

Collaboration and Access to Services

Engagement with key stakeholders is essential to the Office's achievement of the most efficient and effective outcomes. The Office does this through:

- Working collaboratively with other integrity and accountability bodies – locally, nationally and internationally – to encourage best practice, efficiency and leadership;
- Ensuring ongoing accountability to Parliament as well as accessibility to its services for public authorities and the community; and
- Developing, maintaining and supporting relationships with public authorities and community groups.

Working Collaboratively

The Office works collaboratively with local, national and international integrity and accountability bodies to promote best practice, efficiency and leadership. Working collaboratively also provides an opportunity for the Office to benchmark its performance and stakeholder communication activities against other similar agencies, and to identify areas for improvement through the experiences of others.

Information sharing with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions

Background:

Where appropriate, the Office shares information and insights about its work with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions, as well as with other accountability and integrity bodies.

The Office's involvement:

The Office exchanged information with a number of Parliamentary Ombudsmen and industry-based Ombudsmen during the year.

Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association

Members: Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand.

Background:

The Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**ANZOA**) is the peak body for Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand.

The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of ANZOA. The Office periodically provides general updates on its activities and also has nominated representatives who participate in interest groups in the areas of Indigenous engagement, systemic issues and policy influence, people and development, data and analytics, and public relations and communications.

Providing Access to the Community

Communicating with complainants

The Office provides a range of information and services to assist specific groups, and the public more generally, to understand the role of the Ombudsman and the complaint process. Many people find the Office's enquiry service and drop-in clinics held during regional visits assist them to make their complaint. Other initiatives in 2022-23 include:

- Regular updating of the Ombudsman's publications and website to provide easy access to information for people wishing to make a complaint and those undertaking the complaint process;
- Ongoing promotion of the role of the Office and the type of complaints the Office handles through presentations and participating in events in the community; and
- The Office's Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program and Prison Program.

Access to the Ombudsman's services

The Office continues to implement a number of strategies to ensure its complaint services are accessible to all Western Australians. These include access through online facilities as well as more traditional approaches by letter and through visits to the Office. The Office also holds drop-in clinics and engages with community groups, particularly through the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program. Initiatives to make services accessible include:

- Access to the Office through a Freecall number, which is free from landline phones;
- Access to the Office through email and online services. The importance of email and online access is demonstrated by their use this year in 85% of all complaints received (44% by email and 41% through the website complaint form);
- Information on how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman is available in 17 languages in addition to English and features on the homepage of the Ombudsman's website. People may also contact the Office with the assistance of an interpreter by using the Translating and Interpreting Service;
- The Office's accommodation, building and facilities provide access for people with disability, including lifts that accommodate wheelchairs and feature braille on the access buttons and people with hearing and speech impairments can contact the Office using the National Relay Service;
- The Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program and Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program target awareness and accessibility for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians as well as children and young people;
- The Office attends events to raise community awareness of, and access to, its services, such as:
 - The Financial Counsellors' Association of WA Conference marketplace in November 2022;
 - The Wagin Woolorama Agricultural Show in March 2023; and
 - The Multicultural Communities Council WA mini-expo as part of the Refugee Week event, *Finding Freedom: Refugee Mental Health and Inclusion Symposium* in June 2023.
- The Office's visits to adult prisons and the juvenile detention centre provide an opportunity for adult prisoners and juvenile detainees to meet with representatives of the Office and lodge complaints in person.



The Office held an information stall at the Multicultural Communities Council of WA mini-expo in June 2023.

Ombudsman website

The [Ombudsman's website](#) provides a wide range of information and resources for:

- Members of the public on the complaint handling services provided by the Office as well as links to other complaint bodies for issues outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction;
- Public authorities on decision making, complaint handling and conducting investigations;
- Organisations that work with children on the Reportable Conduct Scheme;
- Children and young people as well as information for non-government organisations and government agencies that assist children and young people, including downloadable print material tailored for children and young people. The youth pages can be accessed at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth;
- Access to the Ombudsman's reports such as *Investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide*, *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into the handling of complaints by the Legal Services and Complaints Committee* and *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from An investigation into the Office of the Public Advocate's role in notifying the families of Mrs Joyce Savage, Mr Robert Ayling and Mr Kenneth Hartley of the deaths of Mrs Savage, Mr Ayling and Mr Hartley*;
- The latest news about events and collaborative initiatives such as the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program; and
- Links to other key functions undertaken by the Office such as the Energy and Water Ombudsman website and other related bodies including other Ombudsmen and other Western Australian accountability agencies.



The website continues to be a valuable resource for the community and public sector as shown by the increased use of the website this year. In 2022-23:

- The total number of visits to the website was 106,863;
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage and the Contact Us page) on the site were *How to make a complaint* and *What you can complain about*; and
- The Office's *Effective Handling of Complaints Made to Your Organisation Guidelines* and *Procedural Fairness Guidelines* were the two most viewed documents.

The website content and functionality are continually reviewed and improved to ensure there is maximum accessibility to all members of the diverse Western Australian community. The site provides information in a wide range of [community languages](#) and is accessible to people with disability.

Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during 2022-23. Regional visits were conducted to Newman, Tom Price, Paraburdoo and the Jigalong community in the East Pilbara Region in November 2022 and Karratha, Roebourne and Port Hedland in the West Pilbara Region in May 2023. The visits include activities such as:

- Drop-in clinics, which provided an opportunity for members of the local community to raise their concerns face-to-face with the staff of the Office;
- Information sessions for the Aboriginal community, Elders and service providers, which provided an opportunity for Aboriginal communities to discuss government service delivery and where the Office may be able to assist;
- Liaison with community, advocacy and consumer organisations to provide information about our role;
- Liaison with public authorities, including a workshop on *Effective Complaint Handling and Good Decision Making* in Karratha in May 2023; and
- Liaison with organisations that work with children to provide information about the Reportable Conduct Scheme, including an *Introduction to the Reportable Conduct Scheme* information session in Karratha in May 2023.

The Program is an important way for the Office to raise awareness of, access to, and use of, its services for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians. In 2022-23, the visits were coordinated with the Western Australian Energy and Water Ombudsman, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Office of the Information Commissioner (WA), and the Aboriginal Legal Service.

The Office also:

- Hosted a webinar, *Ombudsman Complaint Resolution Webinar for Community Sector Organisations* in July 2022. The webinar was delivered in collaboration with the Energy and Water Ombudsman, Commonwealth Ombudsman, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Australian Financial Complaints Authority, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and the Equal Opportunity Commission; and
- Held an information stall at the Wagin Woolorama Agricultural Show in March 2023, in collaboration with the Energy and Water Ombudsman and Health and Disability Services Complaints Office.



The Office held an information stall at the Wagin Woolorama Agricultural Show in March 2023, in collaboration with the Energy and Water Ombudsman and Health and Disability Services Complaints Office.

The Program enables the Office to:

- Deliver key services directly to regional communities, particularly through drop-in clinics and information sessions;
- Increase awareness and accessibility among regional and Aboriginal Western Australians (who were historically under-represented in complaints to the Office); and
- Deliver key messages about the Office’s work and services.

The Program also provides a valuable opportunity for staff to strengthen their understanding of the issues affecting people in regional and Aboriginal communities.



Attendees at the Information session for the Aboriginal community, Elders and service providers in Newman, November 2022, with representatives from the Office, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Equal Opportunity Commission, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and Office of the Information Commissioner (WA).



The Office held a drop-in clinic at the Tom Price Community Resource Centre in November 2022.

Aboriginal engagement

In 2016, the Office recruited a Principal Aboriginal Consultant, and in 2016-17, the Office developed the *Aboriginal Action Plan*, a comprehensive whole-of-office plan to address the significant disadvantage faced by Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The plan contributes to an overall goal of developing an organisation that is welcoming and culturally safe for Aboriginal people and meets the unique needs of the Aboriginal community it serves.

In 2018, the Office established two additional Aboriginal positions and in 2021-22, created a critical new executive position, Assistant Ombudsman Aboriginal Engagement and Collaboration, which was filled by Laurence Riley in August 2022. At 30 June 2023, the Office had three staff (3.9% of the Office's total FTE) identifying as Aboriginal in the Aboriginal Engagement and Collaboration Branch.

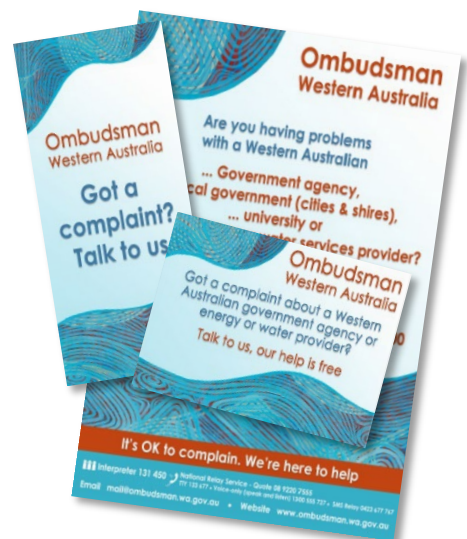
The Office also engaged an Aboriginal artist in 2018 to produce an artwork for the Office. The artwork is featured on the cover of this report and has been used as a theme for new publications.

The Aboriginal Engagement and Collaboration Branch members attended events and meetings with government and non-government service providers to provide an opportunity to raise issues affecting the Aboriginal community and to raise awareness of the Office's role.

The Office also continued its engagement with the wider Aboriginal community through:

- Aboriginal community information sessions as part of its Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program;
- Visits to remote Aboriginal communities during regional visits, including a visit to Jigalong community in the East Pilbara Region in November 2022; and
- Seeking consultation with Aboriginal people with particular expertise for major investigations, reports and other functions of the Office. See further details in the [Own Motion Investigations, Monitoring and Improvement section](#).

The Aboriginal staff also coordinated cultural awareness information and events throughout the year, including training on *Aboriginal Cultural Awareness* for staff of the Office, and provided information to staff about culturally important dates and events being held in the community.



Youth Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office has a dedicated youth space on the Ombudsman Western Australia website with information about the Office specifically tailored for children and young people, as well as information for non-government organisations and government agencies that assist children and young people.

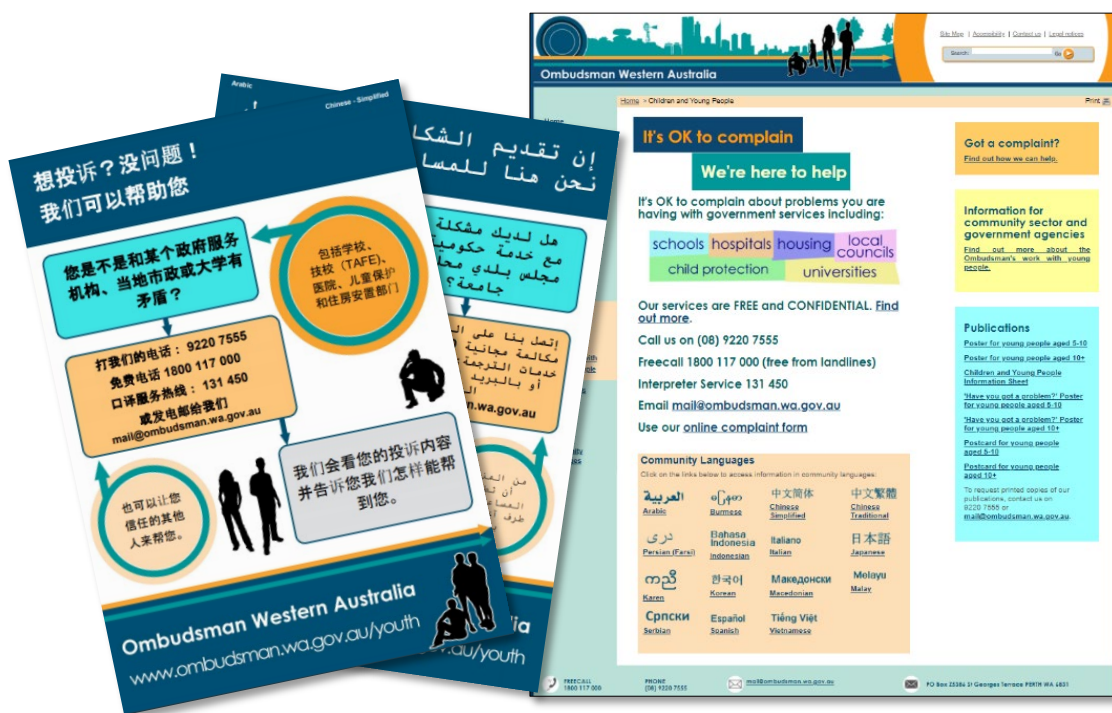
The website also has:

- A suite of promotional materials targeted at, and tailored for, children and young people; and
- A poster for children and young people translated into 15 community languages.

In 2022-23, these materials along with a colouring-in version of the poster were distributed to the community and organisations during the Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.

The Ombudsman has also continued visits to the Banksia Hill Detention Centre and engagement with community sector youth organisations in regional Western Australia under the Ombudsman's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program.

The children and young people section of the Ombudsman's website can be found at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth.



Prison Program

The Office continued the Prison Program during 2022-23. Eight visits were made to prisons and the juvenile detention centre to raise awareness of the role of the Ombudsman and enhance accessibility to the Office for adult prisoners and juvenile detainees in Western Australia.

Speeches and Presentations

Staff delivered speeches and presentations throughout the year at local, national and international conferences and events.

- *Ombudsman Complaint Resolution Webinar for Community Sector Organisations* by the Deputy Ombudsman, Principal Aboriginal Consultant and Principal Project Officer in July 2022, in collaboration with the Energy and Water Ombudsman, Commonwealth Ombudsman, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and Equal Opportunity Commission;
- *Ombudsman Western Australia and Energy and Water Ombudsman*, presented by the Principal Project Officer in collaboration with the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office to clients of the Lorikeet Centre in October 2022;
- *Keeping Accountability Agencies Accountable* presented by the Principal Analyst and Principal Project Officer to University of Western Australia students as part of the Government Accountability Law and Practice Unit in January 2023;
- *The Ombudsman: Traditional and Emerging Functions to Investigate and Monitor Administrative Actions* presented by the Principal Assistant Ombudsman to the State Solicitor's Office whole-of-government Continuing Professional Development Program session for government lawyers in February 2023;
- *Ombudsman Western Australia and Energy and Water Ombudsman*, presented by the Assistant Ombudsman Energy and Water and the Principal Project Officer to senior staff of the Small Business Development Corporation in May 2023;
- *Can I refer you... The Western Australian Ombudsman* presented by the Principal Project Officer to, and in collaboration with, other complaint handling organisations in May 2023; and
- *Child Death Reviews and Family and Domestic Violence Fatalities*, presented by the Senior Assistant Ombudsman Reviews to the Department of Justice's Youth Justice Service Team Leader Conference in June 2023.

The Ombudsman's speeches and presentations are detailed in [The Office of the President of the International Ombudsman Institute and Ombudsman section of this report](#) and the [Ombudsman and IOI President's Speeches and Engagements page of the website](#). Video recorded and written speeches by the Ombudsman are available on the [Speeches by the Ombudsman](#) page of the website.

Liaison with Public Authorities

Liaison relating to complaint resolution

The Office liaised with a range of bodies in relation to complaint resolution in 2022-23, including:

- The Department of Communities;
- The Department of Education;
- Various prisons; and
- The Corruption and Crime Commission.

Liaison relating to reviews

The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its reviews of child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities.

See further details in the [Child Death Review section](#) and the [Family and Domestic Violence Fatality Review section](#).

Liaison relating to the Reportable Conduct Scheme

During 2022-23, the Office held a range of information sessions and workshops for organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme and other stakeholders. This included webinars for eight key sectors in November 2022, and a further 30 stakeholder presentations and meetings in the six months after the Reportable Conduct Scheme commenced on 1 January 2023.

In addition, the Office regularly liaised with a range of bodies in relation to the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

See further details in the [Reportable Conduct Scheme section](#).

Liaison relating to own motion investigations, inspection and monitoring functions

The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its own motion investigations, inspection and monitoring functions.

See further details in the [Own Motion Investigations, Monitoring and Improvement section](#).

Publications

The Office has a comprehensive range of publications about the role of the Ombudsman, which are available on the Ombudsman's website.

For a full listing of the Office's publications, see [Appendix 3](#).

