

Operational Structure

The Role of the Ombudsman

The Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations – more commonly known as the Ombudsman – is an independent officer of the Western Australian Parliament. The Ombudsman is responsible to the Parliament rather than to the government of the day or a particular Minister. This allows the Ombudsman to be completely independent in the investigation and resolution of complaints about public authorities (State Government agencies, statutory authorities and boards, local governments and universities).

Functions of the Ombudsman

The Ombudsman's office (**the Office**) has four principal functions derived from its governing legislation, the [*Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1971*](#) and other legislation, codes or service delivery arrangements.

Principal Functions

Investigating and resolving complaints	Receiving, investigating and resolving complaints about the decision making and administrative practices of public authorities.
Reviewing child deaths	Reviewing and investigating the deaths of certain Western Australian children.
Undertaking own motion investigations and recommending and promoting administrative improvements	Improving public administration for the benefit of all Western Australians through own motion investigations, and education and liaison programs with public authorities.
Other functions	Undertaking a broad range of integrity and oversight functions as detailed under 'Other Functions of the Ombudsman'.

Other Functions of the Ombudsman

Telecommunications Interception	The Ombudsman inspects the records of the Western Australia Police and the Corruption and Crime Commission to ensure compliance with telecommunications interception legislation.
Reviewing appeals by overseas students	The <i>National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2007</i> gives overseas students a right to make a complaint to an external, independent body, such as the Ombudsman, if their internal appeals are unsuccessful at school, college or university level. The Ombudsman handles appeals relating to public educational facilities, including universities.
Public Interest Disclosures	The Ombudsman receives public interest disclosures about matters of State and local government administration that affect an individual.
Indian Ocean Territories	Under a service delivery arrangement between the Ombudsman and the Commonwealth Government, the Ombudsman handles complaints from residents of the Indian Ocean Territories (Christmas and Cocos (Keeling) Islands) about public authorities in the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.
Terrorism	The Ombudsman can receive complaints from a person detained under the <i>Terrorism (Preventative Detention) Act 2006</i> about administrative matters connected with his or her detention.
Energy Ombudsman	The Energy Ombudsman Western Australia was formed in 2005 and deals with complaints about electricity and gas. The Ombudsman undertakes the role of the Energy Ombudsman. The costs of the Energy Ombudsman are met by industry members.

A full list of legislation governing these functions can be found in [Appendix 2](#).

Our Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

Fair, accountable and responsive decision making and practices by public authorities.

Our Mission

To serve Parliament and Western Australians by:

- Resolving complaints about the decision making of public authorities; and
- Improving the standard of public administration.

Our Values

- **Fair:** We observe procedural fairness at all times, use a 'no surprises' approach in all of our work and provide our services equitably to all Western Australians.
- **Independent:** The Ombudsman is an officer of the Parliament, independent of the Government of the day and independent of all parties in dispute.
- **Accountable:** We should be, and are, accountable for our performance and proper expenditure of taxpayers' money. Being accountable means being:
 - **Rigorous:** We undertake work that is important to the community and our decisions are supported by appropriate evidence.
 - **Responsible:** All recommendations for change to public administration must be practical and proportionate to the problem identified and must demonstrate a net public benefit.
 - **Efficient:** We undertake our work in a timely way, at least cost. We value working with other agencies that further good public administration but we should never duplicate their work.

Our Strategic Focus

- Complaint resolution that is independent, fair and timely, raising community awareness of our role and ensuring our services are accessible.
- Improved public administration through own motion investigations and promoting good practice.
- Review and investigation of certain child deaths and improvements to public administration to reduce or prevent child deaths.
- Inspection of the records of telecommunications interception activities and review of appeals by overseas students.
- Good governance and maintaining a skilled and valued workforce.

The *Strategic Plan 2009-2012* and the *Human Resources Strategic Plan 2010-2012* set the strategic direction for the office and provide more detailed strategies designed to achieve the office's goals. A review of these strategies in 2012-13 will set the strategic direction for 2013 and beyond.

In 2011-12, the office relocated from St Martins Tower to Albert Facey House, in accordance with the Government's Office Accommodation Master Plan.

Executive Management Team

The Corporate Executive is made up of six members whose role is to:

- Provide leadership to staff and model the Office's values;
- Set and monitor the strategic direction of the Office and monitor and discuss emerging issues of relevance to the work of the Ombudsman;
- Monitor performance, set priorities and targets for future performance; and
- Ensure compliance with relevant legislation and corporate policies.

The Corporate Executive provides leadership to the Office and ensures strong corporate governance. For more information, see the [Disclosures and Legal Compliance section](#).

Our Corporate Executive

Chris has held the position of Ombudsman since March 2007. He concurrently holds the roles of Energy Ombudsman and State Records Commissioner. Prior to his appointment as Ombudsman, Chris held a number of senior roles in Western Australia and Victoria in the public and private sectors.



Chris Field, Ombudsman



Peter commenced as Deputy Ombudsman in February 2009 and has more than 25 years experience in management roles in the Western Australian public sector. Peter has extensive public sector knowledge and expertise in the operation of independent accountability agencies.

Peter Wilkins, Deputy Ombudsman

Mary became an Assistant Ombudsman in February 2008. Before this, she was the Executive Director Strategic and Corporate Services. Mary has more than 25 years experience in the public sector, including strategic and corporate leadership roles in line and accountability agencies.



Mary White, Principal Assistant Ombudsman Strategic Services



Kim commenced her role as an Assistant Ombudsman in June 2008. She has more than 20 years experience in government roles, working at the Commonwealth and State levels, in both line and central agencies, and has a strong background in evaluation.

Kim Lazenby, Assistant Ombudsman Administrative Improvement

Sarah joined the office in 2001 and commenced her current role as an Assistant Ombudsman in February 2012. She has worked in the State public sector for over 20 years, with extensive experience in complaint investigation.



Sarah Cowie, Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution

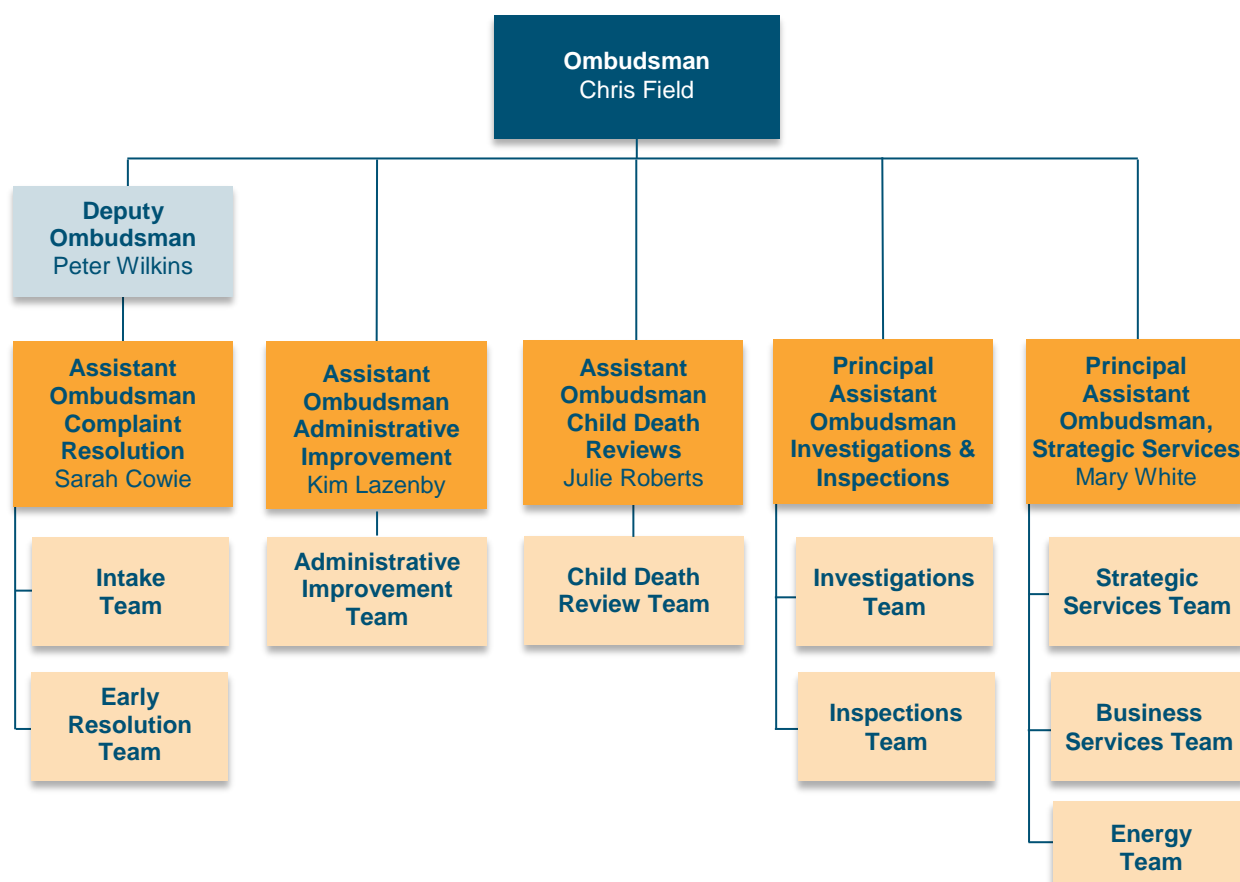


Julie joined the office in 2005 and commenced her current role in June 2009. Julie has more than 25 years experience in the Commonwealth and State public sectors and the non-government community services sector.

Julie Roberts, Assistant Ombudsman Child Death Reviews

Our Structure and Teams

Organisational Structure as at 30 June 2012



Team Responsibilities

- The **Administrative Improvement Team** undertakes own motion investigations and other strategies aimed at improving public administration.
- The **Complaint Resolution Team** includes the Intake Team and the Early Resolution Team and has responsibility for handling enquiries, receiving and assessing complaints, and the early resolution of complaints where appropriate.
- The **Child Death Review Team** reviews certain child deaths, identifies patterns and trends arising from these reviews and makes recommendations to relevant public authorities to prevent or reduce child deaths.
- The **Investigations and Inspections Team** includes the Investigations Team which handles the investigation of complaints and the Inspections Team which undertakes telecommunications interception inspections.
- The **Strategic and Corporate Services Team** includes the Strategic Services Team and the Business Services Team and supports the Office in strengthening its strategic focus, corporate communications, governance and business services.
- The **Energy Team** has responsibility for handling enquiries and receiving, investigating and resolving complaints about energy providers.