

Supporting Vulnerable Communities



We visited Albany in the Great Southern Region in December 2024.

Image credit: Tourism WA

Connecting with the WA community

Reaching out and connecting with the people we serve in WA is a fundamental part of what we do. There are many ways people find out about our services: from online searches through to the white pages, outreach activities or referrals from other service providers.

We strive for continual improvement of our services and communications in our day-to-day work that will assist the community. This year we reviewed and updated our Disability Action and Inclusion Plan and Multicultural Plan after consultation with our staff, community groups and agencies as well as the wider community. These Plans outline the actions we will take to improve our services for the diverse WA community.

Community outreach by our staff both around Perth and out to the regions continues to reach more vulnerable and diverse groups of people. As the need for our services increases, we are increasing our outreach and engagement: to maintain a richer opportunity for dialogue, especially with those living in the regions.

Out and about around Perth

Attending events provides meaningful conversations and advice to those who need more information about how we can assist people. Helping community service providers understand our role is also fundamental, as they seek ways to help vulnerable people in times of stress or hardship.

Community events

By attending regular events, we're continuing to build relationships with local residents and service providers and improve our engagement with diverse groups of people. NAIDOC Week is an important event on our calendar every July, where we attended the City of Armadale's festival which brings together local residents to connect with and celebrate Aboriginal culture. We attended the Disability Connections Expo in August 2024. In October 2024 we spoke with seniors and service providers at the Seniors Recreation Council of WA's 'Have a Go Day' in Burswood. In the same month we attend the Financial Counsellors' Association of WA conference to



With the Australian Financial Complaints Authority at the Perth Disability Connections Expo in August 2024.



At the Seniors Recreation Council of WA's 'Have A Go Day' in October 2024.

discuss ways our services can assist those experiencing financial hardship.

In November 2024, we participated in PrideFest Fairday at the Supreme Court Gardens with the vibrant, diverse and unique LGBTQIA+ community. The Harmony Day festival by the City of Belmont in March 2025 reaching culturally diverse families and community members. We provided information in 19 different languages with options to provide translation and interpreters for other dialects. Let's Connect Armadale in April 2025 was also a new opportunity to talk with local community members, organisations and care service professionals.

Talks

We delivered a series of talks including a lecture to the current cohort of legal students on the history and scope of the Ombudsman services at the UWA Law School. We discussed complaints with community service students at the Australian Professional Services College at their inaugural networking with service providers, and returned to the Lorikeet Centre to talk about our services with community members in Leederville.

Reaching out to the Regions

Western Australia is a vast geographical area, the original and ongoing land and home of the oldest continuous culture on earth – Aboriginal Western Australians. We have a special responsibility to listen to, and engage with, all Aboriginal Western Australians living regionally and remotely.

Regional Western Australia is also central to all of Australia's social and economic interests, making engagement with those living and working in regional Western Australia of critical importance.

For these reasons, we have a Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program to ensure awareness and accessibility of our services to regional and Aboriginal Western Australians.

Our regional outreach is promoted through community organisations and agencies, our website, a media release to traditional media outlets, newspaper advertising, and social media targeting the local area.



We joined the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office at Pridefest Fairday in November 2024.



We visited the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison as part of our visit to Kalgoorlie.

Working together with other agencies

To ensure our visits are as helpful as possible to Aboriginal Western Australians and those living and working regionally, we coordinate them with other consumer protection and complaint handling agencies. This is a highly successful program that benefits the communities we go to by having several providers to talk to at the same time.

This year we coordinated with the Equal Opportunity Commission, Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the (then) Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (Consumer Protection), Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, Australian Financial Complaints Authority and Australian Financial Security Authority.

Goldfields

The year of regional visits began with Australia's largest outback town, Kalgoorlie, in August 2024. Drop-in sessions at the Kalgoorlie CY O'Connor Community Hall, Kambalda Community

Recreation Facility and an Aboriginal Community Information Session at the Goldfields Arts Centre, gave opportunities for staff to discuss issues that arose and where possible, helped people make their complaints to initiate resolutions.

Training for effective complaint handling for public authorities was delivered along with a workshop for Reportable Conduct Scheme Investigations. Going out to the region provided multiple opportunities for the team to meet with community organisations and agencies in person to discuss issues and educate them on our role.

The team visited the Eastern Goldfields Regional Prison, meeting with the superintendent, key senior staff and peer support prisoners.

Great Southern

During December 2024, a week of visits started with an inaugural networking sundowner for the Albany business community hosted by the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry: a unique and successful collaboration to reach over 25 small business members. We held Complaint Services Mini Expos in Denmark and Albany, where people



We co-hosted an evening networking event with the Albany Chamber of Commerce and Industry in December 2024.



Aboriginal community information session at the Noongar Centre (Albany Aboriginal Corporation) in Albany.

could drop in to about problems we can help them with and make complaints.

Other events in the Great Southern included an information session for the Aboriginal community at the Albany Aboriginal Corporation, and joining Consumer Protection's Seniors Connect event. While in the region, staff met with various agencies and organisations including visits to the Pardelup Prison Farm and Albany Regional Prison.

Southern Wheatbelt

We returned to the Wagin Woolarama Agricultural Show in March 2025 which we've attended for several years. The team also visited the Wagin and Katanning Community Resource Centres to distribute information, and hosted a 'Supporting Consumers Sundowner' in Katanning, a successful networking event attended by local advocates and community members.

South West

We attended Consumer Protection's Seniors Connect event in Busselton in May 2025. This event aims to keep seniors connected and informed about consumer rights and preparing for the future.

East Pilbara

We joined the Financial Counsellors' Association of WA's events in the East Pilbara in June 2024. This included a Jigalong Outreach visit and the annual Regional Forum. The Jigalong community welcomed the team for a yarning circle and community BBQ. The Regional Forum provided an opportunity to discuss complaint handling services for people in financial hardship in the regions. We joined the Australian Financial Complaints Authority on an Ombudsman Q&A panel session. Aligning our visits to the regions at the same time as other events such as this, we can maximise our engagement with relevant stakeholders.

The team also held meetings with the Shire of East Pilbara, KJ Rangers, Youth Justice Service, Department of Communities, and artists at the Martumili Aboriginal Art Centre. We ended the visit with a Lunch & Learn event for agencies and community sector workers.



The evening networking event in Katanning was a success.



Engaging with rural families and farmers at the Wagin Woolarama Agricultural Show.



We hosted a Lunch & Learn in Newman.

Getting our information to those who need it

We looked for other ways to engage and reach people who need our services and make ourselves accessible.

Raising awareness

In May 2025 we sponsored the National Reconciliation Week banner program which showcased artwork by the talented Western Australian Aboriginal Noongar artist Darryl Dempster. We sponsored four banners displayed in Perth along Forrest place, and in Midland, Geraldton and Albany.

We used our commissioned artwork by Barbara Bynder, a Whadjuk Ballardong Noongar artist, in new ways this year, including fridge magnets, polo shirts for staff and a table cover. These improved recognition of staff at events and helped made them more approachable.

Publications

This year we published a new flyer about our role as the WA Charitable Trusts Commission to support visits to the regions. The flyer helped raise awareness about the Commission with clear information about what we can

help with and how to make complaints about charitable trusts.

We also published an Easy Read booklet about making a complaint to the Ombudsman. We took a 'draft for consultation' to community events such as the Disability Connections Expo in August 2024 before finalising the booklet.

We continue to have a range of publications about the role of the Ombudsman available on our website, from simple posters to detailed information sheets.

Online engagement

We continued to engage through our Energy and Water Ombudsman Facebook profile during the year and began a project to expand our social media engagement in 2025-26.

We also began a project to develop a new website which will meet contemporary standards for technologies and accessibility. This will work together with social media to communicate with more people online.

