

## Collaboration and Access to Services

Engagement with key stakeholders is essential to the Office's achievement of the most efficient and effective outcomes. The Office does this through:

- Working collaboratively with other integrity and accountability agencies - locally, nationally and internationally - to encourage best practice, efficiency and leadership;
- Ensuring ongoing accountability to Parliament as well as accessibility to its services for public authorities and the community; and
- Developing, maintaining and supporting relationships with public authorities and community groups.

### Working Collaboratively

The Office works collaboratively with local, national and international integrity and accountability agencies to encourage best practice efficiency and leadership. 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 participates as a member of the Group and the Office has nominated senior representatives who sit on the Group's joint working party to collaborate on shared initiatives.

#### 2012-13 initiatives:

The Ombudsman joined his ICG colleagues in Geraldton during May for the inaugural ICG Regional Forum. More than 50 representatives from State Government agencies and local governments attended the Forum. The Forum provided attendees with information on the roles of each of the ICG members as well as discussion on conflicts of interest and the offer, acceptance and provision of gifts, benefits and hospitality.

The Office was involved in the Group's graduate program, which involves a graduate working in each of the member agencies over a two year period in total.

### 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. Staff from the Public Sector Commission, the Ombudsman's office, the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Office of the Information Commissioner present at these sessions.

#### 2012-13 initiatives:

As a key integrity agency, the Office presented on seven 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 2013-14.

### Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association

#### Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman & Energy Ombudsman Western Australia  
Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand

#### Background:

The Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**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 common interest.

#### The Office's involvement:

The Ombudsman sits on the Association's Executive. The Office regularly provides general updates 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, public relations and communications and business services.

#### 2012-13 initiatives:

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

### Information sharing with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions

#### Background:

Where appropriate, the Office shares information and insights about its work with Ombudsmen from other jurisdictions, as well as with other accountability and integrity agencies.

#### 2012-13 initiatives:

The Ombudsman hosted the Australian and New Zealand Energy and Water Ombudsman Network (**ANZEWON**) meeting in April 2013 and met, and exchanged information with, a number of Parliamentary Ombudsmen and industry-based Ombudsmen during the year.

## International Ombudsman Institute

### Background:

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), established in 1978, has over 150 institutions as members.

### The Office's involvement:

In November 2012 the Ombudsman was elected President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region and a Director of the Board of the IOI. The Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region is comprised of Australia, China/Hong Kong, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Taiwan, Tonga and Vanuatu. The Ombudsman was joined on the Board of the IOI by Ombudsmen drawn from around the world, including the Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand, the National Ombudsman of the Netherlands, the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Sweden, the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales and the Ombudsman for Namibia.

### 2012-13 initiatives:

The Ombudsman attended, and delivered an address titled, *The Western Australian Integrity Coordinating Group* at the 10<sup>th</sup> IOI World Conference in November 2012. The Ombudsman also attended the IOI Board of Directors mid-term meeting in April 2013.

## Indonesian/ Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program

### Members:

Western  
Australian  
Ombudsman

Commonwealth  
Ombudsman

New South Wales  
Ombudsman

Ombudsmen of  
the Republik 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.

### 2012-13 initiatives:

In January 2013, the Assistant Ombudsman Complaint Resolution visited Indonesia. The purpose of the visit was to provide training in more effective and sustainable ombudsman and complaint management services to the Office of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia. The program covered modules on conducting investigations, dealing with complaints and complainants as well as agency relationships.

## Providing Access to Key Stakeholders

### Communicating with Complainants

The Office provides a range of information and services to assist specific groups, and the public more generally, to understand the role of the Ombudsman and the complaint process. Many people find the Office's enquiry service assists them to make their complaint. Other initiatives in 2012-13 include:

- Ongoing promotion of the role of the Office and the type of complaints the Office handles through 'Ask the Ombudsman' on 6PR's Nightline Program; and
- Regular updating and simplification of the Ombudsman's website to provide easy access to information for people wishing to make a complaint and those undertaking the complaint process.

### Access to the Ombudsman's Services

The Office continues to implement a number of strategies to ensure its complaint services are accessible to all Western Australians. These include access through online facilities as well as more traditional approaches by letter and through visits to the Office. The Office also holds complaints clinics and delivers presentations to community groups, particularly through the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program. Initiatives to make services accessible include:

- Access to the Office through a toll free number for country callers;
- Access to the Office through email and online services. The importance of email and online access is demonstrated by its further increased use this year from 50% to 56% of all complaints received;
- Information on how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman is available in 15 languages and features on the homepage of the Ombudsman's website. People may also contact us with the assistance of an interpreter by using the Translating and Interpreting Service;
- The Office's accommodation and building access provide access for people with disabilities, including lifts that accommodate wheelchairs and feature braille on the access buttons and people with hearing and speech impairments can contact the Office using the National Relay Service;
- The Office's Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program targets awareness and accessibility for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians; and
- Significant work was undertaken in relation to a series of new measures to ensure that the Office's services are as accessible as possible to children and young people including activities such as a presentation on the *Role of the Ombudsman* for members of the Bunbury Youth Advisory Council and a presentation on making our services more accessible to children and young people at a workshop hosted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People.

## **Liaison with Public Authorities**

The Office liaises with a wide range of departments and authorities throughout the year.

### **Liaison with the Public Sector**

#### **Corrective Services**

Regular meetings were held between senior representatives of the Office and the Department of Corrective Services.

In addition, the Office attended regular meetings with representatives of the Office of the Inspector of Custodial Services. These meetings have proved useful in allowing both offices to become better informed of issues affecting the corrective services sector in Western Australia.

#### **Department of Health**

During the year, meetings were held with senior staff of the Department of Health, including in relation to the Office's own motion investigations on sleep-related infant deaths and suicide by young people.

#### **Department for Child Protection and Family Support**

Regular meetings were held between the Office and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support, including in relation to the Office's own motion investigations on sleep-related infant deaths and suicide by young people.

### **Liaison with the Local Government Sector**

The Office continued to work on strengthening its liaison with the local government sector. Initiatives undertaken during the year include:

- A meeting with representatives of the Finance Committee of the Local Government Managers Australia in February 2013; and
- A range of meetings in relation to the Office's own motion investigation into local government collection of outstanding rates.

### **Liaison with the University Sector**

A number of meetings were held with senior representatives of universities.

## **'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 allows the public to communicate a range of concerns with the Ombudsman. 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 October and December 2012 and March and June 2013.



## Ombudsman Website

The [Ombudsman's 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;
- Public sector agencies on decision making, complaint handling and conducting investigations;
- Access to the Ombudsman's investigation reports such as the *Investigation into ways that State Government departments can prevent or reduce sleep-related infant deaths*;
- The latest news on events and collaborative initiatives such as the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program; and
- Links to other key functions undertaken by the Office such as the Energy Ombudsman website and other related bodies including other Ombudsmen and other Western Australian accountability agencies.



The website continues to be a valuable resource for the community and public sector as shown by the increased use of the website this year. In 2012-13:

- The total number of hits has increased by more than 20% compared to 2011-12, with the number on hits peaking at 154,415 in May 2013, the greatest number of hits in a month ever recorded.
- The number of visitors also increased, particularly around the time of publication of news of public interest such as the *Guidelines on the Management of Personal Information* in May 2013;
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage) on the site were *What you can complain about* and *How to make a complaint*; and
- The Office's guidelines, *Procedural fairness* and *Effective handling of complaints* were the two most viewed documents.



The website content and functionality are 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.

## Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during 2012-13. Two regional visits were conducted to the Pilbara in August 2012 and to the South West in March 2013, and included the following activities:

- A seminar for regionally-based public sector agencies and local governments to discuss good administrative practice, effective complaint resolution and appropriate access to information;
- An expo for community groups to discuss the role of each of the accountability agencies and how they can assist in complaint resolution;
- Complaints clinics, which provided an opportunity for members of the local community to raise their concerns face-to-face with the staff of the Office. The Office resolved many of the complaints made during the time of the visits;
- Individual meetings with Aboriginal community members to discuss government service delivery and where the Office may be able to assist; and
- Training and workshops for regionally-based public sector agencies and local governments.



Participants engage in an activity as part of a workshop on Effective Decision Making hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman.

Preparation is underway for a visit to Kununurra in November 2013. The Program is an important way for the Office to raise awareness of, access to, and use of, its services, for regional and Aboriginal Western Australians.

While the Program is coordinated by the Office, the Office collaborates with 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.

The Program enables the Office to:

- deliver key services directly to regional communities, particularly through complaints clinics;
- increase awareness and accessibility among regional and Aboriginal Western Australians (who were historically under-represented in complaints to the Office); and
- deliver key messages about the Office's work and services.

The Program also provides a valuable opportunity for staff to strengthen their understanding of the issues affecting people in regional and Aboriginal communities.

The collaboration with other integrity and accountability agencies during regional visits and complaints clinics also assists in ensuring regional Western Australians can be easily referred to the most appropriate body to assist them.

## Presentations and Publications

### Speeches and Presentations

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

As well as the presentations and workshops designed to support improvements to public administration by public authorities, provided in the [Own Motion Investigations and Administrative Improvement section](#), speeches and presentations by the Ombudsman and other staff of the Office included:

- A presentation, titled *The fourth branch of government: the evolution of integrity agencies and enhanced government accountability*, at the Australian Institute of Administrative Law National Forum in July 2012;
- A lecture, titled *UWA Public Policy Unit Accountability*, at the University of Western Australia in August 2012;
- A lecture at the University of Western Australia as part of the Public Sector Management Program in August 2012;
- A presentation on handling unreasonable complainant conduct at the Australasian Conference of Planning and Environment Courts and Tribunals in August 2012;
- A presentation, titled *Making your complaint handling system robust and child friendly*, at a workshop hosted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in September 2012;
- A public lecture, titled *The integrity branch of government*, at La Trobe University in September 2012;
- A presentation, titled *The Western Australian Integrity Coordinating Group*, to the 10th International Ombudsman Institute World Conference in November 2012;
- A lecture, titled *Performance Reporting in the Public Sector*, at the School of Accounting at Curtin University in September 2012;
- An opening presentation, titled *Governance and Accountability in Government Departments*, to The Law Society of Western Australia's Government Lawyer's Conference in September 2012;
- A presentation on the role of the Ombudsman to University of Western Australia Administrative Law Students in October 2012;
- A presentation on the role of the Ombudsman to newly elected Members of Parliament in March 2013;



- A presentation, titled *Ensuring your complaint handling system is accessible to children and young people*, at a workshop hosted by the Commissioner for Children and Young People in March 2013;
- A co-presentation of a session, titled *The Post-Kirk Ouster Debates and the Changing Face of Accountability*, at an Australian Institute of Administrative Law WA Chapter Seminar, with Professor Simon Young of the University of Western Australia, in May 2013 ; and
- Presentations to, and information exchange with, a number of agencies about the Office's own motion investigations into sleep-related infant deaths, suicide by young people and local government collection of outstanding rates.

The Ombudsman also delivered presentations in his role as the Energy Ombudsman including a keynote speech, titled *The role of the Energy Ombudsman and its relationship with regulators, industry and consumers*, to the Energy in Western Australia Conference in October 2012, and the opening of the afternoon session of the Economic Regulation Authority Consumer Consultative Committee Biennial Seminar in April 2013.

Speeches by the Ombudsman are available on the [Ombudsman's website](#).

## Western Australian Ombudsman Newsletter

The *Western Australian Ombudsman Newsletter* is a key publication used by the Office to communicate information to its stakeholders about the Office's performance, achievements, events and resources. Newsletters were issued in August and December 2012.

The newsletter is distributed electronically to Members of Parliament, public authorities and interested members of the public and subscription to the newsletter from interested parties has increased steadily over the past year. The newsletter is published on the website after it is issued.



## Publications

The Office has a comprehensive range of publications about the role of the Ombudsman to assist complainants and public authorities, which are available on the Ombudsman's website. For a full listing of the Office's publications, see [Appendix 3](#).



### Guidelines on the Management of Personal Information

Following an own motion investigation of the management of personal information in three State Government agencies, the Ombudsman published a new guideline detailing good practice principles to assist agencies on how to effectively manage personal information.

The good practice principles in the guidelines detail how and when personal information can be collected, how it should be used and disclosed, and storage and security of electronic, paper and sensitive information.



The good practice principles also detail how individuals should be able to access that information and have it corrected if it is wrong and how agencies can ensure transparent management of personal information. The self-assessment checklist assists agencies to check their own management of personal information against the good practice principles.

The *Guidelines for the Management of Personal Information* are available on the [Ombudsman's website](#).

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