

## Stakeholder Liaison and Access to Services

Effective engagement with key stakeholder groups is essential to the achievement of effective complaint resolution, increased awareness of the services provided by the Office and identification and addressing of systemic issues. The Office does this through:

- Continuous liaison and communication with key stakeholders including Member organisations (electricity, gas or water providers), regulators and industry-based Ombudsmen; and
- Ensuring ongoing access to its services for residential and small use customers, and community groups who represent them.

In November 2014, the Energy and Water Ombudsman presented to the Board a reviewed and revised Communications Strategy 2015-19. This strategy identifies activities designed to enhance the promotion of, and access to, the Energy and Water Ombudsman by key stakeholders. Further details about these activities are detailed in this section.

### Stakeholder Liaison

The Office regularly liaises with a number of key stakeholders. This continuous communication and feedback process allows the Office to better understand relevant industry issues and to encourage best practice and leadership in dispute resolution.

### Member Organisations

In order to achieve effective dispute resolution, the Office liaises closely with the Scheme Member organisations. The Office was involved in regular meetings with Members as outlined below:

- In July 2015, and March, April and June 2016, the Energy and Water Ombudsman met with the Chief Executive Officer of Western Power. Energy and Water Ombudsman staff also met with Western Power regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints;
- In October and December 2015, the Energy and Water Ombudsman met with the Chairperson of Synergy as well as the Chief Executive Officer of Synergy in November 2015 and March 2016. Energy and Water Ombudsman staff also met with Synergy throughout the year regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints;
- Energy and Water Ombudsman staff met with Horizon Power regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints;
- In September 2015, the Director of Energy and Water met with Aqwest regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints;

## Stakeholder Liaison and Access to Services

- In September 2015, the Director of Energy and Water met with Busselton Water regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints;
- In October 2015, the Energy and Water Ombudsman met with the Chief Executive Officer of the Water Corporation. Energy and Water Ombudsman staff also had regular liaison with the Water Corporation throughout the year regarding ongoing liaison and the resolution of complaints; and
- In March 2016, the Deputy Energy and Water Ombudsman and Director Energy and Water consulted with senior representatives from Synergy, Water Corporation, Western Power, Alinta, Kleenheat Gas and Horizon Power, on the proposed Energy and Water Ombudsman Budget for 2016-17.

### The Economic Regulation Authority

During 2015-16, the Office continued its regular interaction with the industry regulator, the Economic Regulation Authority (**ERA**). The Office was involved with meetings and liaison with the ERA as outlined below:

- In September and December 2015 and March and June 2016, the Director Energy and Water attended meetings with the ERA's Consumer Consultative Committee. The Consumer Consultative Committee meets quarterly to provide comment to the ERA on issues affecting consumers that fall within the ERA's jurisdiction; and
- In August and November 2015 and February and June 2016, the Director Energy and Water attended liaison meetings with senior staff of the ERA.

### Industry Ombudsmen

Liaison and collaboration with other industry-based Ombudsmen 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 experience of others. A summary of the liaison with these industry bodies is outlined below:

- In July 2015, the Energy and Water Ombudsman attended, and participated in, the Energy and Resources Stakeholder Discussion session of the Council of Australian Governments Energy Council Meeting;
- In October 2015, the Energy and Water Ombudsman met with the Electricity and Gas Complaints Commissioner, New Zealand, via teleconference;
- The Energy and Water Ombudsman attended the Australia and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (**ANZEWON**) meetings via teleconference in November 2015 and May 2016. ANZEWON provides a forum for utility industry Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and appropriate consistency of complaint handling across the jurisdictions. Members are able to share appropriate information and jointly consider emerging consumer issues;

# Stakeholder Liaison and Access to Services

- The Director Energy and Water participated in regular teleconferences with ANZEWON throughout 2015-16. The focus of these discussions was to share appropriate information and insights on systemic issues in complaints in the energy and water industries; and
- The Energy and Water Ombudsman attended the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**ANZOA**) Annual General Meeting and joint Members meeting via teleconference in November 2015, and a Joint Executive Committee and Members meetings in Melbourne in May 2016. In May 2016, the Energy and Water Ombudsman, the Deputy Energy and Water Ombudsman and the Director Energy and Water also attended the 2016 Biennial ANZOA Conference: *The Ombudsman in Australia and New Zealand: one model; many applications* in Melbourne. During the conference, the Energy and Water Ombudsman chaired a session titled: *The continuous rise of the rules of natural justice*. The Director Energy and Water has also attended ANZOA interest groups from time to time. ANZOA is a peak group for Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand. It acts as a network for consultation and discussion for Ombudsmen on matters of interest, concern or common experience.

## Access to Services

### Community Awareness and Accessibility

The Office continued to utilise various communication methods to ensure access to its services for the community, including:

- In October 2015, Energy and Water Ombudsman staff provided a stall, with information on the Energy and Water Ombudsman, at the Financial Counsellors' Association of Western Australia's 2014 conference: *Fundamentals of the Future*. During the conference, the Director Energy and Water gave a presentation as part of the session: *The Ombudsmen are in the House*;
- In November 2015, Energy and Water Ombudsman staff attended *Homeless Connect* and provided information on the Energy and Water Ombudsman;
- In May 2016, the Director Energy and Water attended the National Financial Counselling Australia Conference: *A Wealth of Ideas*. The Director Energy and Water also provided a stall, with information on the Energy and Water Ombudsman, for the delegates; and
- In 2015-16 the Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**), with visits to the Pilbara and Kimberley regions in June 2016.

The Program is an important way for the Energy and Water Ombudsman to raise awareness of, and access to, its services for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians. Energy and Water Ombudsman information sheets are distributed and Energy and Water Ombudsman staff deal with enquiries and complaints

# Stakeholder Liaison and Access to Services

about the electricity, gas and water services providers during complaint clinics which form part of regional visits.

## Speeches and Presentations

Throughout the year, Energy and Water Ombudsman staff delivered presentations on the role of the Energy and Water Ombudsman and how the Energy and Water Ombudsman may be able to assist members of the local community. In October 2015, the Director Energy and Water and staff representatives met with visiting interns from the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia and provided a briefing on the Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia.

## 'Ask the Ombudsman' on Nightline

The Office continues to provide access to its services through the Energy and Water Ombudsman's regular appearances on Radio 6PR's *Nightline* program. Listeners who have complaints about electricity, gas or water providers or want to make other enquiries about the Energy and Water Ombudsman jurisdiction can call in and speak with the Energy and Water Ombudsman live on the air. The segment also allows the Office to communicate key messages about the Energy and Water Ombudsman jurisdictions and the outcomes that can be achieved for members of the public. The Energy and Water Ombudsman appeared on the 'Ask the Ombudsman' segment in August and November 2015, and May 2016.

## Energy and Water Ombudsman Website

The [Energy and Water Ombudsman website](#) provides a wide range of information and resources for members of the public on the complaint handling process provided by the Office.

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](#).

Links to Energy and Water Ombudsman publications and useful links to external websites are used throughout. The site also features an online form for complainants to use to lodge a complaint. The site can be accessed at [www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/energyandwater](http://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/energyandwater).



## Publications

The Energy and Water Ombudsman provides publications to assist complainants to understand the role of the Energy and Water Ombudsman and the Energy and Water Ombudsman's complaint process.

The Energy and Water Ombudsman's complaint forms and information sheets are translated into 15 community languages to ensure accessibility for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The translated forms and information feature on the website and are available in hard copy on request.

