



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.

Integrity Coordinating Group

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman
Public Sector Commissioner
Corruption and Crime Commissioner
Auditor General
Information Commissioner

Background:

The Integrity Coordinating Group (**ICG**) was formed to promote and strengthen integrity in Western Australian public bodies.

The Office's involvement:

The Ombudsman participates as a member of the ICG and the Office has nominated senior representatives who sit on the ICG's joint working party.

2016-17 initiatives:

The ICG met twice in 2016-17.

The Office was involved in the ICG's graduate program, which involves a graduate working in each of the member agencies over a two year period in total.

Public Sector Commission's Induction Seminars

Background:

As part of the induction process for all new public officers, the Public Sector Commission holds a half-day induction seminar. Staff from the Public Sector Commission, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Information Commissioner present at these sessions.

2016-17 initiatives:

The Office presented on three occasions during the year. The Office provides information on *The Role of the Ombudsman* and how the Office may be able to assist new public officers in their work.

International Ombudsman Institute

Background:

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), established in 1978, is the only global organisation for the cooperation of more than 170 Ombudsman institutions from over 90 countries.

The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of the IOI. The Ombudsman was elected 2nd Vice-President of the IOI in November 2016. The Ombudsman previously served as the Treasurer of the IOI from March 2014 to November 2016 and President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) of the IOI from November 2012 until March 2014.

2016-17 initiatives:

In November 2016, the Ombudsman attended the 11th IOI World Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand. The Ombudsman gave a speech, *The evolution of the Ombudsman* in the opening plenary session and in a separate plenary session presented an IOI-funded project jointly undertaken by the offices of the Western Australian and New South Wales Ombudsman, the *Starter Kit for New Ombudsman and Developing or Expanding Offices*. The objective of the project is to provide a highly accessible and practical web-based induction tool for newly appointed Ombudsmen, utilising the knowledge and experience of existing Ombudsmen, and a resource for those offices undergoing an expansion of functions or dealing with novel or challenging issues.

Alongside of the Conference, the Ombudsman attended meetings of the Executive Committee of the Board of the IOI, meetings of the Board of the IOI, a meeting of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region of the IOI, a civil society dialogue hosted by the Austrian Ambassador to Thailand and the General Assembly of the IOI.

In April 2017, the Ombudsman attended a meeting of the Board of the IOI in Vienna.





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.

2016-17 initiatives:

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 Aboriginal complaints handling, first contact, business improvement, policy and research, and public relations and communications.

2016-17 initiatives:

The Ombudsman attended the Annual General Meeting and Members meeting of ANZOA in November 2016.

Indonesian/Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman
Commonwealth Ombudsman
New South Wales Ombudsman
Ombudsman Republik Indonesia

Background:

The Indonesian/Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program (**the Linkages Program**) aims to provide greater access across Indonesia to more effective and sustainable Ombudsman services.

The Office's involvement:

The Office has been involved with the Linkages Program since 2005 and supports the Linkages Program through staff placements in Indonesia and Australia.

2016-17 initiatives:

The Office hosted three staff from Ombudsman Republik Indonesia for a four day internship in December 2016. The interns met with senior Ombudsman staff and received training in the Office's complaint handling processes.

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 complaint clinics held during regional visits assist them to make their complaint. Other initiatives in 2016-17 include:

- Regular updating and simplification 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 'Ask the Ombudsman' on 6PR's *Perth Tonight* program; 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 complaints clinics and delivers presentations to 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 its further increased use this year from 66% to 67% of all complaints received;
- Information on how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman is available in 15 languages 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 disabilities, 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 service, such as the Youth Affairs Council of WA (YACWA) conference in July 2016, the Financial Counsellors' Association of WA conference in October 2016, and Homeless Connect in November 2016; and
- The Office's visits to adult prisons and juvenile custodial facility provide an opportunity for adult prisoners and juvenile detainees to meet with representatives of the Office and lodge complaints in person.



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;
- Children and young people as well as information for non-government organisations and government agencies that assist children and young people;
- Access to the Ombudsman's reports such as *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into issues associated with violence restraining orders and their relationship with family and domestic violence fatalities*;



- The latest news on 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 2016-17:

- The total number of visits to the website has increased by 91% to 184,221 page visits compared to 96,526 page visits in 2015-16;
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage and the Contact Us page) on the site were *The role of the Ombudsman* and *What you can complain about*; and
- The Office's *Guidelines on Complaint Handling* and *Procedural Fairness Guidelines* were the two most viewed documents. The Office's three most recent major investigation reports also regularly featured in the top 10 most downloaded documents each month.

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 disabilities.

Dedicated youth space for children and young people

In June 2016, the Office launched a new, dedicated youth space on the Ombudsman's website. The new pages provide 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 pages also have downloadable print material tailored for children and young people.

The youth pages can be accessed at www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/youth.



'Ask the Ombudsman' on 6PR's Perth Tonight

The Office continues to provide access to its services through the Ombudsman's regular appearances on Radio 6PR's *Perth Tonight* program. Listeners who have complaints about public authorities or want to make enquiries have the opportunity to call in and speak with the Ombudsman live on air.

The segment allows the public to communicate a range of concerns with the Ombudsman. The segment also allows the Office to communicate key messages about the State Ombudsman and Energy and Water Ombudsman jurisdictions, the outcomes that can be achieved for members of the public and how public administration can be improved. The Ombudsman appeared on the 'Ask the Ombudsman' segment in August and November 2016 and May 2017.

Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during 2016-17. Two regional visits were conducted to Broome in the Kimberley in July 2016 and Carnarvon in the Gascoyne in June 2017, including such activities as:

- Complaints clinics, which provided an opportunity for members of the local community to raise their concerns face-to-face with the staff of the Office;
- Meetings with the Aboriginal community to discuss government service delivery and where the agencies may be able to assist;
- Liaison with community, advocacy and consumer groups; and
- Liaison with public authorities, including meetings with senior officers and workshops for public officers on *Good Decision Making* and *Effective Complaint Handling*.



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.

The Program enables the Office to:

- Deliver key services directly to regional communities, particularly through complaints clinics;
- 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.

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, and a suite of promotional materials targeted at, and tailored for, children and young people. In 2016-17, the Office expanded the range of publications available on the youth space.

The Office continued its proactive visiting program to vulnerable groups of children in the child protection system. During 2016-17, the Office visited:

- The Kath French Secure Care Centre in October 2016;
- Four residential group homes in the Perth metropolitan area in October and November 2016, and June 2017; and
- One residential group home in the Mid West Region in June 2017.

The Ombudsman has also increased regular visits to the Banksia Hill Detention Centre and engagement with the community sector in the 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 2016-17. Three visits were made to prisons and juvenile detention centres 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

The Ombudsman and other staff delivered speeches and presentations throughout the year at local, national and international conferences and events.

Ombudsman's speeches and presentations

- *Consumer Law and Economics Workshop*, University of Western Australia in August 2016;
- *The Ombudsman*, University of Western Australia Administrative Law Students in October 2016;
- Speech to the *Asia Pacific Coroners Society (APCS) Annual Conference* in November 2016;
- *The evolution of the Ombudsman*, a speech to the opening plenary session of the 11th World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute in November 2016;
- *Starter Kit for New Ombudsman and Developing or Expanding Offices*, A presentation to the 11th World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute in November 2016;
- *The Ombudsman*, to the Treasury Coffee Shop Forum in December 2016; and
- Panel discussion titled *Don't Silence the Violence*, hosted by the Aboriginal Family Law Service in February 2017.

Speeches by the Ombudsman are available on the [Ombudsman's website](#).

Speeches and presentations by other staff

- Presentations on the Ombudsman's report, *Investigation into issues associated with violence restraining orders and their relationship with family and domestic violence fatalities* to a range of non-government organisations;
- *Operationalising KPIs – Improving Performance and Accountability* to the Institute of Internal Auditors' Australian Public Sector Internal Auditors Conference in July 2016 and the Western Australia Internal Auditor Conference in September 2016;
- *Conducting an Investigation* to staff at Murdoch University, in October 2016;
- *The Energy and Water Ombudsman* to the Water Regulatory Managers Forum in October 2016;
- *The Western Australian Ombudsman* to members of the community at the Glyde-in Community Resource Centre East Fremantle, in a session titled 'Integrity in government' in collaboration with the Public Sector Commission and the Office of the Information Commissioner, in October 2016;



- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman* to staff at Hakea Prison in November 2016 and staff at Banksia Hill Detention Centre in March 2016;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman* to Edith Cowan University Administrative Law Students in March 2017;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman* to staff and visitors at the Lorikeet Centre in May 2017; and
- *Ombudsman Western Australia* to a delegation from the Botswana High Commission Directorate on Corruption and Economic Crime in June 2017.

Staff of the Office also regularly present on the role of the Ombudsman at the Public Sector Commission's *Induction to the Western Australian Public Sector* seminars for public sector employees.

Liaison with Public Authorities

Liaison relating to complaint resolution

The Office liaised with a range of bodies in relation to complaint resolution in 2016-17, including:

- The Department of Corrective Services;
- The Department of Housing;
- The Department of Transport;
- The Department of Education;
- The Department for Child Protection and Family Support;
- Western Australia Police;
- The Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services;
- The Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- The Corruption and Crime Commission;
- Various universities; and
- Various local governments.

Liaison relating to reviews and own motion investigations

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

See further details in the [Child Death Review section](#), the [Family and Domestic Violence Fatality Review section](#), and the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#).

Liaison relating to inspection and monitoring functions

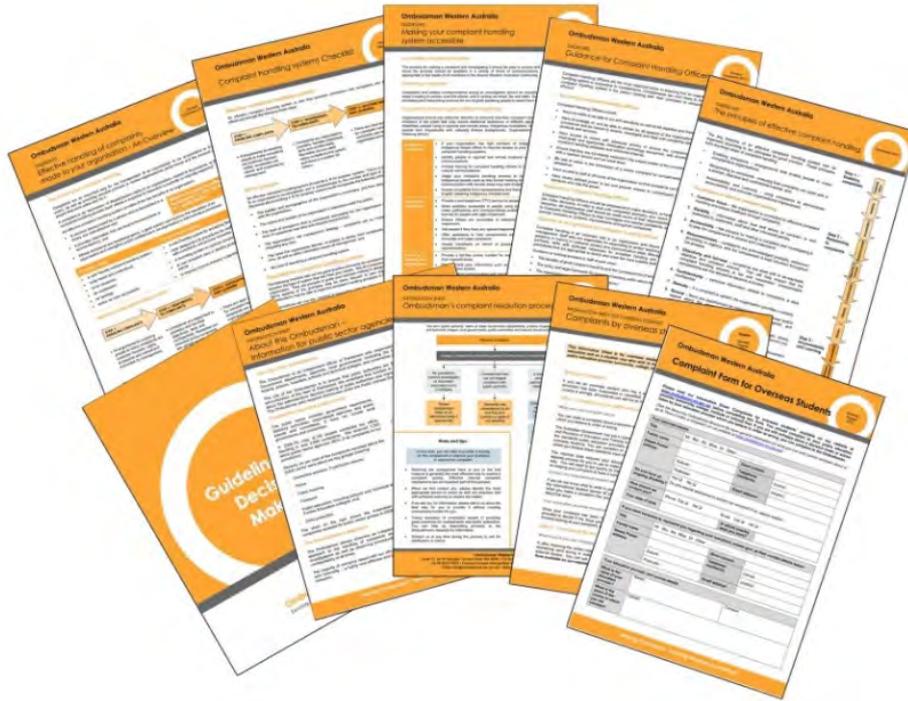
The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its inspection and monitoring functions.

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



Publications

The Office has a comprehensive range of publications about the role of the Ombudsman to assist complainants and public authorities, which are available on the Ombudsman's website. For a full listing of the Office's publications, see [Appendix 3](#).



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