



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 bodies - 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 bodies to promote 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 Integrity Coordinating Group (**ICG**) was formed to promote and strengthen integrity in Western Australian public bodies.

The Office's involvement:

The Ombudsman participates as a member of the ICG and the Office has nominated senior representatives who sit on the ICG's joint working party.

2013-14 initiatives:

The Ombudsman joined his ICG colleagues at a forum in Perth in July 2013. The forum was attended by 280 representatives from State Government agencies and local governments and provided attendees with information on identifying risks associated with gifts, benefits and hospitality and considering how they can minimise those risks through sound policies, transparent recordkeeping, communication and review activities.

The Office was involved in the ICG'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 office of the Ombudsman, the Corruption and Crime Commission and the Office of the Information Commissioner present at these sessions.

2013-14 initiatives:

The Office presented on eight 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 2014-15.

International Ombudsman Institute

Background:

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), established in 1978, is the only global organisation for the cooperation of more than 150 Ombudsman institutions.

The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of the IOI. The Ombudsman was elected to the position of IOI Treasurer and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors of the IOI in March 2014. The Ombudsman previously served as the President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) of the IOI from November 2012 until March 2014. APOR is comprised of Australia, China/Hong Kong, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Taiwan, Tonga and Vanuatu.

2013-14 initiatives:

In April 2014, the Ombudsman attended the APOR Conference and, as outgoing Regional President, chaired the APOR Business Meeting. The Ombudsman also attended the IOI Board of Directors meeting in September 2013.

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 bodies.

2013-14 initiatives:

The Office exchanged information with a number of Parliamentary Ombudsmen and industry-based Ombudsmen during the year.

Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association

Members:

Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand

Background:

The Australia and New Zealand Ombudsman Association (**ANZOA**) is the peak body for Parliamentary and industry-based Ombudsmen from Australia and New Zealand

The Office's involvement:

The Office is a member of ANZOA. The Office periodically provides general updates on its activities and also has nominated representatives who participate in interest groups in the areas of public relations, first contact teams, business improvement and communications.

2013-14 initiatives:

The Ombudsman participated in three ANZOA Executive Committee meetings during the year and attended the ANZOA Annual General Meeting, Executive Committee meeting and Strategic Planning session in November 2013. The Ombudsman also participated in ANZOA's Special General Meeting in December 2013. The Ombudsman and Deputy Ombudsman attended, and presented at, the ANZOA 4th Biennial Conference in April 2014.

Indonesian/Australian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program

Members:

Western Australian Ombudsman
Commonwealth Ombudsman
New South Wales Ombudsman
Ombudsman Republik Indonesia

Background:

The Indonesian/Australasian Ombudsman Linkages and Strengthening Program (**Program**) aims to provide greater access across Indonesia to more effective and sustainable Ombudsman 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.

2013-14 initiatives:

In July 2013, the Ombudsman, together with the New South Wales Ombudsman, Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Chief Ombudsman of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia, attended a leadership dialogue and training program over two days with Ombudsmen and senior staff of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia.



Providing Access to the Community

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 2013-14 include:

- 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; and
- 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.

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 56% to 61% 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 the Office with the assistance of an interpreter by using the Translating and Interpreting Service;
- The Office's accommodation, building and facilities 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;
- The Office attends events to raise community awareness of, and access to, its service, such as the Financial Counsellors' Association conference in October 2013, and Homeless Connect in August 2013 and June 2014; and
- The Office's visits to adult prisons and juvenile custodial facilities provide an opportunity for people detained in custody to meet with representatives of the Office and lodge complaints in person.

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 authorities 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 and authorities*



can prevent or reduce suicide by young people;

- 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 and Water 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 2013-14:

- The total number of visits to the website has increased by 14% to 72,363 page visits compared to 63,517 page visits in 2012-13.
- The number of unique visitors peaked at 4,772 in May 2014, the greatest number of visitors in a month ever recorded, following the publication in April 2014 of the Ombudsman's report, *Investigation into ways that State government departments and authorities can prevent or reduce suicide by young people;*
- The top two most visited pages (besides the homepage and the Contact Us page) on the site were How to make a complaint and The role of the Ombudsman; and
- The Office's Guidelines on Complaint Handling, and Procedural Fairness Guidelines 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.

'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 and Water 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 December 2013 and March and June 2014.

Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program

The Office continued the Regional Awareness and Accessibility Program (**the Program**) during 2013-14. One regional visit was conducted to Kununurra in November 2013 and included the following activities:

- A seminar for regionally-based public authorities to discuss good administrative practice, effective complaint resolution and appropriate access to information;
- 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 authorities.

Preparation is underway for a visit to Kalgoorlie-Boulder in July and August 2014. 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, the Commissioner for Victims of Crime, and the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office.



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

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 and Aboriginal Western Australians can be easily referred to the most appropriate body to assist them.

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

Ombudsman's speeches and presentations

- *The Role of the Ombudsman and Integrity Coordination in Western Australia* to the Accounting and Finance Association of Australia and New Zealand Conference in July 2013;
- *The Fourth Arm of Government* as part of the Constitutional Centre Lecture Series 2013 in August 2013;



- *A Fourth Branch of Government? The Evolution and Role of Parliamentary Statutory Officers* at the Australasian Study of Parliament Group Annual Conference in October 2013;
- A presentation to University of Western Australia Administrative Law Students on *The Role of the Ombudsman* in October 2013;
- A panel discussion on *Good governance principles and practice — the perspectives from the ‘watchdogs’* at the (then) Chartered Secretaries Australia Public Sector Update in October 2013;
- Presentations and a chaired session at the *Government Accountability: Law and Practice* unit at the Faculty of Law, University of Western Australia in January 2014; and
- *Meeting the challenge: How successful have operational reforms been for Ombudsman offices?*, a chaired session and a panel discussion on examining the Ombudsman and integrity in government, at the ANZOA 4th Biennial Conference in April 2014.

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

Speeches and presentations by other staff

- A workshop on *The Role of the Ombudsman and Complaint Handling* at the Local Government Western Australian Rangers Conference in September 2013;
- A workshop on *The Role of the Ombudsman and Complaint Handling* at the Shire of Mundaring in December 2013;
- A presentation to participants of the Public Sector Management Program on *The Role of the Ombudsman* in March 2014;
- A presentation on *The Ombudsman and University Complaints* to Heads of School, Executive Deans and Directors at Edith Cowan University’s Student Complaints Investigation Forum in May 2014;
- A presentation to the Society for Consumer Affairs Professionals on *Managing Unreasonable Complainant Conduct* in March 2014;
- Presentations to youth custodial officer recruits at the Department of Corrective Services Bentley Training Academy in relation to *Complaint Handling and the Role of the Ombudsman* in December 2013 and May 2014;
- *How Ombudsman’s offices are bringing key performance indicators to life* at the ANZOA 4th Biennial Conference in April 2014; and
- *Public Sector Accountability, Governance & Performance Reporting* to students from Curtin University’s School of Accounting in October 2013.

Staff of the Office also regularly present on the role of the Ombudsman at the Public Sector Commission’s *Induction to the Western Australian Public Sector* seminars for public sector employees.

Liaison with Public Authorities

Liaison relating to complaint resolution

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



The Office also attended Banksia Hill Detention Centre in November 2013 and the temporary juvenile custodial facility in Hakea Prison in January and February 2013 to observe conditions, meet with staff and detainees and provide an opportunity for detainees to make complaints to the Office if they wished to do so.

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.

Other liaison with public authorities

The Office liaised with a range of other public sector agencies in 2013-14, including:

- The Department of Housing;
- The Department of Transport;
- The Department of Education;
- The Department of Health;
- The Department for Child Protection and Family Support;
- Western Australia Police;
- The Corruption and Crime Commission;
- Various universities; and
- Various local governments.

Liaison relating to own motion investigations

The Office undertook a range of liaison activities in relation to its own motion investigations.

See further details in the [Child Death Review section](#), the [Family and Domestic Violence Fatality Review section](#), and [Own Motion Investigations section](#).



Publications

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 2013.

The newsletter is distributed electronically to Members of Parliament, public authorities and interested members of the public. The newsletter is published on the website after it is issued.



Guidelines and information sheets

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](#).



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