

# Improving Services



We delivered workshops on the Reportable Conduct Scheme and on Effective Complaint Handling  
Image credit: Ombudsman WA

## Achieving administrative improvements

### Improvements through complaints

Complaints made to an organisation provide valuable information that can lead to service improvements, provided the information reaches key decision-makers. Public authorities and other organisations should use complaints to identify systemic, thematic or serious issues. By doing so, they can address problems early and prevent them reoccurring for other customers and clients.

When we become involved in a complaint, we look for opportunities for public authorities to make improvements to their administrative practices.

The Ombudsman has the power to make recommendations to public authorities following our investigations. We can also achieve outcomes through our investigation process.

In 2024-25, we achieved 51 administrative improvements through the investigation of complaints.

### Improvements through complaint resolution in 2024-25



### Improvements through reviews

Through our [review of child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities](#), we identify ways to improve how public authorities support vulnerable children and family and domestic violence victims, and to prevent or reduce the risk of future deaths in similar circumstances.

In 2024-25, we made six recommendations to public authorities, relating to changing policies and procedures.

### Improvements through the Reportable Conduct Scheme

In our administration of the [Reportable Conduct Scheme](#), we examine the systems and policies of an organisation for reporting, responding and preventing child abuse. The review of these systems may result in administrative improvements, which we then record and monitor.

In 2024-25, there were 238 improvement actions made by

organisations as a result of our involvement.

### Improvements through the Reportable Conduct Scheme in 2024-25



### Improvements through guidance and publications

Our library of guidelines and information sheets continues to be a valuable resource for public authorities and organisations.

In particular our [Guidelines on Effective Complaint Handling](#) are one of the top resources downloaded from our website. We also have [Guidelines on Good Decision Making](#), as well as [Guidelines on Conducting Administrative Investigations](#) and a range of [information sheets](#).

We also have a range of [information sheets and templates](#) to support organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

### Improvements through training

This year we delivered Effective Complaint Handling workshops in Kalgoorlie in August 2024 and Albany in December 2024.

These interactive workshops are part of our [Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program](#) and are aimed at building the capacity of public officers in the regions.

Our Reportable Conduct team also held a number of workshops and information sessions [for organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme](#).



## Major investigations

### Why we do major investigations

One of our key activities to improve public administration and to prevent harm to vulnerable people is to undertake major reviews and investigations of systemic issues identified across all areas of our work.

This includes major reviews and investigations of complaints, child deaths, family and domestic violence fatalities and allegations of child abuse notified to us under the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

Our goal is for these major reviews and investigations to address systemic issues and result in practical improvements, particularly where such improvements may prevent harm or save lives.

### How do we work

Topics are selected based on criteria that include:

- the number and nature of the issues brought to our attention;
- the level of public interest;

- the number of people likely to be affected;
- whether others have already examined the topic;
- the potential for the investigation to result in real improvement; and
- whether the investigation is the best use of our resources.

Having identified a topic, we undertake extensive preliminary research to plan the scope, objectives and methodology of the investigation. Our approach may vary depending on what is being investigated but will generally include:

- review of the research literature;
- analysis of information provided by organisations;
- engagement with government agencies, non-government organisations and relevant experts;
- providing organisations included in the investigation an opportunity to review and respond to our draft findings and recommendations; and
- preparing a final report, which is tabled in Parliament and made publicly available.

Overall, we work closely with organisations throughout the entire process to ensure our recommendations result in practical improvements and minimise unnecessary administrative burden.

### Our achievements

Our major reviews and investigations improve the policies and practices of organisations, reduce risk to vulnerable people and result in more consistent and accountable decision making.

In 2024-25, we undertook significant work on:

- 'Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children', which was tabled in Parliament in April 2025; and
- An investigation into the management of tenant liabilities in public housing.

## Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children

Organisations covered by the Scheme are required to have systems in place for preventing, notifying and dealing with reportable conduct. Implementation of these systems is fundamental to the protection of children and compliance with the Scheme's requirements.

To build the capacity of organisations and to inform Parliament of the Scheme's operation, we examined allegations notified to us over an 18-month period and asked organisations about their compliance with requirements to have systems in place under the Scheme.

We found that there was still developing awareness and understanding of the Scheme, with only 39.3% of organisations reporting that they had fully implemented all required systems. Accordingly, we provided the report and further guidance materials to organisations so that they improve their systems and help keep children safe. We will continue to closely monitor organisational systems and use the findings of this report to target our efforts to areas of greatest need and risk given the importance of ensuring that allegations of child abuse are not dismissed, ignored or mishandled.

In this review, we:



- examined 889 notifications received during the first 18 months of the Scheme;
- administered and analysed a survey completed by 1,191 organisations on the systems they had implemented under the Scheme; and
- reviewed over 6,000 pages of documents provided by 39 organisations to identify, in further detail, areas of good practice and where improvement is required.

## An investigation into the management of tenant liabilities in public housing

We are undertaking a major investigation into how the Department of Housing and Works (previously the Department of Communities prior to 1 July 2025) manages the debts of public housing tenants. This work will examine whether there is proactive, fair and accountable decision making so that vulnerable people in the public housing system are appropriately supported and excessive debt accumulation is minimised.

## Monitoring the implementation of recommendations

Our recommendations are designed to be an evidence-based, proportionate, and practical response to the issues identified. Each of the recommendations arising from our major investigations are actively monitored to ensure they are implemented.

In 2024-25, we continued to monitor the implementation of Recommendation 8 from the '[Investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide](#)'. This report, published in 2022, examined how public authorities can improve the identification

Recommendation 8: The Mental Health Commission, in collaboration with relevant State Government departments and authorities and stakeholders, develop and disseminate a common understanding of what constitutes a trauma-informed approach for Western Australian State Government departments and authorities. Including, but not limited to:

- A definition and key principles of a trauma-informed approach;
- Domains of implementation (including, but not limited to, an organisation's strategic leadership, policy, training for staff, and evaluation);
- Consideration of vicarious trauma in the service delivery context;
- This approach being intersectional, and elevates the voices and experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; and
- A timeline for undertaking this work.



of, and responses to, family and domestic violence in Western Australia. We made nine recommendations in the report, and the following year we published '[A report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide](#)' to report on how our recommendations were being implemented. We considered that Recommendation 8 required further monitoring, so have reported on this recommendation in our annual reports.

The Mental Health Commission established the State Government Working Group for the Development of a Trauma-Informed Approach to give effect to Recommendation 8 and provided us the following update on its work:

There has been good progress made on the Guide and on 10 June 2025 the second draft was shared with Working Group members for review. Planning for targeted consultation is underway with State Government agencies not currently engaged in the Working Group and relevant sector peak bodies—including the Western Australian Association for Mental Health, Consumers of Mental Health WA, the Mental Health Advocacy Service, and WA Network of Alcohol and other Drug Agencies. The consultation is expected to take place in July 2025.

Once the findings from the consultation have been incorporated into the draft guide, the Working Group will have an additional opportunity for final feedback in October 2025.

... the final version of the Guide is now anticipated to be completed and disseminated by December 2025.

We are pleased that there is continued progress on this important body of work. We will continue to monitor the steps taken to give effect to Recommendation 8 and will publish an update in our 2025-26 Annual Report.