



# Overview

This section provides an executive summary of the Office's performance, general information about the Office and the Office's Performance Management Framework.

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## 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**



## Year in Brief 2018-19

- We finalised 95% of complaints within 3 months.
  - Since 2007, we have:
    - Decreased the age of complaints from 173 days to 48 days; and
    - Reduced the cost of resolving complaints by 36%.
  - 100% of our recommendations were accepted for the twelfth consecutive year.
  - We received:
    - 30 investigable child deaths;
    - 17 reviewable family and domestic violence fatalities; and
    - Made 15 recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce these deaths and fatalities.
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- 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.*
  - We provided a *Report by the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations under section 158 of the Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012 for the whole monitoring period to the Attorney General and the Commissioner of Police and the report was tabled in Parliament by the Attorney General on 2 April 2019.*
  - Significant work was undertaken on an own motion investigation into ways that State Government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people.
  - We undertook a range of work to implement our inaugural *Aboriginal Action Plan.*
  - We enhanced awareness and access to the Office for children and young people through a range of mechanisms, including continuing our visiting program to vulnerable groups of children in the child protection system.
  - We enhanced regional awareness and access to the Office through visits to Katanning and Albany in the Great Southern Region, Manjimup in the South West Region and Mandurah, Waroona and Boddington in the Peel Region.
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## Operational Structure

### The Role of the Ombudsman

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations – more commonly known as the Ombudsman – is an independent and impartial officer of the Western Australian Parliament. The Ombudsman is responsible to the Parliament rather than to the government of the day or a particular Minister. This allows the Ombudsman to be completely independent in undertaking the Ombudsman’s functions.

### Functions of the Ombudsman

The Office has four principal functions derived from its governing legislation, the [\*Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971\*](#), and other legislation, codes or service delivery arrangements.

### Principal Functions

<b><u>Investigating and resolving complaints</u></b>	Receiving, investigating and resolving complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities.
<b><u>Reviewing certain deaths</u></b>	Reviewing certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities.
<b><u>Undertaking own motion investigations and promoting improvements to public administration</u></b>	Improving public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations and education and liaison programs with public authorities.
<b><u>Other functions</u></b>	Undertaking a range of additional functions, including statutory inspection and monitoring functions.

## Other Functions of the Ombudsman

<b><u>Complaints and appeals by overseas students</u></b>	Under the relevant national code, the Ombudsman can receive complaints or appeals by overseas students.
<b><u>Public Interest Disclosures</u></b>	The Ombudsman can receive disclosures of public interest information relating to matters of administration, and public officers.
<b><u>Complaints from residents of the Indian Ocean Territories</u></b>	Under a service delivery arrangement between the Ombudsman and the Australian Government, the Ombudsman can investigate complaints about public authorities in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction that provide services in the Indian Ocean Territories (Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands).
<b><u>Complaints from persons detained under terrorism legislation</u></b>	Persons detained under relevant terrorism legislation can make a complaint to the Ombudsman.
<b><u>Inspection of Telecommunications Interception records</u></b>	The Ombudsman inspects the records of the Western Australia Police Force and the Corruption and Crime Commission to ascertain the extent of compliance with relevant telecommunications interception legislation.
<b><u>Monitoring functions under the Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012</u></b>	Under the <i>Criminal Organisations Control Act 2012</i> , the Ombudsman monitors and reports on the exercise of powers conferred on the Commissioner of Police and police officers under the legislation for a five year period.
<b><u>Energy and Water Ombudsman</u></b>	The Energy and Water Ombudsman Western Australia resolves complaints about electricity, gas and water services providers. The Ombudsman undertakes the role of the Energy and Water Ombudsman. The costs of the Energy and Water Ombudsman are met by industry members.

A full list of legislation governing these functions can be found in the Appendices Section in [Appendix 2](#).

## Our Vision, Mission and Values

### Our Vision

Lawful, fair and accountable decision making and practices by public authorities.

### Our Mission

To serve Parliament and Western Australians by:

- Receiving, investigating and resolving complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities;
- Reviewing certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities;
- Improving public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations and education and liaison programs with public authorities; and
- Undertaking a range of additional functions, including statutory inspection and monitoring functions.

### Our Values

- **Fair:** We observe the requirements of our legislation at all times, use a 'no surprises' approach in all of our work and provide our services equitably to all Western Australians.
- **Independent:** The Ombudsman is an officer of the Parliament, independent of the government of the day and impartial in all of our work.
- **Accountable:** We should be, and are, accountable for our performance and proper expenditure of taxpayers' money. Being accountable means being:
  - **Rigorous:** We undertake work that is important to the community and our decisions are supported by appropriate evidence.
  - **Responsible:** All recommendations for change to public administration are practical and proportionate to the problem identified and have a net public benefit.
  - **Efficient:** We undertake our work in a timely way at least cost. We value working with other agencies that further good public administration but we never duplicate their work.



## Our Strategic Focus

- Complaint resolution that is high quality, independent, fair and timely, with an emphasis on early resolution, practical remedies for members of the public and improvements to public administration.
- Improved public administration through own motion investigations, making practical recommendations for improvement and monitoring their implementation.
- Review of certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities, identifying patterns and trends and making recommendations to public authorities about ways to prevent or reduce these deaths.
- Inspection of certain records and reports to ensure statutory compliance by the Western Australia Police Force and the Corruption and Crime Commission and monitoring and reporting on the exercise of certain powers by Western Australia Police Force under defined legislation.
- Collaboration with other Ombudsman and accountability agencies, raising community awareness, making our services accessible and promoting good decision making practices and complaint handling in public authorities.
- Strong and effective governance and attracting, developing and retaining a skilled and valued workforce with a culture that supports high quality, responsive and efficient service.

## Management

Management of the Office is undertaken by the Executive Management Group comprised of the Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Executive Services and Assistant Ombudsman Strategic Policy and Projects, National and International Relations, and the Office's Corporate Executive which includes each member of the Executive Management Group and the leaders of the teams in the Office.

The role of the Corporate Executive is to:

- Provide leadership to staff and model the Office's values;
- Set and monitor the strategic direction of the Office and monitor and discuss emerging issues of relevance to the work of the Ombudsman;
- Monitor performance, set priorities and targets for future performance; and
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and corporate policies.

For more information, see the [Disclosures and Legal Compliance section](#).

# Executive Management Group

## Chris Field

### Ombudsman

Chris Field is the Western Australian Ombudsman. He concurrently holds the roles of Energy and Water Ombudsman and Chair, State Records Commission.

Chris was elected Second Vice President of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) in 2016, having served as Treasurer of the IOI between 2014-2016 and President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region of the IOI between 2012-2014. He is also a member of the Australian and New Zealand Ombudsman Association.

Chris is an Adjunct Professor in the School of Law at the University of Western Australia and founder and co-coordinator of the unit 'Government Accountability – Law and Practice'. Chris is also the author of a range of publications on law, economics and public policy.

He commenced his career as a lawyer at Arthur Robinson and Hedderwicks (now Allens Linklaters), prior to holding the roles of Executive Director, Consumer Law Centre Victoria and Chairman, Australian Consumers' Association (now Choice). Immediately prior to his appointment as Ombudsman, he was an inaugural Member of the Western Australian Economic Regulation Authority. He holds Arts and Law (Honours) degrees.



## Mary White

### Deputy Ombudsman

Mary was appointed Deputy Ombudsman in April 2014 and concurrently holds the role of Deputy Energy and Water Ombudsman. Prior to her appointment Mary worked in a number of senior executive roles in the Office, from February 2008. Mary has more than 30 years' experience in the public sector, including strategic and corporate leadership roles in line and accountability agencies.



## Alan Shaw

### Principal Assistant Ombudsman Executive Services

Alan commenced his role as Principal Assistant Ombudsman Executive Services in June 2017. He has extensive experience in management roles and has been accountable for strategy and financial, and asset management. He has held a number of senior roles in the Western Australian public sector, Government Trading Enterprises and the not-for-profit sector.



## Rebecca Poole

### Assistant Ombudsman Strategic Policy and Projects, National and International Relations

Rebecca commenced in her role as Assistant Ombudsman Strategic Policy and Projects, National and International Relations in 2017. She has extensive experience managing strategic research, policy and projects and intergovernmental and international engagement on issues of good governance.



# Our Corporate Executive

**Michelle Bovill**

**Assistant Ombudsman  
Complaint Resolution**

Michelle joined the Office in 2007 and commenced the role of Assistant Ombudsman in December 2015. She has more than 19 years' public sector experience in investigations and complaint handling.



**Marcus Claridge**

**Assistant Ombudsman  
Energy and Water**

Marcus was appointed to the role of Assistant Ombudsman Energy and Water in April 2018. Prior to his appointment Marcus was Director, Energy and Water Ombudsman and has worked in other investigatory roles since 2011. Marcus has over 30 years regulatory and investigations experience, both within Australia and Asia.



**Natarlie De Cinque**

**Assistant Ombudsman  
Reviews**

Natarlie joined the office in 2009 and commenced the role of Assistant Ombudsman Reviews in July 2016. She has worked in the State public sector for over 20 years, and has extensive experience working with the issues of child safety and wellbeing, and family and domestic violence.



## Belinda West

Assistant Ombudsman  
Administrative Improvement

Belinda joined the office in 2008 and commenced as an Assistant Ombudsman in August 2014. She has more than 25 years' experience working in the public sector in financial and performance auditing and leadership roles in both line and accountability agencies.

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## Paula Parentich

Assistant Ombudsman  
Investigations

Paula was appointed as an Assistant Ombudsman in April 2017. She has been a legal practitioner for over 20 years, working in the Commonwealth and State public sectors, and in the non-government sector.

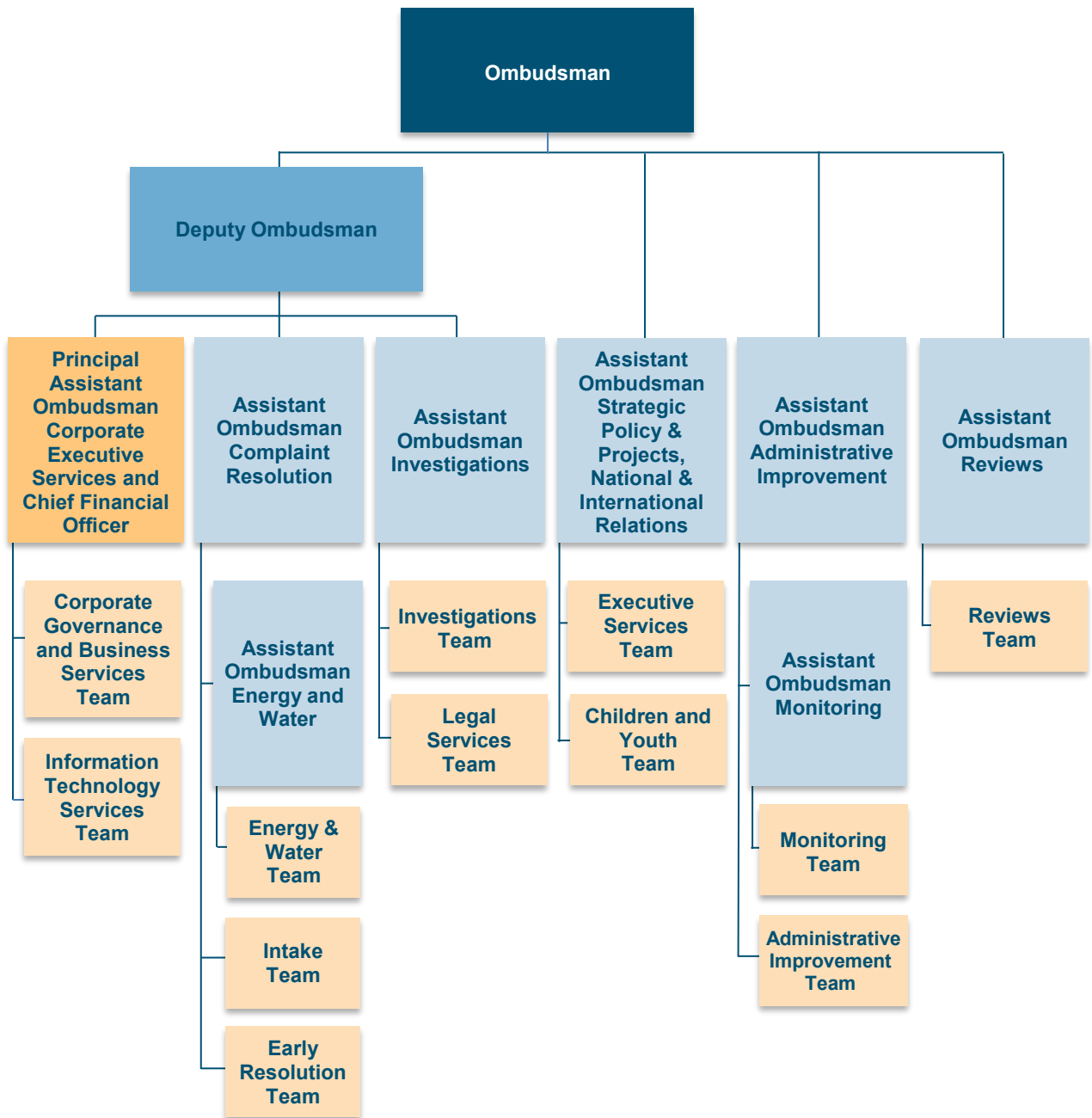
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# Our Structure and Teams

## Organisational Structure as at 30 June 2019

Operational Structure



## Team Responsibilities

- The **Complaint Resolution Team** includes the Intake Team and the Early Resolution Team and has responsibility for handling enquiries, receiving and assessing complaints, and undertaking the early resolution of complaints, where appropriate, through informal investigations.
- The **Administrative Improvement Team** undertakes own motion investigations and other strategies aimed at improving public administration.
- The **Monitoring Team** monitors and reports on the operation of powers conferred on the Western Australia Police Force under legislation, undertakes inspections of telecommunications interception records and undertakes other statutory inspection and monitoring functions.
- The **Reviews Team** reviews certain child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities, identifies patterns and trends arising from these reviews and makes recommendations to relevant public authorities to prevent or reduce these deaths.
- The **Investigations Team** handles the investigation of complaints and the **Legal Services Team** provides legal services across the Office.
- The **Energy and Water Team** has responsibility for handling enquiries and receiving, investigating and resolving complaints about electricity, gas and water services providers.
- The **Corporate Governance and Business Services** and **Information Technology Services Teams** support the Office in providing corporate communications, governance, business services, internal audit and integrity of corporate services.
- The **Executive Services** and **Children and Youth Teams** are responsible for strategic research, policy and projects; national and international relations; strategic and corporate communications; executive services and services for children and youth.