can access our services.

Public sector connection

In 2025-26 we focused on connecting and collaborating with the public sector to drive service improvement. We connected with agencies who deal directly with people when they are vulnerable.

We met with Consumer Protection to improve our understanding of how our offices resolve complaints. The communication between our offices is now more effective, contributing to better complaint outcomes for Consumer Protection clients.

We also connected with the Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime. This contributed to our understanding of service gaps for victim-survivors and also opened a channel with us for them to obtain information for their clients about complaint avenues.

Some government agencies, such as the Western Australia Police Force, make decisions that can affect a person's rights and freedoms. They may also decide what action should be taken when a person feels

unsafe. It is important that the public knows how to complain about decisions these agencies make and has confidence that their complaints to those agencies will be handled fairly.

We reached out to WA Police's internal complaints management team to improve our communication with them.

As a result, the clear and regular communication is helping us work with WA Police to resolve complaints we receive about it more efficiently and effectively. We are also gaining more meaningful insights into how WA Police can improve its response to complaints from the public.

We have been working more closely with the Corruption and Crime Commission to improve our information sharing, as allowed by legislation, and to clarify the scope of our roles for oversight of WA Police's decision making.

This is helping us take a more trauma-informed approach when a person raises concerns about WA Police and both our offices may have a role. Importantly, by working together we are reducing the risk that vulnerable people may fall through

gaps while reducing duplication in our work to more efficiently use public resources.

In 2025-26 we sought to proactively knowledge-share with public sector agencies to build service capability and accountability. This included sharing our expertise with Parliament to support its oversight of all public agencies.

By providing expert knowledge on best practice complaints handling to Parliamentary Inquiries into the Legal Practice Board of Western Australia and into the guardianship and administration system in Western Australia, our office supported Parliament to build better, more transparent public services.

Engagement with prisons

We have continued to receive a high and increasing volume of complaints from prisoners and their families.

We engaged with the Department of Justice (Corrective Services) and participated in their review of their internal complaints service, ACCESS.

We met with the Department of Justice and facilitated improved communication internally and to prisoners about the challenges it is facing and the strategies it has in place to manage delays in completing Treatment Assessment Reports.

We strengthened our working relationship with ACCESS providing clarification on our processes and how we can better assist complainants being heard at the right time.

In 2025-26 we visited:

- Wyndham Work Camp
- Casuarina Prison
- Unit 18 Juvenile Detention, Casuarina
- Bunbury Prison twice
- Hakea Prison
- Greenough Prison

During these visits, our team:

- Met with various members of the prison staff, provided information about the role of our office and discussed issues impacting the facility;
- Undertook a tour of the facility, inspected the units, health services, visits, education, recreation and work areas and the confidential mail and phone systems; and
- met with peer support prisoners confidentially to discuss their experiences, identify any systemic issues, and raise awareness of the Ombudsman's role.

After our initial visit to Bunbury Regional Prison in November 2025, we returned with staff from Aboriginal Legal Services WA, HaDSCO, Office of the Inspector of Custodia Services (OICS), Equal Opportunity Commission and the Electoral Commission. We collectively presented education to the peer support prisoners about the roles of each office to strengthen their understanding of the right place for prisoners to complain to.

Accessibility improvements for prisoners

In 2025-26 we began taking complaints by phone in a staged progression starting with people in closed environments. We have introduced warm referrals to connect complainants to the right place under our 'Right place right time' initiative. This includes introducing consent warm referrals for the prison and detention centre confidential mailing system, in collaboration with 18 other government or oversight agencies to avoid double handling, improve accessibility and timeliness for complainants.

We embarked on an educational tour of the closed environments in WA, to provide information about who we are and how we can help.

Collaborating with agencies who work in prisons

We met with the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services (OICS) to find ways to collaborate and support our connected roles. We have scheduled our prison visits for the year ahead and arranged to conduct at least two visits together. We will provide cultural support and cooperate to ensure this is a mutually beneficially arrangement.

We committed to sharing important data to help both our agencies identify systemic trends and improve pathways for prisoners to resolve individual complaints, while working together to provide insight into the closed environment space and consider opportunities for joint inspections in future.



Image: In April 2026, our team visited the Bunbury Regional Prison with joined with the Aboriginal Legal Service WA, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, Equal Opportunity Commission, Western Australian Electoral Commission and Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services.

What we achieved

Improvements to public administration

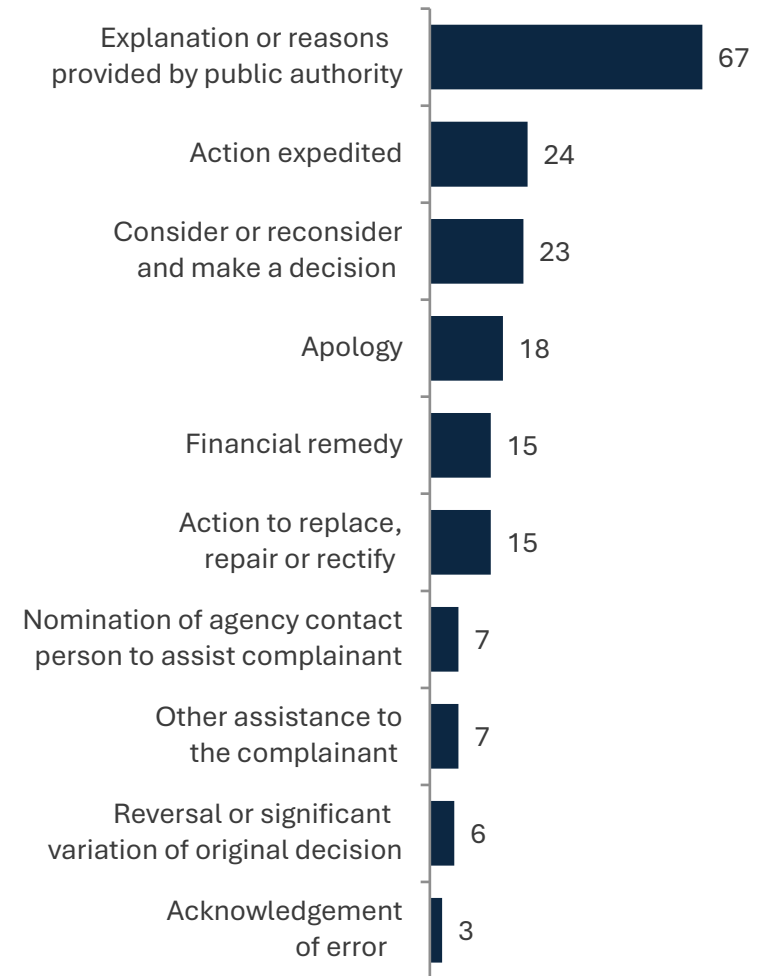
In every complaint, we try to identify outcomes that would improve public administration.

In 2025-26, we achieved 64 administrative improvements including changes to policy and procedures, changes to business systems or practices and staff training and development. Refer to the [Achieving administrative improvements section](#) for more detail.

Outcomes for complainants

Through our investigation process, we achieve outcomes for complainants where it is fair and reasonable for the public authority to provide a remedy. We achieved 185 remedies for complainants in 2025-26 because of our investigations. The nature of the remedies is shown in the following chart.

Remedies for complainants following the Ombudsman's involvement in 2025-26



Continuous improvement

We review and improve our complaint handling processes through:

- Feedback from complainants
- Stakeholder feedback
- Staff training and development
- Internal quality assurance reviews

This year we have focussed on the complainant's journey through our complaint handling processes and introduced a number of improvements.

Improving accessibility

We improved accessibility through applying plain English principles to improve the readability of our letters, brochures, information sheets and online resources. Our website and online complaint form were replaced and have modernised our accessibility.

In 2025-26 we have taken significant steps towards increasing our accessibility for vulnerable people by undertaking a staged progression to take complaints by phone with a written record created by our staff, demonstrating a flexible and inclusive approach to the legislative requirement that complaints must be in writing.

Strengthening our capability

Throughout 2025-26, four of our senior staff continued to participate in a two-year Management Development Program to improve our leadership capability.

All staff from our Complaint Resolution branch were offered training to improve our ability to deliver trauma-informed services. 17 staff completed a 2-day Mental Health First Aid training, all Complaints staff attended a full-day workshop on Managing compassion fatigue, burnout and vicarious trauma and a further 13 staff attended plain English training to support clear and concise communication.

We also delivered targeted in-house training to ensure consistency and quality in managing enquiries and complaints, data collection, to manage risks, and improve the timeliness of responses.

Improving efficiency

In the past year, we refined our risk management strategies and triage processes to identify and respond to risk early and to reduce unnecessary duplication. We introduced a senior and secondary triage role to further reduce unnecessary delays and identify

opportunities for quick resolution of less complex matters that could be allocated to less experienced investigators.

We also reviewed our management of post closure correspondence where complainants continue to contact our office following the finalisation of a case, seeking further reconsideration or review of our decisions and case outcomes. Timely, considered and decisive responses with more streamlined processes allowed our case officers to use their time more effectively to focus on cases that were still active and requiring assessment, resolution or investigation.

Our implementation of improved communication strategies in 2024-25 including automatic replies and regular acknowledgments and progress updates through the complaint process ensured that complainants were kept informed and we were not required to manage disgruntled people who were experiencing longer than usual delays until allocation of their complaint to a case officer. We have progressively removed manual processes and reports and simplified approval processes. We continued to empower our

staff by providing more autonomy and less approval processes within staff capability.

Following a 6-month period of ‘paper lite’ case management, we were paperless on 1 July 2026. This significantly reduced time and resources and the environmental impact of unnecessarily printing large volumes of materials.

Reducing matters when we can’t help

Prior to 2025-26, more than 30% of our complaints each year were consistently for agencies that were not within our jurisdiction. The total number of out of jurisdiction complaints had been increasing year on year. This resulted in significant resources being used to manage complaints that were not for us. We implemented a number of strategies to reduce the volume of complaints that we received about agencies that were out of jurisdiction and to improve our processes to ensure efficient and timely responses.

Throughout the year, the volume progressively reduced as these strategies were implemented. By June 2026 after the launch of our new website and online complaint form, the percentage for the month had reduced to 10%. The overall

position for the full year for 2025-26 reduced to 18%, which represented a total reduction of 312 complaints.

Similarly, a significant volume of our enquiries were about agencies outside of our jurisdiction. After introducing recorded messages redirecting callers to the right agency prior to speaking with our enquiry officers, a significant volume of calls were redirected to the right agency prior to speaking with our officers. This allowed our enquiry officers to focus our limited resources on matters that were for us.

Our deliberate strategies to reduce matters we can’t help with has reduced out of jurisdiction complaints and enquiries by 55%

Similar strategies have been introduced to manage premature complaints by providing information in a timely and accessible way to encourage complainants to exhaust internal complaint processes, where appropriate, before submitting their complaint to our office.

Strengthening our complaint handling framework

Our focus is on building a more consistent, transparent, and responsive system that reflects our values and meets community and stakeholder expectations.

- **Refined and aligned processes:** We will streamline our complaint handling procedures using robust, fit-for-purpose tools that meet applicable standards and ensure consistency across the organisation.
- **Driving continuous improvement:** We will actively identify and implement efficiencies and innovations that enhance our internal controls and improve the speed and quality of complaint resolution.
- **Collaborative learning:** Our teams will participate in cross-jurisdictional and professional forums to share insights, benchmark performance, and adopt best practices in complaint management.

- **Governance in action:** We remain committed to strong governance, applying the same principles we advocate – transparency, accountability, and value for money – in every aspect of our complaint handling approach.

We'll keep listening, investigating, and working collaboratively to make sure public authorities are accountable and responsive to the people they serve.

We're also investing in digital tools, staff development, and community engagement to enhance our services and reach more people. Our future focus includes expanding our accessibility initiatives, strengthening data analytics, and deepening our partnerships across sectors.

CASE STUDY

Ensuring access to support for young adults leaving care

A former carer complained to the Ombudsman about a public authority's handling of the leaving care process for two young adults who had previously been in their care. The former carer was concerned that the young adults had not received appropriate assistance, including being placed on a priority housing waitlist. After raising concerns with the public authority, the former carer approached the Ombudsman because they believed steps in the leaving care process had not been completed.

Following the Ombudsman's investigation, the public authority identified that the two young adults met the criteria for priority housing but had not been placed on the priority housing waitlist. The authority confirmed they would be placed on the priority housing waitlist with their applications backdated to reflect when they should originally have been listed. The authority also confirmed that post-care support was still available to them. This case helped to ensure the two young adults could access support and services intended to assist them in their transition to independence.

CASE STUDY

Improving complaint handling and communication

A resident complained to a local government authority about a neighbouring building development and privacy impacts. After trying to resolve the matter with the local government, they remained dissatisfied with the responses they received and contacted the Ombudsman.

As a result of the Ombudsman's investigation, the local government identified that the complaints had not been managed in accordance with its complaint management policy. The local government apologised to the resident for delays in managing their complaint, provided an update on the issues they raised and explained the investigations being undertaken. It also conducted staff training on complaint handling and commenced development of an automated system to identify, escalate and monitor complaints. This case prompted changes designed to improved complaint handling, including better systems for monitoring complaints.

CASE STUDY

Improving transparency about rubbish bin upgrade applications

A resident with a significant health condition applied to their local government for larger household waste and recycling bins. They were told that a site visit and visual inspection of their bins would normally be required before an upgrade could be approved. The resident questioned whether the local government had the authority to require a bin inspection and complained to the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman investigated the complaint and found the local government's request for a site visit for a visual inspection was reasonable in the circumstances. However, the investigation identified opportunities to improve public information about the bin upgrade process. As a result, the local government updated its website to explain the assessment and approval process for bin upgrades. It also added information about upgrades available on compassionate grounds for people with medical conditions. These changes help residents better understand the requirements for requesting larger bins and support more transparent decision-making.

CASE STUDY

Making bond administration safer for people at risk

A tenant who was a victim-survivor of family and domestic violence and was protected by a Family Violence Restraining Order disputed the handling of a residential tenancy bond by a public authority. They told the public authority that its processes were contributing to unwanted contact, but felt that their safety concerns were not understood and that they were repeatedly required to explain their circumstances. After being unable to resolve the matter directly with the authority, they contacted the Ombudsman.

Following an investigation by the Ombudsman, the authority contacted the person, explained its handling of the matter and apologised for not listening or responding sensitively. It also introduced a system alert for bond records where family and domestic violence or a restraining order has been reported. The change helps staff identify safety concerns, avoid inappropriate contact directions and provide a more informed response to people in vulnerable circumstances while reducing the potential for systems abuse.

CASE STUDY

Strengthening safeguards for patients' personal belongings

A former hospital patient experiencing a mental health crisis complained that some of her personal belongings, including a valuable ring and clothing, could not be located after she left hospital. The public health service declined to reimburse her, relying on a property record that she disputed. After unsuccessfully pursuing the matter with the health service, she approached the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman identified gaps and inconsistencies in the property records and sought further information about how the decision had been made.

Following the Ombudsman's involvement, the public health service agreed to reimburse the former patient for the full receipted cost of the ring and offered her an opportunity to speak directly with them about her experience. They also reviewed its patient property arrangements, clarified responsibility for parts of the system and established a working group to improve oversight, standardise practices and strengthen safeguards for patients' belongings. The investigation highlighted that accurate records and clear accountability are essential to fair decision-making and to maintaining public confidence.

CASE STUDY

Independent review leads to a proportionate outcome for TAFE student

A student completing a vocational qualification was expelled from a public training provider and prevented from enrolling there again after an incident during a work placement. The student believed the penalty was too severe and raised concerns about the fairness of the disciplinary and appeal processes. Their concerns included that the allegation was not clear, whether all relevant information had been disclosed to them and whether the appeal had been independently considered. After unsuccessfully challenging the decision through the provider's internal processes, the student contacted the Ombudsman.

Following the Ombudsman's investigation, the training provider convened a new appeal panel whose members had not been involved in the original decision. The panel found that, although the student had breached the Student Code of Conduct, expulsion and refusal of future enrolment were disproportionate. The student was eligible to re-enrol and complete the remaining practical component of the qualification. The provider also introduced policies requiring appeal panel members to be independent of the original decision, clarified the rules applying to students on work placements, and provided guidance to staff about using neutral and objective language in decision-making. The outcome demonstrates the importance of fair and independent review, clear policies and penalties that reflect the nature and seriousness of the conduct.

CASE STUDY

Security upgrades approved and funded

A public housing tenant requested a public authority install upgraded security screens for their home. They said the existing security measures did not adequately address the impact of their psychosocial disability and past traumatic experiences, and that concerns about their safety were affecting their wellbeing. After the public authority declined their request for funding and advised that the decision could not be appealed, they complained to the Ombudsman. They were supported in the complaint process by a disability advocacy and support service.

Following the Ombudsman's investigation, the public authority reconsidered the tenant's supporting medical information. As a result, it made a discretionary decision to fund and install upgraded security screens at no cost to the tenant. The case highlights the importance of public authorities considering whether flexibility may be appropriate when applying policies to people with vulnerabilities or disability-related needs.

CASE STUDY

Public housing charges reconsidered after evidence reviewed

A public housing tenant who was the victim-survivor of family and domestic violence received a bill for repairs. She was told by the public authority that she was liable for damage to a door that police had forced open while responding to welfare concerns for children. The tenant disputed whether she was liable for these costs and also disputed a separate charge for pest control. After the public authority upheld the charges through its appeal process, the tenant approached the Ombudsman as she was concerned that the decision appeared not to have considered the correct police information and one of the pest-control charges was considered unfair.

Following the Ombudsman's involvement, the public authority checked the correct police record and waived the full charge of over \$2,000 for the door repairs and replacement. It also waived a further pest-control charge because there was insufficient evidence that the contractor had adequately arranged access before the second treatment. The outcome highlights the importance of checking updated evidence, considering a person's circumstances and ensuring that contractor records support charges before holding a tenant responsible.

CASE STUDY

Clarifying the status of a former tenant's debt

A former public housing tenant, represented by an advocate due to their health issues, disputed charges of more than \$8,600 for repairs and maintenance after leaving the property. The person believed the public authority's appeal process had not fairly considered relevant supporting information or evidence that other people may have occupied the property. The appeal was unsuccessful and the advocate supported the tenant to complain to the Ombudsman seeking a further review of the charges.

Following an investigation by the Ombudsman, the public authority confirmed that the debt could no longer be recovered, had been written off and required no further action from the former tenant. The authority acknowledged that it had not informed the former tenant of this outcome. The person and their advocate were informed of the outcome which removed the uncertainty and provided significant relief that the debt was no longer outstanding, while reinforcing the importance of clear and timely communication about decisions affecting a person's financial position.

Energy and Water Ombudsman

We provide the dispute resolution services for the Energy and Water Ombudsman Scheme under a service agreement with the governing Board.

The operations of the Energy and Water Ombudsman are reported in its [annual report](#) in November each year.

How we operate

The Energy and Water Ombudsman provides accessible, independent, and fair resolution of complaints about electricity, gas, and water services. We ensure fairness and justice in how essential services are provided to residential and small business customers across WA.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman Scheme (scheme) is overseen by the Board of Energy and Water Ombudsman (Western Australia) Limited and is the approved external dispute resolution scheme in WA for licensed electricity, gas and water service providers.

All licenced providers are required to be a member of the scheme and fully fund the scheme's operations.

Complaints we handled

In 2025-26, we received 1,900 complaints:

- 1,135 electricity complaints
- 292 gas complaints
- 473 water complaints

We also handled 133 enquiries.

We experienced a 19% increase in energy and water complaints compared to the previous year

The main issues related to:

- billing (45%)
- supply of electricity, gas or water services (15%)
- customer service (15%)

People who make complaints must go to their provider first. We assist by escalating complaints to senior officers at the member providers. In 2025-26, 15% came back unresolved by the member and we facilitated a resolution or investigated the complaint.

What we achieved

In 2025-26:

- 88% of complaints were finalised within 30 days.
- 15% of complaints we conciliated or investigated were resolved with an outcome for the complainant.
- We achieved 148 remedies for people whose complaints we resolved. This included financial remedies totalling nearly \$90,000 and default listings removed from credit records, explanations and apologies.
- We engaged with the Economic Regulation Authority and Energy Policy WA regarding the implementation of the [Alternative Electricity Services regulatory framework](#).



WA Charitable Trusts Commission

The Western Australian Charitable Trusts Commission oversees the administration of charitable trusts in Western Australia. We can receive complaints, investigate concerns about trust administration, review trust records, and make recommendations to improve governance and accountability.

Charitable trusts support a wide range of charitable purposes across Western Australia. For Aboriginal communities, trusts are often used to manage native title settlement funds and mining-related benefits. Charitable trusts are used to manage funds for purposes including education, religion, health, welfare and environmental conservation.

Through our oversight, engagement and education activities, we promote transparency, accountability and good governance, while supporting trustees and beneficiaries to understand their rights and responsibilities.

Engagement and Education

During 2025-26, we implemented a targeted engagement strategy to increase awareness of the Charitable Trusts Commission's role

and improve access to our services. We met with state and federal government agencies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Aboriginal corporations, community groups and beneficiaries. We undertook targeted metropolitan and regional community outreach and awareness initiatives.

The program was designed with our Cultural Safety Officer and further developed and delivered with our Moorditj Wirrin team. This improved our provision of culturally safe and accessible complaint services for Aboriginal people and other vulnerable communities. Through a “right place, right time” approach, we are building trust by helping people access the most appropriate pathway for their concerns, whether through our Office, a government agency, or by engaging directly with a trustee.

The program strengthened relationships with key stakeholders and improved our understanding of their needs, supporting the effective oversight of charitable trusts in Western Australia.

Complaints and Enquiries

In 2025-26, we received one enquiry and 22 complaints about charitable trusts.

This represented a significant increase from 2024-25, when we received three complaints. The increase reflects growing awareness of the Commission's role and improved access to our services through stakeholder engagement program and outreach activities.

The matters received highlighted key issues affecting beneficiaries and charitable trust governance, including conflicts of interest, access to information, transparency of trust funds, trust administration, expenditure of funds, and membership concerns.

These insights will inform our ongoing regulatory, education, community and stakeholder engagement activities.

Investigation into the Noongar Charitable Trust

Complaint and referral

We started our investigation following a complaint and subsequent referral from the Attorney General. The Attorney General had also received complaints from community members and organisations, including the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC). The referral focused on major transactions approved by the trustee, Equity Trustees (EQT), between 2019 and 2020, particularly the purchase of the El Caballo properties and related distributions of trust funds. Concerns included whether sufficient due diligence had been undertaken, whether the properties were purchased above market value, and whether the decisions were in the best interests of the Noongar community.

What we did to investigate

We reviewed complaints, examined documents and correspondence, obtained information from EQT and SWALSC, considered legal obligations under the trust deed and relevant legislation, and commissioned retrospective independent valuations of the El Caballo properties. We

also sought responses from EQT and SWALSC to our preliminary findings and considered additional submissions and expert valuation evidence.

Finding and outcome

We found that EQT breached its duties as trustee by failing to undertake sufficient due diligence, including obtaining an independent valuation before purchasing the El Caballo properties. We also found that the subsequent \$1.5 million distribution for refurbishment of those properties was not in the best interests of the Noongar community.

As a result, we concluded that EQT had breached its duties as trustee of the Noongar Charitable Trust and advised EQT and SWALSC of our findings, seeking submissions on the amount required to restore the trust.

We provided the [report of our investigation](#) to EQT and SWALSC and to the Attorney General. The Attorney General tabled the report in the Western Australian Parliament on 12 August 2025.

Subsequently, EQT commenced legal proceedings in the Supreme Court to challenge our findings.



Inspections and monitoring

Why we do what we do

We inspect and monitor the use of certain powers by public authorities, often reporting through responsible Ministers to the Parliament.

Powers granted to public authorities are intended to combat criminal behaviour and support community safety but can also impact privacy and freedoms.

Through our inspection and monitoring role, we promote improvements to the practices and procedures of public authorities and provide independent assurance that these powers are exercised lawfully.

How do we work

We carry out our monitoring role through inspections and reviews of the records of specific public authorities and by providing regular feedback on their compliance with legislation. We also provide reports to relevant Ministers on what we found and can make recommendations for improvement.

Our achievements

In 2025-26, we continued to promote improvements to the practices of public authorities and hold them accountable in their use of their powers by:

- inspecting records of telecommunications interceptions
- monitoring the use police powers under consorting and prohibited insignia laws
- monitoring the operation of the Protected Entertainment Precincts Scheme.

Inspection of telecommunications interception records

The WA Police Force and the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) are permitted under legislation to carry out telecommunication interceptions in Western Australia. We inspect the records of these public authorities at least twice each financial year to assess the extent of compliance with relevant telecommunications interception legislation and we report to the responsible Minister on the results of these inspections.

In 2025-26, we provided a report to the Attorney General and the Commissioner of the CCC regarding the results of the inspections conducted of the records of the CCC. We also provided a report to the Minister for Police and the Commissioner of Police regarding the results of the inspections conducted of the records of the WA Police Force.

Monitoring of the Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Act 2021

In 2021 Parliament passed the *Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Act 2021* (the Act). The purpose of the Act is to assist police in disrupting criminal organisations. The Act does this by empowering police to combat consorting between certain offenders and prohibit the display of insignia of certain organisations, such as outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Our role is to assess whether WA Police have complied with the provisions of Act. We do this by reviewing the records held by WA Police and ensuring that the powers entrusted to them are exercised reasonably and lawfully. We are required to report annually to the Attorney General on the outcome of this work.

Our report, 'Operation of the Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia Scheme December 2023 to December 2024', reviewed the scheme's first three years of operation and summarised the relevant monitoring period. The report was tabled in Parliament on 4 December 2025.

Monitoring of Protected Entertainment Precincts

The Protected Entertainment Precincts (PEP) Scheme commenced on 24 December 2022. It enables relevant authorities to exclude people who have behaved in violent, disorderly, indecent or threatening ways from declared areas for up to five years.

The Ombudsman's role is to independently examine how the PEP scheme is operating and its impact on any group particularly affected by it. Our scrutiny includes examining the records and practices of the WA Police Force and the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety. We have also consulted with relevant stakeholders including local governments and peak bodies.

We are required to prepare a report on the PEP Scheme after it has been operating for three years for the Minister for Racing and Gaming who will table it in Parliament.

The report was finalised and provided to the Minister in June 2026.

We will continue to conduct regular inspections and report to the Minister as required.