

Annual Report

2024-25

driving change...
connecting...
improving services...
protecting...

Ombudsman
Western Australia



Artwork

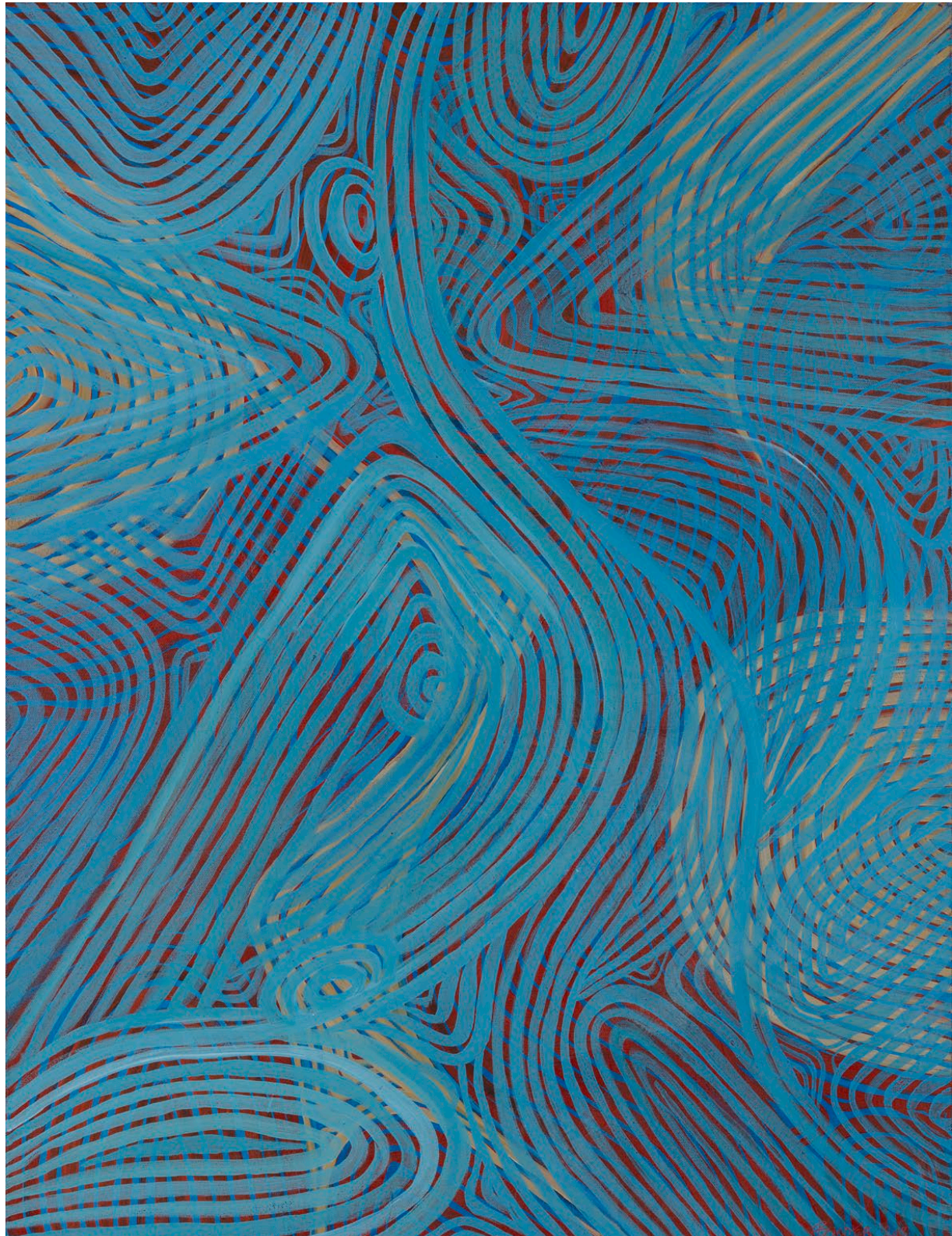
Barbara Bynder is a Whadjuk Ballardong Noongar artist. This painting was commissioned in 2018 and portrays the idea of fairness, mediation and accessible services where just decision making is promoted. The Ombudsman, government agencies and Aboriginal people are shown equally as hills that come to a point where they meet with a river flowing between them representing independence. The linear artwork represents the idea of songlines that traverse the Australian continent connecting Aboriginal people to each other.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia as the traditional custodians of this land. We recognise and respect the long history and ongoing cultural connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to Australia, recognise the strength, resilience and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and pay respect to Elders past and present, and emerging leaders.

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

In this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises Torres Strait Islanders who live in Western Australia. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities do exist.



Welcome to our annual report

This report describes the performance and services we delivered for the year ending 30 June 2025.

First published by Ombudsman Western Australia in September 2025. This report was written, designed, printed and converted for electronic viewing in house.

You can access this and earlier annual reports on our website.

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**The President of
the Legislative Council**

**The Speaker of the
Legislative Assembly**

Annual Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman) for the year ended 30 June 2025

In accordance with section 64(1) of the *Financial Management Act 2006* (as modified by section 5(2) and Schedule 2), I am pleased to submit to Parliament the Annual Report of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman) for the financial year ended 30 June 2025.

The report has been prepared in accordance with the *Financial Management Act 2006* and section 27 of the *Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971*.

Bevan Warner
Ombudsman

26 September 2025

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Message from the Ombudsman

The role of the Ombudsman concerns the protection of people's rights, prevention of harm, improving public services and ensuring good government.

We work with some of the most vulnerable members of the Western Australian community, offering practical insights to decision-makers, to improve the way government services are experienced and delivered.

New functions have been added since 1971 when the role was first legislated, and I expect the work will need to keep evolving, in line with modern expectations of what constitutes fair and effective public administration.

I would like to acknowledge that the work in this annual report for 2024-25 was achieved under the leadership of Deputy Ombudsman David Robinson, who led the organisation prior to my appointment on 9 June 2025.

David and the executive leadership team faced a challenging year with heightened scrutiny of the organisation arising from a Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) investigation, that

led to the former Ombudsman's resignation in October 2024.

At the same time, the office faced increasing operational pressures such as significant increases in complaints and reportable conduct notifications, in a tight fiscal environment, as well as the need to modernise ageing IT systems and infrastructure.

The restoration of public trust and confidence in the office remains a key priority for me. This will be achieved by exhibiting the same standards we expect of others, and the exercise of discerning judgment in the use of the extensive powers granted to the role.

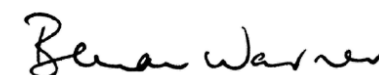
I am very appreciative of the expertise of the professional and dedicated body of staff who will help carry the organisation forward. They are here because they believe in the role and work of the Ombudsman. They have shown a willingness to evolve into a more modern, responsive and engaging organisation.

My focus for 2025-26 will be to engage more openly with the community and stakeholders, to explain our work and its

importance. We will be more accessible on social media, have a new website, and be publicly reporting on our findings and our work more than ever.

I would like to thank David and the entire team for their commitment to the work of the office over the last 12 months. This annual report shows only a small part of the hard work they do every day in the service of all Western Australians.

I look forward to a successful 2025-26 in full appreciation of the great privilege extended to me in being appointed Ombudsman for WA.



Bevan Warner
OMBUDSMAN

Overview



We visited Newman and Jigalong in the East Pilbara Region in June 2025.

Image credit: Tourism WA

Executive Summary

The role of the Ombudsman

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations – more commonly known as the Ombudsman:

☑ **Protects People's Rights:** we give people a way to ensure they are heard when they feel they've been treated unfairly.

☑ **Improves Services and Build Trust in Government:** we can investigate how services are delivered and bring weaknesses to the attention of decision-makers. In doing so, we improve service delivery for all Western Australians.

☑ **Prevents Harm:** through death reviews, investigations and oversight of how organisations respond to allegations of child related harm, we identify opportunities to prevent deaths and strengthen the safety net around children.

☑ **Supports Vulnerable Communities:** we can focus on people who are often overlooked or disadvantaged, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are considered.

Protecting people's rights

People have a right to complain about poor service delivery by Western Australian government agencies, local governments and universities (public authorities). We ensure that people's complaints are heard and, where there has been a mistake or poor service, the problem is fixed.

In 2024-25, we received 14,506 contacts, comprising 11,641 enquiries and 2,865 written complaints. Of the written complaints within our remit, 72% were about Western Australian government agencies, 23% were about local governments, and 5% were about universities.

We achieved 241 remedies for people who made complaints, such as decisions being reconsidered or reversed, apologies and explanations, and financial remedies.

As the Energy and Water Ombudsman, we received 1,604 complaints and 132 enquiries about electricity, gas and water services.

We achieved 111 remedies through our investigation and resolution of complaints.

We are also the Western Australian Charitable Trusts Commission, and we receive and investigate complaints about charitable trusts. In 2024-25, we received three complaints about charitable trusts.

We also have functions to monitor the use of certain powers relating to telecommunications interceptions, consorting laws, and public entertainment precinct bans. This oversight is aimed at ensuring these significant powers that impact on people's rights are used lawfully and appropriately.

Improving services

Through all our work, we look for ways that administrative practices and procedures can be improved. This includes changing policies and procedures, training staff or amending a business system.

In 2024-25, our investigations of complaints led to 51 improvements to

administration. Our reviews of certain deaths lead to six formal recommendations to improve policies, procedures or other systems.

We improved child safety in organisations working with children, with 238 improvements made and a report 'Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children'.

Preventing harm

We review child deaths and family and domestic violence (FDV) fatalities to improve public safety and prevent future harm. We also administer the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

In 2024-25, we received 161 child death notifications and 14 FDV fatality notifications. Our reviews of these deaths looked for ways that public authorities could prevent or reduce the likelihood of similar deaths occurring in the future.

We also received 877 notifications of reportable conduct. These are allegations of child related harm made against the employees in organisations working with children, reported to the Ombudsman by the employer. We

oversee and monitor how the organisations are responding to the allegations and ensuring child safety.

Supporting vulnerable communities

The Ombudsman is there for all Western Australians; however, vulnerable communities are often disproportionately represented in our work.

We handle complaints from people interacting with the justice system, police, public housing, and child protection. We are notified of child abuse (reportable conduct) and deaths of children or people in circumstances of FDV. In this work, children and young people, Aboriginal people, people with disability and those living in regional and remote areas are particularly affected.

We have a range of strategies to engage with the community with a strong focus on vulnerable people.

In 2024-25, we participated in a range of events across the metropolitan Perth area. We also continued our regional visit program, which included visits to regional areas in collaboration with

other complaint handling and consumer rights organisations.

Our Vision

Lawful, reasonable, 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, universities and charitable trusts;
- Reviewing child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities;
- Overseeing and monitoring that relevant organisations are accountable for, and are, preventing, notifying and dealing with reportable conduct;
- 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.

Performance highlights



Protecting people's rights

16,244 contacts from people with complaints and enquiries

775 investigations finalised

↑ **24% increase** in complaints about public authorities

↑ **24% increase** in energy and water investigations

352 remedies achieved for complainants

93% of allegations were finalised **within 3 months**



Improving services

6 recommendations to improve public administration through child death and FDV fatality reviews

51 improvements to public administration through complaint resolution

238 improvement actions by organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme

We published a systemic review '[Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children](#)'



Preventing harm

877 notifications of child related harm in organisations (reportable conduct) and responded to 497 enquiries from organisations

53 events to educate organisations covered by the Reportable Conduct Scheme

161 child death notifications received and 61 progressed to review

14 FDV fatality notifications received and 12 progressed to review



Supporting vulnerable communities

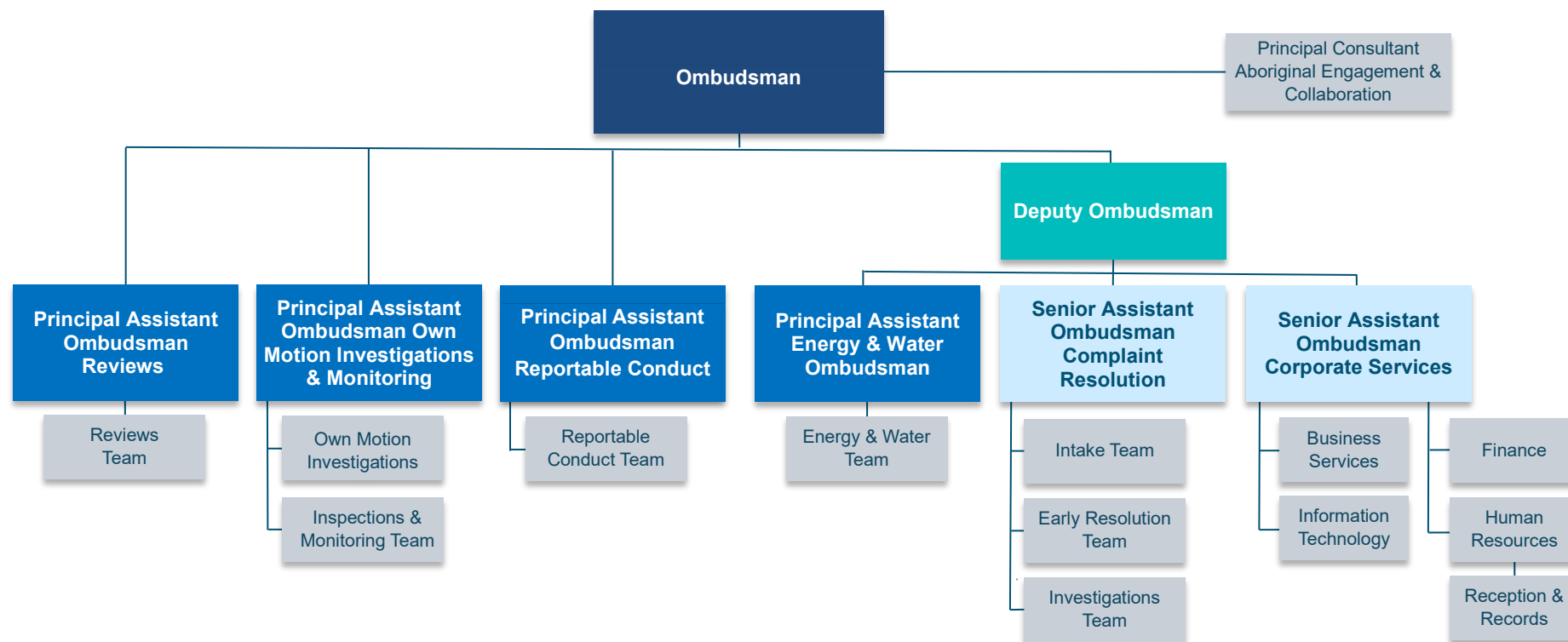
10 community events and presentations across the metropolitan area

9 regional towns visited

- Kalgoorlie and Kambalda in the Goldfields
- Albany, Denmark and Katanning in the Great Southern
- Wagin in the Wheatbelt
- Busselton in the South West
- Newman and Jigalong in the Pilbara

Operational structure

Organisation chart at 30 June 2025:



Bevan Warner, Ombudsman

Appointed in June 2025. Bevan has over 30 years' experience in the public sector, including 10 as Managing Director of Victoria Legal Aid, 11 as General Manager of Legal Aid WA and 5 in senior roles with the WA Aboriginal Affairs Department. Most recently, Bevan was the CEO of Launch Housing, a Melbourne based community housing organisation dedicated to ending homelessness.

David Robinson, Deputy Ombudsman

Appointed in February 2024. David was previously the Acting Deputy Director General, People, Culture and Standards in the Department of Justice and prior to that spent 20 years at the Corruption and Crime Commission, including eight as Director Operations and 18 months acting as Chief Executive.

Executive Leadership

Brianna Lonnie, Senior Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution

Brianna joined the Ombudsman's office in November 2024. Previously, Brianna worked for Legal Aid WA for 25 years and has extensive experience leading impactful legal and public sector initiatives in justice, advocacy, and public administration.

Complaint Resolution branch

We receive, investigate and resolve complaints about State Government agencies, local governments and universities (public authorities).

Our Intake Team handles enquiries and assesses complaints, with a focus on advice and referral.

Our Early Resolution Team does informal investigations for more straightforward complaints.

Our Investigations Team investigates complaints that are lengthy or complex. We also investigate complaints about charitable trusts, in conjunction with the Principal Assistant Ombudsman Reportable Conduct.

Alison Cameron, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Reportable Conduct

Alison joined the Ombudsman's office in 2017 and commenced in her current role in November 2023. Alison was admitted to legal practice in 2009 and has extensive experience in both child protection and administrative law and practice, both within Australia and Canada.

Reportable Conduct branch

We receive notifications about allegations of, and convictions for, child related harm (reportable conduct) from organisations about their employees. We monitor, oversee and review the investigations by organisations and look for opportunities for improvement.

We also provide education and advice to organisations about identifying and preventing reportable conduct.

Natarlie De Cinque, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Reviews

Natarlie joined the Ombudsman's office in 2009 and commenced in her current role in July 2019. She has worked in the State public sector for over 25 years and has extensive experience working with the issues of child safety and wellbeing, and family and domestic violence.

Reviews branch

We review child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities and make recommendations to relevant public authorities to prevent or reduce these deaths.

We also collate and analyse data on child deaths and family and domestic violence fatalities, to identify patterns and trends to inform service development.

Belinda West, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Own Motion Investigations and Monitoring

Belinda joined the Ombudsman's office in 2008 and commenced in her current role in March 2020. Belinda has more than 30 years of experience working in the public sector in financial and performance auditing and leadership roles.

Own Motion Investigations and Monitoring branch

Our Own Motion Investigations Team carries out large investigations that generally examine a significant or systemic issue identified from complaints, reviews or oversight roles.

Our Monitoring Team does inspection, monitoring and reporting functions like:

- inspecting telecommunication interceptions records to ensure compliance with legislation;
- monitoring the exercise of police powers on unlawful consorting notices and prohibited insignia; and
- scrutinising the powers relating to protected entertainment precincts.

Marcus Claridge, Principal Assistant Energy and Water Ombudsman

Marcus joined the Ombudsman's office in 2011 and commenced in his current role in April 2018. Marcus has over 35 years of regulatory and investigations experience, both within Australia and Asia.

Energy and Water Ombudsman branch

We investigate and resolve complaints about electricity, gas and water providers.

The Intake Team within the Complaint Resolution branch handles the enquiries and referrals to electricity, gas and water providers. The Energy and Water Ombudsman team facilitates resolutions and investigates the complaints.

The costs of the Energy and Water Ombudsman are met by industry. The Energy and Water Ombudsman is governed by an independent Board.

More about the Energy and Water Ombudsman can be found at energyandwater.ombudsman.wa.gov.au

Sharon Basini, Senior Assistant Ombudsman Corporate Services

Sharon joined the Ombudsman's office in January 2025. Sharon previously worked at the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and has more than 20 years' experience in various corporate services roles including senior roles since 2017.

Corporate Services branch

We have four teams: Finance and Governance, Information Technology, Human Resources (which includes Records and Reception) and Business Services.

We support the Ombudsman's office by providing effective human resource guidance, robust financial management and governance. We also uphold the office's integrity and compliance while maintaining its workplace environment and business systems.

Business Services are responsible for communications, community outreach and engagement programs, websites and publications, and strategic projects.

Cultural advice

Justyne Eades, Principal Consultant Aboriginal Engagement and Collaboration

Justyne joined the Ombudsman's office in May 2023. A proud Menang Goreng woman from the Great Southern Region of Western Australia, Justyne has legal qualifications and more than two decades of experience in government and the not-for-profit sectors, having worked for the Department of Justice, the Aboriginal Legal Service and the Commissioner for Children and Young People among others.

Aboriginal engagement and collaboration

Justyne provides cultural advice across the office. This includes being consulted and involved in complaints and other cases.

Justyne also plays a key role in our community engagement, attending most visits to regional areas and facilitating engagement with local Aboriginal communities and organisations.



The Ombudsman sponsored Reconciliation Week street banners in Perth, Midland, Albany and Geraldton. The banners featured artwork by Noongar artist Darryl Dempster.

Administered Legislation

Principal legislation

The enabling legislation for the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman) is the [Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971](#)

Legislation and other instruments governing our functions

Investigating and resolving complaints	<u>Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971</u>
Reviewing certain deaths	<u>Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971</u> Part III, Division 3A and section 16(1).
Reportable Conduct Scheme	<u>Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971</u> Part III, Division 3B
Own motion investigations	<u>Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971</u> section 16(1).
Western Australian Charitable Trusts Commission	<u>Charitable Trusts Act 2022</u>
Complaints and appeals by overseas students	<u>National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018</u>
Public Interest Disclosures	<u>Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003</u>
Complaints from residents of the Indian Ocean Territories	<u>Indian Ocean Territories (Administration of Laws) Act 1992</u> <u>Christmas Island Act 1958 (Commonwealth)</u> <u>Cocos (Keeling) Islands Act 1955 (Commonwealth)</u>

Complaints from persons detained under terrorism legislation

[Terrorism \(Preventative Detention\) Act 2006](#)

Inspection of Telecommunications Interception records

[Telecommunications \(Interception and Access\) Act 1979 \(Commonwealth\)](#)

[Telecommunications \(Interception and Access\) Western Australia Act 1996](#)

[Telecommunications \(Interception and Access\) Western Australia Regulations 1996](#)

Scrutiny of police powers in relation to unlawful consorting and prohibited insignia

[Criminal Law \(Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia\) Act 2021](#)

Scrutiny of powers in relation to Protected Entertainment Precincts

[Liquor Control Act 1988](#)

Other key legislation impacting on the office's activities

Auditor General Act 2006

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003

Disability Services Act 1993

Economic Regulation Authority Act 2003

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Financial Management Act 2006

Industrial Relations Act 1979

Long Service Leave Act 1958

Minimum Conditions of Employment Act 1993

Procurement Act 2020

Public Sector Management Act 1994

Royal Commissions Act 1968

Salaries and Allowances Act 1975

State Records Act 2000

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

Performance management framework

Our outcome-based management framework is consistent with the Government goal of Safe, Strong and Fair Communities: Supporting our local and regional communities to thrive.

Desired Outcomes of the Ombudsman's Office

The public sector of Western Australia is accountable for, and is improving the standard of, administrative decision making and practices, and relevant entities are accountable for, and are, preventing, notifying and dealing with reportable conduct.



Key Effectiveness Indicators

- Where the Ombudsman made recommendations to improve practices or procedures, the percentage of recommendations accepted by agencies.
- Number of improvements to practices or procedures as a result of Ombudsman action.
- Where the Ombudsman made recommendations regarding reportable conduct, the percentage of recommendations accepted by relevant entities.
- Number of actions taken by relevant entities to prevent reportable conduct.

Service Provided by the Ombudsman's Office

Resolving complaints about the decision making of public authorities, improving the standard of public administration, and monitoring that relevant entities are preventing and dealing with reportable conduct.



Key Efficiency Indicators

- Percentage of allegations finalised within three months.
- Percentage of allegations finalised within 12 months.
- Percentage of allegations on hand at 30 June less than three months old.
- Percentage of allegations on hand at 30 June less than 12 months old.
- Average cost per finalised allegation.
- Average cost per finalised notification of death.
- Average cost per notification of reportable conduct.
- Cost of monitoring and inspection functions.

Significant issues impacting our office

Changes in leadership

Bevan Warner commenced as Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman) on 9 June 2025. The position was effectively vacant through the earlier part of the financial year after the former Ombudsman, Chris Field, took leave from early 2024 and resigned in October 2024 arising from a Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) investigation.

Deputy Ombudsman, David Robinson, fulfilled the functions of the Ombudsman during the period of vacancy.

The leadership vacancy as a result of the CCC investigation meant 2024-25 was a period of uncertainty in the office.

Increase in complaints

We have experienced a significant and sustained increase in complaints made to our office, with an average of 30% more complaints each month since January 2025 compared to the average in the previous 18 months. This has placed significant pressure on our Complaint Resolution branch and

affected the timeliness of complaints. The Complaint Resolution branch has improved various processes to handle the increased volume and will continue to make changes to our complaint handling processes through 2025-26. More information is provided in the [Complaint Resolution section](#).

Changes to complaint jurisdiction

In February 2025, the National Student Ombudsman (NSO) commenced. While our powers have not changed, most university complaints are now handled by this dedicated national body. We started referring complaints to the NSO and updated our website and information.

In 2025-26, a new Local Government Inspector will be appointed. We will work with the Inspectorate to streamline complaint handling about local governments.

In April 2024, legislation established the Alternative Electricity Services Framework. This establishes a regulatory framework for electricity

providers currently operating outside the licencing regime, such as embedded networks and other electricity supply arrangements. Regulating the new services will extend consumer protections, including access to the Energy and Water Ombudsman, for thousands of customers. We are working with Energy Policy WA on the implementation of the framework and preparing to take complaints when it commences operation.

Increase in reportable conduct notifications

We received 878 notifications of reportable conduct in 2024-25, which is 26% higher than the year before. This has placed significant pressure on the Reportable Conduct branch, which is, at the same time, working to provide more information and education to organisations covered by the scheme.

Nevertheless, we believe that there is still low awareness and underreporting of reportable conduct across many sectors. This is supported in our research included in our report

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

Our challenge in 2025-26 will be continuing to enhance education while handling an increasing number of notifications within current resources.

Changes to the child safety landscape

We are actively engaged in cross-agency and cross-jurisdiction discussions regarding state and national amendments to the Working with Children Check system. We endorse the need for a national approach to all aspects of the Working with Children Check system, and the need to increase information sharing measures between stakeholders, both intra and interstate. Whilst ongoing, much progress has already been made in this space, and we are deeply committed to prioritising these reforms.

In addition, we are committed to facilitating the implementation of the Child Safe Standards (CSS) in Western Australia, and recognise the importance of the CSS in increasing the significance and effectiveness of the Reportable

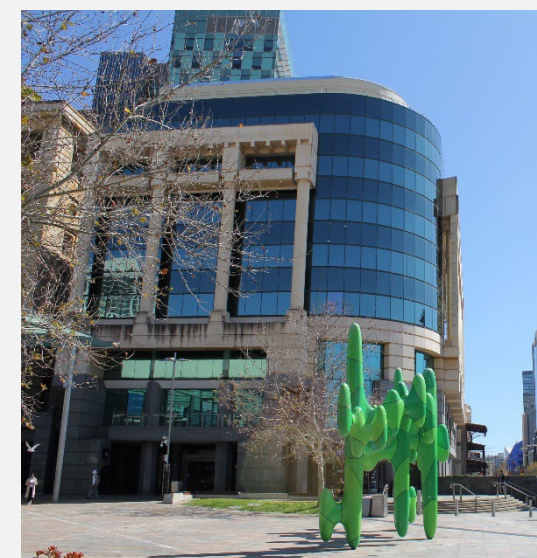
Conduct Scheme. Our outreach work in metropolitan and regional Western Australia focusses on increasing awareness of all aspects of child safety in WA, and this will continue in 2025-26.

Investing in our future

We are undertaking a significant digital transformation. In 2024-25, this focussed on bringing our information and communications technology up to contemporary standards to set us up for capability enhancements in 2025-26 and beyond.

This program includes an uplift from on-premise to cloud environments, application upgrades, hardware upgrades, better utilisation of Microsoft 365 capabilities and integrations, and security enhancements. It also includes new internal and external websites and better engagement with the community through digital channels like social media.

Our challenge is delivering this program of work with appropriate planning and resourcing in a tight fiscal environment.



Summary of performance

Financial performance

Financial targets

	2024-25 Target ^(a) ('000)	2024-25 Actual ('000)	Variance ('000)
Total cost of services (expense limit) (sourced from Statement of Comprehensive income)	16,542	15,357	(1,185)
Net cost of services (sourced from Statement of Comprehensive income)	13,776	12,501	(1,275)
Total equity (sourced from Statement of financial position)	1,632	4,147	2,515
Agreed salary expense level	10,449	10,389	(60)

(a) As specified in the 2024-25 Budget Statements.

Explanations on variances are contained in Note 9 'Explanatory Statement' to the financial statements.

Working cash targets

	2024-25 Agreed limit ^(b) ('000)	2024-25 Target / Actual ('000)	Variance ('000)
Agreed working cash limit (at Budget)	787	787	n/a
Agreed working cash limit (at Actual)	807	4,272	3,465

(b) As specified in the 2024-25 Resource Agreement.

Cash held at the end of the year was \$3 million above the agreed working cash limit due to delays in some capital projects, some prior year surpluses being carried forward, and cash retained to fund the Alternative Electricity Scheme.

Key effectiveness performance

	2023-24	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	Variation	Result
Where the Ombudsman made recommendations to improve practices or procedures, the percentage of recommendations accepted by agencies	100%	100%	100%	Nil	✓
Number of improvements to practices or procedures as a result of Ombudsman action	40	100	57	(43)	🔔
Where the Ombudsman made recommendations regarding reportable conduct, the percentage of recommendations accepted by relevant entities	Not applicable	100%	Not applicable	Not applicable	-
Number of actions taken by relevant entities to prevent reportable conduct	97	51	238	187	✓

Key efficiency performance

	2023-24	2024-25 Target	2024-25 Actual	Variation	Result
Percentage of allegations finalised within three months	95%	95%	93%	-2%	🔔
Percentage of allegations finalised within 12 months	100%	100%	100%	Nil	✓
Percentage of allegations on hand at 30 June less than three months old	88%	90%	85%	-5%	🔔
Percentage of allegations on hand at 30 June less than 12 months old	100%	100%	100%	Nil	✓
Average cost per finalised allegation	\$1,314	\$1,890	\$1,375	-\$515	✓
Average cost per finalised notification of death	\$11,571	\$14,655	\$14,429	-\$226	✓
Average cost per notification of reportable conduct	\$3,687	\$4,000	\$3,226	-\$774	✓
Cost of monitoring and inspection functions	\$1,000,679	\$1,168,000	\$1,116,054	-\$51,946	✓

🔔 For further details, see the [Key Performance Indicators section](#).