

About the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial officer who reports directly to Parliament. The Ombudsman receives, investigates and resolves complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities, undertakes own motion investigations, reviews certain child deaths, reviews family and domestic violence fatalities and undertakes inspection and monitoring functions.

The Ombudsman concurrently holds the roles of Energy and Water Ombudsman and Chair, State Records Commission.

Ombudsman's Overview

The Ombudsman investigates and resolves complaints from Western Australians. In 2018-19, we received 12,515 contacts from Western Australian citizens, comprised of 10,551 enquiries and 1,964 complaints.

Complaints must be resolved effectively and efficiently. In the last year, 95% of complaints were resolved within three months. The average age of complaints as at 30 June 2007 was 173 days. As at 30 June 2019, it is 48 days. In that same time, the cost of resolving complaints has reduced by 36%, from \$2,941 in 2007-08 to \$1,895 in 2018-19.



A vital role undertaken by the Ombudsman is the review of certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. In 2018-19, we made 15 recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities. Timely review processes have resulted in over three quarters of all reviews being completed within six months.

At the completion of investigations and reviews the Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations. In 2018-19, for the twelfth consecutive year, 100% of my recommendations were accepted. After making recommendations we report to Parliament on the steps taken to give effect to these recommendations. To this end, in 2018-19, we tabled in Parliament *A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from Investigation into ways to prevent or reduce deaths of children by drowning*. I am very pleased that in relation to all of the recommendations, the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (**the Department**) and the Building Commissioner (**the Commissioner**) have either taken steps, or propose to

take steps (or both), to give effect to the recommendations. Following the report, the Department, Commissioner and local governments have made particularly positive progress in the areas of improving consistency and quality of swimming pool inspections and the training and professional development of swimming pool inspectors. The very evident level of national collaboration in relation to portable swimming pools, and Western Australian leadership in relation to this, is also very pleasing.

Further still, we have included in this annual report, as we do each year, a review of the steps taken to give effect to the recommendations arising from the review of child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities.

The Ombudsman serves all Western Australians living and working in our vast State. To enhance awareness of, and accessibility to, our services by Aboriginal Western Australians and those living or working in the regions, we visited Katanning, Albany and Manjimup in November 2018 and Mandurah, Waroona and Boddington in June 2019 as well as a range of other engagement and collaboration initiatives.

I take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude for the tireless contributions of my outstanding staff team. Their level of professionalism, integrity and commitment to public service continues to be of the very highest order.

The Ombudsman serves the Western Australian Parliament and its Committees. It is a particularly special honour to serve as an officer of the Parliament and a special privilege to present the report of our work in 2018-19.



Chris Field
Ombudsman