

Significant Issues and Trends

A number of current and emerging trends impacting on the Ombudsman's office were outlined in the 2006-07 budget papers. In this section of the report, we describe our approach to addressing these challenges and a range of other operational initiatives for the next reporting period.

Increasing complexity

Recent years have seen a marked increase in the complexity of matters under investigation by our office. Increased complexity of investigations places greater demands on the office to finalise complaints in a timely and effective manner. We will continue to take steps in the 2007-08 reporting period to address these issues.

Systemic focus

In addition to investigating individual complaints, the Ombudsman's office is increasingly focused on working proactively with the public sector to improve public administration. We do this in a range of ways such as undertaking major investigations of systemic issues and developing resource materials for use by the public sector, for example, *The Ombudsman's Redress Guidelines*.

In the coming year we will improve our capacity to identify key issues of systemic and serious importance either within single agencies or across the public sector generally. This will enable us to utilise our resources strategically to address areas of greatest need.

Improving our accessibility

Over recent years the office has identified an increased need for our services to be accessible to all citizens, particularly Indigenous and regional Western Australians. Over the coming year the office will ensure that we continue to increase awareness of and accessibility to our services by these members of the community.

Dealing with challenging complainants

The Ombudsman's office is part of a national research project led by the New South Wales Ombudsman with the participation of other Australian Ombudsman schemes. It focuses on developing better strategies for managing complainants whose conduct is unreasonable.

The second stage of the project, to be implemented in the coming year, looks at adapting these strategies to meet the needs of the wider public sector, particularly agencies, many of which must maintain an ongoing relationship with complainants.