



QUEENSLAND
OMBUDSMAN

50 YEARS
1974-2024

Marking 50 years
of service to the
community



Public

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Nathaniel Chapman

Leaving Our Mark, (2023)

Digital artwork (artwork shown and elements used throughout)

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Nathaniel Chapman is a Goenpul and Yuggera Man, also from the Wambia Tribe in Northern Territory and Waka Waka country in Eidsvold, Queensland.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land throughout Queensland and their continuing connection to land, culture and community. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Introduction

This year, the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman celebrates 50 years since its establishment. For over half a century, the Office has given the people in Queensland free, impartial and confidential service.

In 1974, the Office started its work of investigating complaints about public sector services. Over time, outcomes from our investigations have delivered fairness and positive change in many forms. Our recommendations and guidance have helped shape public administration to ensure transparency and accountability of services to Queenslanders.

Over 50 years many things change. We grow. We learn. New services are added to our area of responsibility, different technologies become part of how we deliver our services to the growing Queensland community.

While there has been significant change, this Office's commitment to fairness and improvement is unwavering. It is evident in our work of responding to people who bring us complaints, providing information and guidance to public sector officers about good practice and inspecting places of detention.

I thank those who have held the Ombudsman role over the past 50 years, and the Office's employees, past and present, for their contributions. I also want to thank the many public sector employees who we engage with in our work for the positive and open way in which they continue to support the Office.

This booklet contains a timeline of events which has shaped the Office over our 50 years of service to the community.

Anthony Reilly

Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services
November 2024

What is an Ombudsman?

The term 'Ombudsman' is derived from a Swedish word which roughly means 'representative of the people'.

What we do

Our role is established under three acts:

Ombudsman Act 2001 (Ombudsman Act)

The Office investigates administrative actions of all Queensland state government departments, local councils, public universities and government authorities.

We give people a timely, effective and independent way to have administrative actions of agencies investigated.

We also provide advice, training and information to agencies about ways of improving the quality of decision-making and administrative practices.

Our complaints assessment and investigation service is free and independent.

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 (PID Act)

The PID Act provides a way for people to disclose information about serious wrongdoing in the public sector, and to ensure that they are appropriately protected when they do.

The Office is the oversight agency for the PID Act. In the oversight role, we monitor the management of PIDs, collect statistics about PIDs and monitor trends. We also undertake an educational and advisory role, including providing training and supporting a professional network for agency PID coordinators. As the oversight agency, we also set and publish standards for the way public sector entities deal with PIDs.

Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022 (IDS Act)

The Ombudsman is also the Inspector of Detention Services. The IDS Act sets out a framework for review of detention services, inspection of places of detention and independent and transparent reporting.

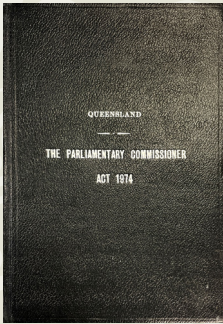
Key functions of the Inspector include:

- publishing standards for inspections
- inspecting places of detention in Queensland, including:
 - youth detention centres
 - adult prisons
 - watch-houses
- reporting to the Legislative Assembly on inspection visits and making recommendations for improvement.

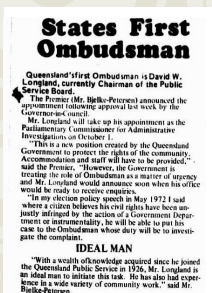
From then to now

Fair and accountable public administration in Queensland

This timeline shows some events that have shaped the Office over 50 years of service to the community.



1974
Copy of *The Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974*



1974
Noosa News announcing first Ombudsman as the 'ideal man'

1974 **1 July:** *Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974* commenced

1 October: Sir David Longland commenced as the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations, a role that became known as Ombudsman.

Sir David Longland took a leading role in establishing the service and in the first annual report, he wrote:

"... One of my main objectives will be to create a situation of complete impartiality and confidentiality towards complaints."

Ombudsman: Sir David Longland (1974–1979)

Sir David Longland had a distinguished career in the public sector before his appointment as the first Ombudsman. In 1946, he was the State Migration Officer with responsibility for accommodating and inducting post-war migrants to Queensland. In 1957, he was appointed Under Secretary of the Department of Works; and in 1969, he became Chairman of the newly constituted Public Service Board.

1978 In the late 1970s, the Office began a program of visits to regional areas to educate agencies and the public about our functions.

1979 **Ombudsman:** Sir David Muir (1979–1981)

Before his appointment as Ombudsman, Sir David Muir was the Chairman of the Public Service Board. His career included appointment as Queensland's Agent-General in London and other senior roles in Queensland and Australian public service agencies.

1981 **Ombudsman:** Cedric Johnson (1981–1990)

Before being appointed Ombudsman, Cedric Johnson served in senior leadership roles in the Queensland Government, including being Under Secretary for the Department of Welfare Services.

1985 Computers installed in the Office.



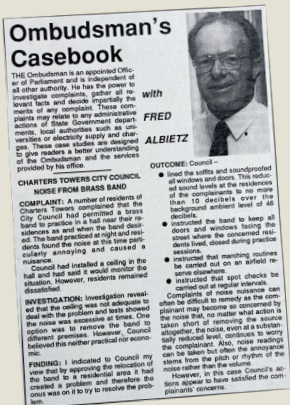
Brochures used to communicate our role



Badge and cufflinks were given to female and male officers respectively circa mid 1980s



1992
Ombudsman gains the additional role of Information Commissioner



1992–1995
Early Casebooks were published via newspapers



2003
Queensland Ombudsman brochures explaining our role were translated into different languages



2003
The Baby Kate Report (2003) made front page news

1991 Ombudsman: Fred Albietz (1991–2001)
Fred Albietz provided over 46 years of service to the Queensland public sector, including 22 years in the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman. Before joining the Office, he held senior roles with the Department of Justice.

1992 The Ombudsman concurrently becomes the **Information Commissioner** for the purposes of the *Freedom of Information Act 1992*.

Casebooks by Albietz were published from 1992–1995 in newspapers throughout Queensland.

2001 Ombudsman Act 2001 – introduced our proactive function of assisting agencies to improve the quality of administrative practices and procedures.

Ombudsman: David Bevan (2001–2010)
Prior to his appointment as Ombudsman, David Bevan was a Director at the Criminal Justice Commission. In 1973, Mr Bevan was admitted as a barrister. His public service included senior roles with the Office of the Queensland Parliamentary Counsel and Office of the Solicitor-General.

2002 Introduction of a new phone-based service for people detained in Queensland prisons. Prisoners can directly call the Office to talk about complaints.

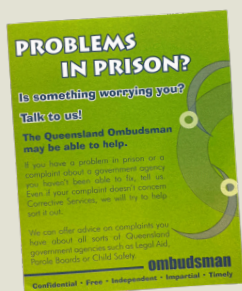
First reports under the Ombudsman Act:
Brooke Brennan Report (2002) and *Baby Kate Report* (2003) – both reports found communication and coordination problems among agencies that contributed to the ineffectual management and response to issues relating to child safety.

2003 Produced information brochures for complainants about our services in Vietnamese, Spanish, Chinese and Serbian.

Created tools for better decision-making:

- *Effective Complaints Management* factsheet
- *An easy guide to good administrative decision-making and Handling a Queensland Ombudsman investigation.*

2004 Training service commenced – 6 sessions delivered.

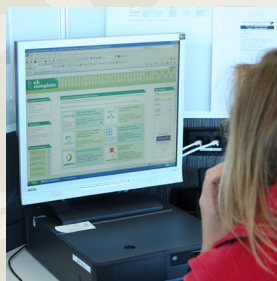


Flyers created to help prisoners connect to the Office

Ombudsman hits work death probe



Early newspaper articles from 2002 captured events that led to the *Workplace Electrocution Project* (2005)



2010 *It's ok to complain* website helped people navigate integrity agencies



2020 First publication of *Casebook*

2005 **February:** The Office of the Information Commissioner becomes a separate entity. This removes the role of Information Commissioner from the Ombudsman.

2011 **Ombudsman:** Phil Clarke 2011–2020
Phil Clarke was appointed as Ombudsman after more than 25 years in the Queensland public sector. His public service included leadership roles in TAFE institutes and senior executive roles in agencies with responsibilities for areas including employment, emergency services and local government.

2012 Email newsletters are created to provide regular news, tips and advice on good decision-making and complaint management.

2013 The Office became the oversight agency for the *Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010* – reviewing the management of public interest disclosures, providing education and advice to agencies.

Online complaint form launched on our website.

2015 New website launched providing increased accessibility through options for translations in different languages and text to be read aloud.

2020 **Ombudsman:** Anthony Reilly (2020 to current)
Anthony Reilly is an experienced lawyer and public administrator. Prior to appointment as Ombudsman, Mr Reilly was CEO of Legal Aid Queensland. He has also held leadership roles in agencies including Queensland Health, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Public Safety Business Agency.

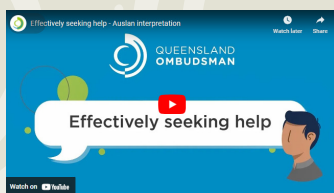
Investigation summaries are used to create the first of the *Casebook* series – a tool for shared learning to improve agencies decision-making and administrative processes.

The Office responds to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns.

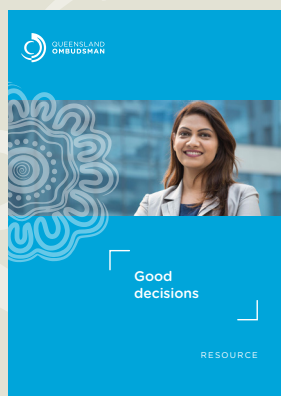
2022 Publishing of *Learning from experience* report (2022) – Insights from 20 years of Queensland Ombudsman investigation reports.



2023
Published inspection standards for Queensland prisons



2023
Auslan video series published



2023
Good decisions resource – a detailed rundown of the stages of decision-making



2024
Easy Read documents explaining our roles published

2023 **March:** Auslan and audio description videos explaining the function of the Office and the complaints process published on YouTube.

July: Additional role for the Ombudsman as Inspector of Detention Services commenced under the *Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022* (IDS Act), with the aim to promote the humane treatment of detainees and the prevention of harm through reviews, inspections and independent reporting.

August: Inspector of Detention Services inspection standards published for Queensland prisons and youth detention centres.

August: *Leaving Our Mark* artwork created for the Office by Nathaniel Chapman, Goenpul and Yuggera Man, also from the Wambia Tribe in Northern Territory and Waka Waka country in Eidsvold, Queensland.

2024 **Major investigation:** *Prison overcrowding and other matters report* – the first Office investigation of matters raised by the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee (LASC).

June: Easy Read documents launched explaining what we do under our roles as Queensland Ombudsman and Inspector of Detention Services.

August: Publication of the *Cleveland Youth Detention Centre inspection report: Focus on separation due to staff shortages*. The Office's first report under the IDS Act.

This document is a summary of our services and history. For more information, visit our website www.ombudsman.qld.gov.au.

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