

Ombudsman's Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present my first report as Western Australian Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman undertakes two principal functions. First, we seek to resolve complaints that people have with the public service, local governments and public universities. We seek to undertake timely, thorough, objective and impartial investigations of complaints. I am very pleased that this year we have been able to significantly reduce older investigation cases on hand while dealing with a more complex caseload in a timely way. A focus on continuing to improve both timeliness and efficiency of our investigations will be of key importance in future years.

Second, we aim to improve public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians. To do so, we undertake a range of activities, including education and liaison with public administrators, investigations arising from complaints made to us, investigations of our own motion and participation in activities designed to improve the delivery of public services. In relation to the last of these points, we also play an active role in strengthening integrity across the public sector through our participation in the Integrity Coordinating Group. I am pleased to report that this year we have engaged all of these mechanisms to contribute to the improvement of public administration in Western Australia.

The office faces a number of pressures on its services over the coming years, arising from a range of matters, including the increasing complexity of cases and the need to ensure that we are able to contribute effectively to improving public administration through the undertaking of investigations. We will also need to ensure that our office is accessible to all Western Australians and, in particular, specific groups of the population, including regional Western Australians and Indigenous Western Australians. How we reach out to these groups, making them aware of our services and ensuring that we are accessible to them, will be a challenge that we will embrace in the coming year.

I take this opportunity to record my appreciation for the work of my predecessor, Deirdre O'Donnell. Deirdre's contribution to the office of the Western Australian Ombudsman was significant and enhanced considerably the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations. Most of the many achievements set out in this Annual Report were accomplished under Deirdre's leadership.

The achievements of the Ombudsman are the achievements of a dedicated team, committed to resolving problems and to improving public administration. I also take this opportunity to thank them for their professionalism, commitment and belief in the importance of their role.

This year the Western Australian Ombudsman celebrates its thirty-fifth anniversary – in 1972, Western Australia led this country in creating the role of Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, now better known as the Western Australian Ombudsman. It is a great privilege to occupy the position of Ombudsman and I look forward to working with my team to serve the Western Australian Parliament and all Western Australians.



Chris Field

Western Australian Ombudsman