

Collaboration and Access to Services

Effective engagement with key stakeholder groups is essential to the office's achievement of positive complaint outcomes and improved public administration. The office does this through:

- Working collaboratively with other integrity and accountability agencies - locally, nationally and internationally - to encourage best practice and leadership in the sector;
- Ensuring ongoing accessibility to its services for public authorities and the community;
- Developing, maintaining and supporting relationships with public authorities and community groups; and
- Providing publications, workshops and advice to public authorities on good administrative decision making and complaint handling (also see the [Administrative Improvement](#) section).

Working Collaboratively

The office works collaboratively with local, national and international integrity and accountability agencies to encourage best practice and leadership in the sector. Working collaboratively also provides an opportunity for the office to benchmark its performance and stakeholder communication activities against other similar agencies, and to identify areas for improvement through the experiences of others.

[Integrity Coordinating Group](#)

Members:

[Western Australian Ombudsman](#)

[Public Sector Commissioner](#)

[Corruption and Crime Commissioner](#)

[Auditor General](#)

[Information Commissioner](#)

Background:

The Group was formed to promote and strengthen integrity in Western Australian public bodies.

The office's involvement:

The Ombudsman was the Chair of the Group during the year and the office provided executive support for this role. The Ombudsman passed his responsibilities as Chair to the Auditor General on 30 June 2011. Senior Ombudsman staff members also sit on the Group's joint working party.

2010-11 initiatives:

In June 2011 the Group held the Integrity Coordinating Group Forum 2011 and launched the [Integrity in Decision Making](#) product ([see details](#) later in this section).

In January 2011 the Ombudsman appointed a Graduate Officer who is undertaking a program of six-monthly placements with members of the Group (see details later in this section).

Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman & Energy Ombudsman Western Australia

16 Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand

Background:

The Association is a peak body industry group for Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen in Australia and New Zealand. It acts as a network for consultation and discussion for Ombudsmen on matters of interest, concern or common experience.

The office's involvement:

The Ombudsman sits on the Association's Executive. The office regularly reports on its activities to the Association and also has nominated representatives who sit on interest groups in the areas of policy and research, first contact and public relations and communications.

2010-11 initiatives:

The Ombudsman was involved in four scheduled meetings via teleconference during the year, and attended the Association's Annual General Meeting and Executive Committee meeting in Melbourne in November 2010.

Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman

Parliamentary Ombudsmen from the Australasian and Pacific region

Background:

Ombudsmen from the Australasian and Pacific region meet to foster engagement, liaison and best practice in the pursuit of good governance and complaint handling within the region.

2010-11 Initiatives:

The Ombudsman attended the 26th Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference in Taipei, Taiwan in March 2011. The conference theme was 'The Ombudsman and Human Rights: Protecting Human Rights and Promoting Good Governance.' The Ombudsman addressed the conference with a paper titled, [*The Ombudsman and the Constitution of Liberty*](#).

Indonesian/Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman

Commonwealth Ombudsman

New South Wales Ombudsman

Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia

Background:

The program aims to provide access across a larger portion of Indonesia to more effective and sustainable Ombudsman and complaint management services.

The office's involvement:

The office has been involved with the program since 2005 and supports the program through staff placements in Indonesia and Australia.

2010-11 initiatives:

Planning commenced for an Ombudsman staff member to visit Indonesia in July 2011. The purpose of the visit is to be introduced to Indonesia's incoming Ombudsmen, to develop a work program for the next phase of the program and to continue to evaluate outcomes from earlier program activities.

Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct Project

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman

Led by New South Wales Ombudsman, involving Parliamentary Ombudsmen from all other jurisdictions.

Background:

The project aims to develop better strategies for managing complainants whose behaviour is challenging and is led by the New South Wales Ombudsman.

The office's involvement:

The office has been involved with the project since 2006 and has had input into the interim and [final practice manuals](#), developed in the first phase of the project.

2010-11 initiatives:

Work has been progressing on phase 2 of the project. The office has had input into the strategic direction of the next edition of the practice manual which will incorporate strategies for managing unreasonable behaviour where there is an ongoing relationship and for dealing with relationships in remote areas.

Information sharing with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions

Background:

Where possible and practical, the office aims to share information and insights about its work with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions, as well as with other accountability and integrity agencies

2010-11 Initiatives:

In February 2011, the office hosted a visit from the New Zealand Ombudsman's office. New Zealand's Deputy Ombudsman and an Assistant Ombudsman travelled to Western Australia to find out more about how the Western Australian office works, and how the office's processes might be applied in New Zealand.

Public Sector Commission's Induction: Your Guide to Ethics and Integrity in the Public Sector Program

Background:

As part of the induction process for all new public officers, the Public Sector Commission holds a half-day module on ethics and integrity in the public sector. The sessions are available to all new public officers. The Public Sector Commission, Corruption and Crime Commission and Office of the Information Commissioner also present at these sessions.

2010-11 Initiatives:

As a key integrity agency, the office presented on five occasions during the year. The office provides information to new public sector employees on *The Role of the Ombudsman* and how the office may be able to assist them in their work. This program will continue into 2011-12.

Integrity Coordinating Group Forum 2011



Left: The ICG members taking part in the panel discussion at the Forum.

Integrity in decision making was the theme of the Integrity Coordinating Group Forum for 2011, *Integrity in decision making: A discussion with the Integrity Coordinating Group* which was held in Perth on 16 June 2011. The Forum was a joint initiative of the Group and, as the Ombudsman was the Chair during 2010-11, the office was primarily responsible for the coordination of the Forum.

The topic of integrity in decision making was selected by the Group as it applies to all public officers as they carry out their daily duties. Around 200 Chief Executive Officers, senior executive staff and those involved with promoting integrity in public bodies attended the event. During the Forum, the Integrity Coordinating Group members, the Public Sector Commissioner, the Auditor General, the Corruption and Crime Commissioner, the Western Australian Ombudsman and the Information Commissioner, spoke about their roles in relation to decision making, why integrity is important and shared their insights and observations based on their experiences. The Forum was followed by an Expo where senior staff from the member bodies were available to speak to, and take questions from, attendees about the work of the integrity agencies and integrity generally.

"Attendees gave extremely positive feedback with 96 per cent very satisfied or satisfied with the overall quality of the Forum and relevance of the content."



Above: Communications Manager, Janelle Walker, and Publications Manager, Lisa Webb, at the Ombudsman's stand at the ICG Expo.

The Integrity Coordinating Group also launched its new product, *Integrity in Decision Making*, at the event. The product provides an Integrity in Decision Making Framework and a series of practical guides along with checklists for individual decision makers and public authorities.

The *Integrity in Decision Making* product can be downloaded from the [ICG website](#) or received electronically by [emailing the ICG](#).



Right: The ICG's *Integrity in Decision Making* product which includes guidelines and checklists for public authorities and decision makers.

Providing Access to Key Stakeholders

‘Ask the Ombudsman’ on *Nightline*

The office continues to provide access to its services through the Ombudsman’s regular appearances on Radio 6PR’s *Nightline* program. Listeners who have complaints about public authorities or want to make enquiries have the opportunity to call in and speak with the Ombudsman live on air. The segment has allowed the public to communicate a range of concerns with the Ombudsman over the three years the initiative has been running. The segment also allows the office to communicate key messages about the State Ombudsman and Energy Ombudsman jurisdictions, the outcomes that can be achieved for members of the public and how public administration can be improved. The Ombudsman appeared on the ‘Ask the Ombudsman’ segment in September and November 2010 and March 2011.

Ombudsman Website

The [Western Australian Ombudsman website](#) is a valuable resource for the community and public sector. The number of visitors to the website increased significantly in 2010-11, particularly around the time of regional visits, publication of Ombudsman investigation reports and public sector events including the Integrity Coordinating Group 2011 Forum in June.

The website provides a wide range of information and resources for:

- Members of the public on the complaint handling services provided by the office as well as links to other complaint bodies for issues outside the Ombudsman’s jurisdiction. In 2010-11 the most visited pages on the site included [‘How to make a complaint’](#), [‘What you can complain about’](#) and [‘Links to other complaint handling bodies’](#);
- Public sector agencies on decision making, complaint handling and conducting investigations. The website provides access to a wide range of guidelines and information sheets, which are regularly reviewed and updated to assist both complainants and agencies. Throughout 2010-11 the office’s [Procedural Fairness](#) guideline was not only the most viewed document but also in the top five most viewed site content;
- Access to the Ombudsman’s investigation reports such as [The Management of Personal Information](#);
- The latest news on events such as regional visits and collaborative initiatives such as the Integrity Coordinating Group 2011 Forum; and
- Links to other key functions undertaken by the office such as the Energy Ombudsman role. There was significant redevelopment and improvement of the [Energy Ombudsman](#) section of the website in 2010-11 to improve access and information to members of the public and Energy Ombudsman scheme members.

In August 2010, a [new website page](#), information sheet and complaint form was added to the ‘How to make a complaint’ section to assist overseas students wishing to make a complaint about their public education provider.

The website content and functionality is continually reviewed and improved to ensure there is maximum accessibility to all members of the diverse Western Australian community. The site provides information in a wide range of [community languages](#) and is accessible to people with disabilities.

Indian Ocean Territories Visit



Left: Anne Donaldson, Director Health and Disability Services Complaints Office; Sandra Pelham, Senior Investigating Officer, Commonwealth Ombudsman's office; and Mary White, Assistant Ombudsman Strategic Services, Western Australian's Ombudsman's office.

In April 2011, staff from the office visited the Indian Ocean Territories. The team travelled to both the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and to Christmas Island.

While the visit was coordinated by the Ombudsman's office, it also involved staff from the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office and the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office.

Under a service delivery arrangement with the Commonwealth Government, the Ombudsman's office handles complaints from people in the Indian Ocean Territories about Western Australian public authorities which are within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction and operate in the

Indian Ocean Territories. The visit aimed to raise awareness of, and access to, these services for people living and working in the Territories.

Activities conducted on the visit included:

- Meetings and discussions with the local governments on both islands along with the Administration Team (part of the Commonwealth's Department of Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government) to discuss issues and trends affecting service delivery on the islands;
- Meetings with the local schools and hospitals to discuss the role of the office and methods for improving standards of administration;
- Meetings with representatives from key community groups including the Malay Association, Chinese Literary Association, seniors group and the Community Consultative Committee to discuss how these groups can assist others in the community with the complaint handling process; and
- Complaint clinics to provide an opportunity for people to speak with complaint resolution staff face-to-face about their issues and complaints.

"Having the State and Commonwealth accountability agencies working together to answer questions and share perspectives ensured maximum benefit for everyone concerned."

While the visit enabled the office to deliver key messages about the Ombudsman's work and services, it also provided a valuable opportunity for staff to strengthen their understanding of the issues affecting people in the island communities. The visit also highlighted the important interaction of the Commonwealth, State and local governments in the provision of services to the communities.

Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**), visiting the Great Southern Region in November 2010. The Program is an important way for the office to raise awareness of, and access to its services, for regional and Indigenous Western Australians.

While the Program is coordinated by the Ombudsman's office, it incorporates the work of other integrity and accountability agencies including the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office, the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office.

Activities conducted on the visit included:

For Public Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A seminar for Commonwealth, State and local public authorities to discuss the role of the office, relevant issues and current trends in complaints and good administrative practice;• Workshops on <i>Effective Complaint Handling Systems</i>, <i>Complaint Investigation and Resolution</i>, <i>Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct</i> and <i>Good Administrative Decision Making Practices</i>; and• Meetings and/or workshops with individual public authorities.
For Prisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A visit to Albany Regional Prison that included the Ombudsman meeting with the Superintendent and other prison staff about current issues and trends; and• A visit to Pardelup Prison Farm including a meeting with the Superintendent and a tour of the facilities.
For Indigenous People	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An information session with local Indigenous government workers on the role of the Ombudsman and how the office can assist them with their work; and• An open session for the local Indigenous community to discuss challenging issues faced in the community and any complaints they wished to have heard.
For the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A seminar for community groups to discuss the role of the office and how to assist people wishing to make a complaint;• Promotion of the role and functions of the Ombudsman and the visits in local print and radio media; and• Complaint clinics for the community to discuss their issues and complaints with staff.

Our Performance - Collaboration and Access to Services



Above: Information Commissioner, Sven Bluemmel, and Ombudsman, Chris Field discuss regional issues at the Great Southern Region visit.

Below: Ombudsman, Chris Field, delivers a presentation at the Great Southern Region visit.



Complaint clinics enabled members of the local community to speak with office staff face-to-face about their issues and concerns. The office was able to provide advice about, or resolve many of the complaints made during the visit. The collaboration with other integrity and accountability agencies during regional visits and complaint clinics also assists in ensuring regional Western Australians can be easily referred to the most appropriate body to assist them.

In July 2010, Ombudsman staff travelled to Wiluna to meet with members of the community and provide access to the Ombudsman's services. Staff observed the interaction between the public authorities operating in the community and the local people. The experience was a valuable opportunity to gather a sense of the issues facing regional and remote Western Australian Indigenous communities.

Presentations and Publications

Speeches and Presentations



Photograph courtesy of Control Yuan

The Ombudsman and other staff delivered speeches and presentations throughout the year at local, national and international conferences and events.

Left: Ombudsman, Chris Field, presenting a paper titled *The Ombudsman and the Constitution of Liberty* at the 26th Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference in Taipei, Taiwan.

