

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, complaints management, systemic issues and policy influence, and public relations and communications. In October 2021, the office's public relations and communications interest group representative presented on the youth engagement initiatives of ANZOA members as part of a webinar open to all staff of the ANZOA membership.

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 2021-22 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 84% of all complaints received (51% by email and 33% 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 Dowerin Machinery Field Days Agricultural Show in August 2021;
 - The Multicultural Communities Council WA mini-expo as part of the Mental Health Week event in October 2021;
 - The Financial Counsellors' Association of WA Conference marketplace in November 2021; and
- 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.

Ombudsman website

The [Ombudsman's website](https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au) 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, 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 *A report on the steps taken to give effect to the recommendations arising from Preventing suicide by children and young people 2020* and *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 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 2021-22:

- The total number of visits to the website was 103,579;
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage and the Contact Us page) on the site were *Making 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 2021-22. A regional visit was conducted to Kununurra, Wyndham, Halls Creek, and a remote Aboriginal community in the East Kimberley Region in August-September 2021 and Broome, Derby and Fitzroy Crossing in the West Kimberley Region in October 2021. 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;
- Meetings 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 further information and discussion; and
- Liaison with public authorities.

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 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 Corruption and Crime Commission and the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (Consumer Protection).

The Office also held an information stall at the Dowerin Machinery Field Days Agricultural Show in August 2021, in collaboration with the 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.



The Office held an information stall at the Dowerin Machinery Field Days Agricultural Show in August 2021.

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 will be recruited in 2022.

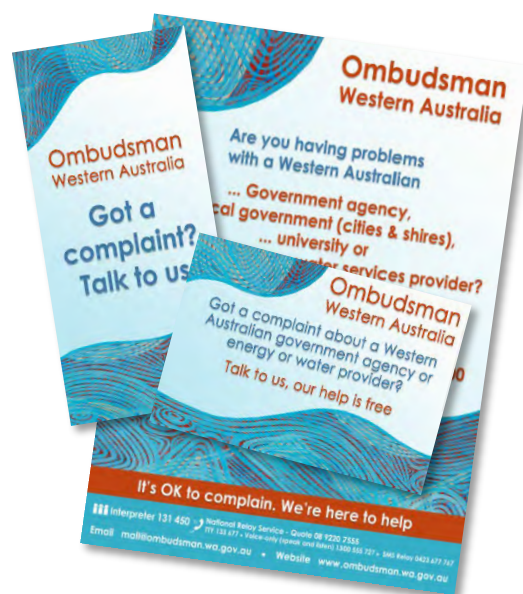
The Office also engaged an Aboriginal artist to produce an artwork for the Office. The artwork is featured on the cover of this report and has been used as a theme for new publications.

The Principal Aboriginal Consultant 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;
- An opportunity arose for a visit to a remote community during the visit to the East Kimberley Region; 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 2021-22, these materials along with a colouring-in version of the poster was distributed to the community and community organisations during the Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program visits to the East Kimberley and West Kimberley Regions and the Dowerin Machinery Field Days Agricultural Show.

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 2021-22. Four 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

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

- *The Western Australian Ombudsman*, presented by the Principal Project Officer in collaboration with the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office to clients of the Lorikeet Centre in July and November 2021 and May 2022;
- *Update from Ombudsman and Energy and Water Ombudsman WA*, presented by the Senior Investigating Officer to the Financial Counsellors' Association Conference Regional and Remote Day in November 2021;
- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Identification and Reporting*, presented by the Principal Investigator and Analyst, Reviews Team, to the Ombudsman's Advisory Panel in December 2021;
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman*, presented by the Deputy Ombudsman to the Department of Education Regional Directors forum in February 2022;
- *Processes and Opportunities into the Future*, presented by the Senior Assistant Ombudsman Reviews to staff of the Department of Communities in March 2022;
- *Department of Education Information Sharing*, presented by the Senior Assistant Ombudsman Reviews to staff of the Department of Education in May 2022;
- *Ombudsman and Energy and Water Ombudsman WA*, presented by the Assistant Ombudsman Energy and Water to the WA Council of Social Services' Community Relief and Resilience Forum in May 2022;
- *Review Role of Ombudsman Western Australia*, presented by the Senior Assistant Ombudsman Reviews to staff of the Department of Education in May 2022; and
- *The Role and Functions of the Ombudsman*, presented by the Deputy Ombudsman to the Local Government Elected Members Association in June 2022.

Video recorded and written speeches by the Ombudsman are available on the [Speeches by the Ombudsman](#) page of the website.

The Ombudsman's speeches and presentations as President of the International Ombudsman Institute are detailed in the [International Ombudsman Institute section of this report](#) and the [President's Speeches and Engagements 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 2021-22, including:

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

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, Monitoring and 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, Monitoring and 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](#).

