



Ombudsman
Western Australia

Supporting vulnerable communities

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Connecting with the WA community

Reaching out and connecting with the people we serve in WA is part of our broader public responsibility. There are many ways people find out about our services: from online searches, social media posts and using artificial intelligence (AI), through to the white pages, outreach activities or referrals from other service providers.

We strive for continual improvement of our services and communications in our daily work that will assist the community. This year we moved from our previous website that was 18 years old and launched a new website to make it easier for people to find information and use our services.

Community outreach by our staff around Perth and out to the regions continues to reach more vulnerable and diverse groups of people. As the need for our services increases, we are increasing our outreach and engagement, with more frequent visits to the regions and maintaining ongoing relationships in the regions we have been to.

While outreach and engagement activities are improving awareness and accessibility, they also generate additional demand for

complaints handling, education and support services, particularly in regional and remote communities.

Out and about around Perth

Attending community events and meeting with local organisations provides meaningful conversations and advice to those who need more information about how we can assist people. Helping service providers understand our role is also fundamental, as they seek ways to help vulnerable people in times of stress or hardship.

By attending regular events, we're continuing to build relationships with local residents and service providers, and improve our engagement with diverse groups of people.

Harmony Day

In March we joined the Health and Disability Service Complaints Office at the Belmont Harmony Day. The very busy day of festivities drew a big crowd who took away bags of information and resources.

Together with the Katanning Harmony festival we also attended this year, these community events are wonderful celebrations and opportunities bringing together the rich cultural diversity of our community, and an opportunity for our staff to chat with local residents and organisations about our services.



Images: Harmony Day stalls in Belmont and Katanning.

NAIDOC Week

Recognising and celebrating NAIDOC Week aligns with our commitment to inclusion, equity and respect. The week is an important event on our calendar every July, where we attended festivals in Armadale and Mirrabooka which bring together local residents to connect with and celebrate Aboriginal culture. These events offered valuable opportunities for staff to engage with local community members and service organisations to listen, learn and build meaningful relationships.



Images: NAIDOC stalls in Mirrabooka and Armadale

Financial Counselling WA

In October we were part of the Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia Conference 2025, themed “Honouring the Past, Shaping the Future”. Connecting with financial counsellors shares information about how we help resolve energy and water complaints and support their vital work across the community.



WA Seniors Week

This annual event celebrates the contributions of older people in the Western Australian community and their active involvement in community life.

In November, we joined two fantastic events for seniors: Have a Go Day in Burswood Park, and Ballardong Elders and Seniors Day in Northam. Both free events for seniors, in Northam it was the first event of its kind, hosted by the Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation.

Pridefest

In November, we proudly participated in PrideFest Fairday at the Supreme Court Gardens with the vibrant, diverse and unique LGBTQIA+ community.

Aboriginal Justice Open Day

In February we participated in the Aboriginal Justice Open Day held at Marangaroo. The Department of Justice led initiative is a culturally safe one-stop-shop for official documentation and administrative services that can often take months to resolve, especially in regional areas.

Our complaint handling officers are trained in cultural awareness and cross-cultural

communication. People can also contact us using a representative or through an interpreter service, including Aboriginal interpreters.

Talks and Presentations

We delivered a series of talks including a lecture in September to the current cohort of legal students on the history and scope of the Ombudsman services at the UWA Law School. We also had a stall at UWA Blackstone Society's 'Beyond Commercial Law' careers fair.

In November we made an in-person presentation to staff of The Nationals WA Party at Parliament House. This was a unique opportunity to explain to their regional electorate officers our role, different types of complaints and how we can assist with their constituents' enquiries. We also returned to the Lorikeet Centre to talk about our services with community members in Leederville.

“[A public officer] attended the complaints workshop run by us and wanted to express how useful and informative it was, and to say thank you.
- Case officer

In December we presented a webinar hosted by Financial Counselling WA, which combined an overview of the Ombudsman's role, complaint handling process and how financial counsellors can assist their clients in making complaints.

In June, Ombudsman Bevan Warner presented to Community Leaders at the Office of Multicultural Interests' Forum, which brought together representatives of new and emerging communities who play an important role in sharing information through their networks.

Bevan spoke to community leaders about our role, our accessible website and other support like language services to make a complaint. He listened to the community leaders about their problems with government services and how we can raise our profile within their community.



Above: Justin O'Malley, Director Energy and Water, presents to electorate office staff.

Below: Bevan Warner, Ombudsman, presents at the Office of Multicultural Interests' Forum



Reaching out to the Regions

Western Australia is a vast geographical area, the original and ongoing land and home of the oldest continuous culture on earth – Aboriginal Western Australians. We have a special responsibility to listen to, and engage with, all Aboriginal Western Australians living regionally and remotely.

Regional Western Australia is also central to all of Australia's social and economic interests, making engagement with those living and working in regional Western Australia of critical importance.

For these reasons, we have a Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program to ensure awareness and accessibility of our services to regional and Aboriginal Western Australians.

Our regional outreach is promoted through community organisations and agencies, collaborating with local service providers, attending local events, promotion on our website, a media release to traditional media outlets and social media targeting the local area.

Working together with other agencies

To ensure our visits are as helpful as possible to Aboriginal Western Australians and those living and working regionally, we coordinate them with other consumer protection and complaint handling agencies. This is a highly successfully program that benefits the communities we go to by having several providers to talk to at the same time.

This year we coordinated with the Equal Opportunity Commission, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (Consumer Protection), Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, Australian Financial Complaints Authority and Australian Financial Security Authority.

East Kimberley

The year of regional visits began in July 2025 in the far north of our state talking with organisations and communities in Kununurra, Wyndham and Warmun.

Events included co-hosting a networking event with the East Kimberley Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Kununurra, hosting a Lunch & Learn event for the community at the Ngnowar Aerwah Community Centre in Wyndham and meeting with community in Warmun.



Image: Ombudsman, Bevan Warner, at the East Kimberley Chamber of Commerce and Industry event in Kununurra, July 2025

The team also joined Consumer Protection’s Community Connect event in Kununurra and met with a range of government and community sector organisations.

At the end of the week, staff reflected on the impact of the community engagement activities, emphasising the significance of face-to-face interactions and the privilege of being invited into communities. The team felt that the experience expanded their perspectives and offered insight into the lives of people we serve.

In March 2026 we returned to Kununurra to reconnect with stakeholders following our visit last year. Principal Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution Brianna Lonnie spoke at the International Women’s Day breakfast hosted by the East Kimberley Chamber of Commerce. Brianna spoke about access to justice being a human right, accessibility beginning with awareness, and creating accessible workplaces that allow women to fully participate and not limit their economic empowerment, independence or future career opportunities.



Image: Brianna Lonnie, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution, speaking at the International Women’s Day breakfast in Kununurra, March 2026.

Indian Ocean Territories (IOT)

We provide a complaint resolution service to the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) for services which are provided by State Government agencies and local governments.

In September, we went to Cocos (Keeling) Islands, attending local community events on the West and Home islands, and went to Christmas Island. Through this engagement, we took enquiries and information was provided about our role, process and the further steps for lodging a complaint. Staff met with a range of service providers and local organisations to raise awareness of the Ombudsman’s services, where IOT residents were able to find out about our services and bring their concerns to us.

It was also an important visit for staff to gain an understanding of emerging risks and issues which are particular to the islands. This included learning about gaps between what the WA Ombudsman and the Commonwealth Ombudsman can look into, and whether we can work with the Commonwealth Ombudsman to identify which issues each help with.

South West

In November we went to the South West to talk with local agencies, organisations and community members. Events included Consumer Protection's 'Community Connect' in Margaret River, the 'Smart2Ask Community Expo' at the South West Sport Centre in Bunbury, and 'Bring Your Bills' at the Eaton Recreation Centre. These provided opportunities for residents to talk about billing issues, consumer and legal advice, and how to resolve problems with a wide range of services.

The team met with local organisations including the South West Community Legal Centre to discuss how our services can help their clients, as well as the City of Augusta-Margaret River and the City of Bunbury. This included a visit to Bunbury Regional Prison.

We spoke with local service providers, lawyers and financial counsellors at the 'Supporting Consumers Sundowner' co-hosted with the South West Law Society in Bunbury.

Pilbara

In November, we were also in Karratha at the AGM of the Puutu Kunti Kurrama and Pinikura Aboriginal Corporation.

The AGM is an important gathering of community and a valuable place to have conversations. We were privileged to be invited to attend and talk with members about ways we can help with community concerns including about Charitable Trusts.

Adapting and improving our Regional Access and Awareness Program

In early 2026, with global factors influencing reliable access to fuel across the State, our regional travel plans were adapted to more local areas.

Smaller and shorter visits were coordinated to continue developing relationships with organisations and communities we had previously visited.



Images: Left: Staff at Smart2Ask Bunbury. Middle: Brianna Lonnie speak to lawyers and advocates in Bunbury. Right: Staff at Community Connect Margaret River

Wheatbelt

In March, we teamed up with the Telecommunications Ombudsman for the ‘Ombudsman Small Business Forum’ hosted by the Narrogin Chamber of Commerce. As part of the Chamber Connect series, the event was an opportunity for small businesses to understand when they can contact an ombudsman, what issues we can help resolve, clarity on how the complaints process works.

A stand for two days at the Woolorama, our state’s largest agricultural show outside the metropolitan area, was a key opportunity for our staff to speak with local residents in the heart of the Wheatbelt.



Later in June our team returned to the Wheatbelt at the Beverley Community Resource Centre. Together with Consumer Protection WA and Equal Opportunity Commission WA, we talked with community members about how we can help with complaints.

Great Southern

Later in March we engaged with local community at an information session at the Gnowangerup Community Resource Centre. It was also an opportunity to talk with community groups about the Charitable Trusts Commission.



We then held a stall at the Katanning Harmony Day festival, a significant multicultural event in one of the towns with the highest migrant work force.

Mid West

In June we visited Geraldton to talk directly with a range of community organisations and agencies about how we can help with complaints in the Mid West.

The team met with the Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation and Geraldton Streetwork Aboriginal Corporation (known locally as Streeties) at the Bundiyarra offices. We discussed the range of work the Ombudsman does and how we assist the community as the WA Ombudsman, Energy and Water Ombudsman, and Charitable Trusts Commission.

Images: Left: Staff at the Wagin Woolorama with Consumer Protection and the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman. Right: Staff at Beverley Community Resource Centre.

By attending the Financial Counsellors Association of WA Forum held in Geraldton the same week, we were able to talk with financial counsellors in the region and put a strong focus on ways we can support communities in regional WA experiencing financial hardship. The Forum also provided insightful sessions for our team. One session that stood out was about the supports available for those entering prison to manage their finances, and where the justice system could work better to support prisoners and reintegration.

In Geraldton we also met with the Regional Alliance West and Legal Aid WA, and discussed how financial counsellors and community legal services can refer clients to us. Visiting Youth Justice Services, they discussed how we can assist young people with complaints. The team also went to Greenough Regional Prison to meet with the Superintendent, staff and Peer Support group.

Peel

In June, on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, we teamed up with Consumer Protection WA and the Equal Opportunity Commission, at the Shire of Murray's 'Purple Pickleball' event in Pinjarra talking with community members about how we can help with complaints.



Thank you for attending and supporting our World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Purple Pickleball event last week. We appreciate your involvement and the valuable role you play in our community. Thank you again for your continued support.
- Event organiser



Images: Staff at the Financial Counselling WA Geraldton Forum

Getting our information to those who need it

We continued to look for new and meaningful ways to engage and reach people who need our services and make ourselves more accessible.

Raising awareness

In May, we sponsored the National Reconciliation Week banner program in four locations: Forrest Place in Perth, Midland, Karratha and Bunbury. This year's banner featured the artwork of Melissa Sunfly, a proud Kukatja/Ngardi woman and emerging artist, with Warlayirti Artists in the East Kimberley, who creates contemporary visual art rooted in powerful stories, deep cultural knowledge, and strong connections to Country.

The Ombudsman and other senior staff also participated in radio interviews about our work.



Image: Reconciliation Week banner on display in Forrest Place, Perth. Banners were also displayed in Midland, Karratha and Bunbury.

Online accessibility

We launched a new website in June this year to make it easier for people to find information and use our services.

The new site focuses on accessibility and clear, simple language. It has been designed to meet accessibility standards so more people can use it with ease. The language and the appearance can be changed with the Userway toolbar.

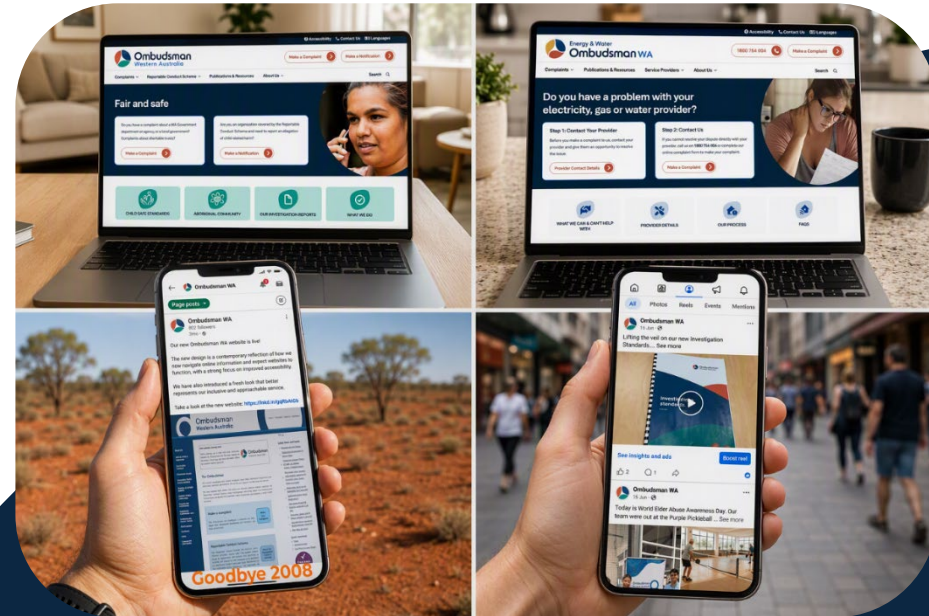
The website is easier to use, with clear menus and simple navigation. You can quickly find key services, like how to make a complaint or submit a notification. We have also made our online forms easier to use and more secure.

The new website includes:

- A Publications and Resources section where you can search our reports and publications. This also has guides, forms and information sheets for the community and organisations
- A News section with updates about our work

- A 'case studies' section with real examples of how we help people
- Information for different groups, including children and young people and Aboriginal communities
- Support for different languages, including translated information.

This year we began actively using LinkedIn as a platform to share content and news updates. Through the year this grew significantly with content shared and engaged with by professionals. Later in the year we expanded to include a Facebook and Instagram page to reach other demographics and community groups.



Images: Above: New websites and social media channels launched in 2026

Below: Ombudsman Bevan Warner interviewed by Nadia Mitsopoulos on ABC Breakfast, September 2025



LinkedIn followers 2025-26

