



Office overview

1.1 From the HaDSCO Director



I am pleased to present the 2017-18 Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) Annual Report. It shows how the work of the Office supports improvements in health, disability and mental health services in Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories.

At HaDSCO we adopt a positive approach to complaint handling as we recognise the inherent value of complaints in terms of opportunities for improvement across the health, disability and mental health sectors. Aligned with our Complaints Handling strategic focus of Receive, Resolve, Reform, each complaint provides us with the opportunity to independently resolve a matter for the parties involved and to reform systems for the future.

In 2017-18, we received 2,719 complaints. The number of complaints continues to increase overall with a 12% increase since 2014-15. At the

heart of every complaint is an individual who believes something went wrong and that systems and processes should be improved for others. The Office provides an effective avenue for redress for these individuals and for systemic change, and contributes to improvements for patient-centred care in the health and mental health sectors and person-centred approaches in the disability sector.

We regularly observe that service providers are performing their jobs well and providing a high standard of care. However, communication between an individual and the service provider is a frequent area of complaint, whether this is about treatment options, the terminology used when discussing a patient's condition, provision of information around consent or billing arrangements, or the way or manner in which information is provided.

It is no surprise therefore, that when asked what individuals want to achieve from our services, they inform us that they are seeking an explanation from the service provider. This was identified in our submission to the Sustainable Health Review in October 2017. As we pointed out in our submission, this further suggests that there are opportunities to learn from complaints and implement continuous improvement programs, which focus on improving communication between service providers and patients, encouraging consultation with patients and carers and involving them in

decision making (i.e. the principles of patient-centred service delivery).

We achieved a number of outcomes in our Educate and Train program area, where our strategic focus is to Engage, Evaluate and Educate. We introduced a new initiative providing individual Report Cards to the five public Health Service Providers in WA Health, two private health service providers and the Department of Justice in relation to health services provided in Western Australian prisons. The aim of the Report Cards was to assist these providers to gain an appreciation of the complaints managed by HaDSCO that related to their services.

We also continued to engage with service providers through monitoring and evaluating trends in our complaints to inform opportunities for improvement, which saw the provision of the *Health Complaint Trends Report 2014-17* and the *Disability Services Data Collection Program Report 2016-17* for health and disability service providers prescribed under the enabling legislation.

In addition, we developed and published new Information Sheets for complaints about health services, disability and mental health services and for prison health services. These provide practical examples of the range and nature of issues we can receive complaints about. We have delivered a number of presentations and stakeholder engagement activities, the details of which are contained in this report.

Consistent with our strategic objective of Responding to Changing

Environments where our focus is to Review, Respond and Redefine our service delivery, we continued to work on the implementation of the National Code of Conduct for health care workers in Western Australia, releasing a Consultation Paper in December 2017. We also led discussions with the Department of Communities and the National Disability Insurance Agency about transition arrangements for our jurisdiction following the decision announced by the Government of Western Australia that Western Australia will join the nationally delivered NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme).

Our sound governance framework continues to underpin the operations of the Office. This year we implemented our new Disability Access and Inclusion Plan 2018-2022, which was based on research into contemporary trends regarding best practice for access and inclusion to ensure we focus on the wide-ranging needs of our stakeholders.

In closing, I extend my thanks to my dedicated staff for their ongoing commitment to the work of the Office, which is greatly valued. The contribution of this small team has seen the Office accomplish important outcomes over the past year.



Sarah Cowie
DIRECTOR

“At HaDSCO we adopt a positive approach to complaint handling as we recognise the inherent value of complaints in terms of opportunities for improvement across the health, disability and mental health sectors.”

Key highlights 2017-18

Complaints

Received
2,719
complaints



39
Service improvements managed as a result of HaDSCO's involvement



163
Redress actions facilitated for individuals



Educate and train



Undertook
159
engagement activities with stakeholders across metropolitan, regional and remote regions



Released new resources including four new tailored information sheets on the range of matters we can receive complaints about in the areas of health, disability, mental health and prison health services

Governance



Implemented a new Disability Access and Inclusion Plan and a Risk Register

Respond to changing environments

Provided input into policy initiatives and reforms, including for the Sustainable Health Review and complaints management under NDIS



Released a *National Code of Conduct for health care workers in Western Australia - Consultation Paper* December 2017

1.3 Who we are

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) is an independent Statutory Authority offering an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health, disability and mental health services in Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories.

The Office was established in 1996 and, until November 2010, HaDSCO was known as the Office of Health Review. The name was changed following amendments to the *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995*, and the *Disability Services Act 1993*. HaDSCO manages complaints about health, disability and mental health services, covering the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

Our functions are set out in our governing legislation; the *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995*, Part 6 of the *Disability Services Act 1993* and Part 19 of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. Under these Acts, our main functions are to:

- Deal with complaints by negotiated settlement, conciliation or investigation.
- Review and identify the causes of complaints.
- Provide advice and make recommendations for service improvement.
- Educate the community and service providers about complaint handling.
- Inquire into broader issues of health, disability and mental health care arising from complaints received.
- Work in collaboration with the community and service providers to improve health, disability and mental health services.
- Publish the work of the Office.
- Perform any other function conferred on the Director by the *Health and Disability Services (Complaints) Act 1995* or another written law.

Other key compliance legislation

Auditor General Act 2006
Electoral Act 1907
Equal Opportunity Act 1984
Financial Management Act 2006
Freedom of Information Act 1992
Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (WA) Act 2010

Industrial Relations Act 1979
Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984
Public Sector Management Act 1994
Salaries and Allowances Act 1975
State Records Act 2000
State Supply Commission Act 1991

Responsible Minister

Hon Roger Cook MLA
Deputy Premier; Minister for Health; Mental Health.

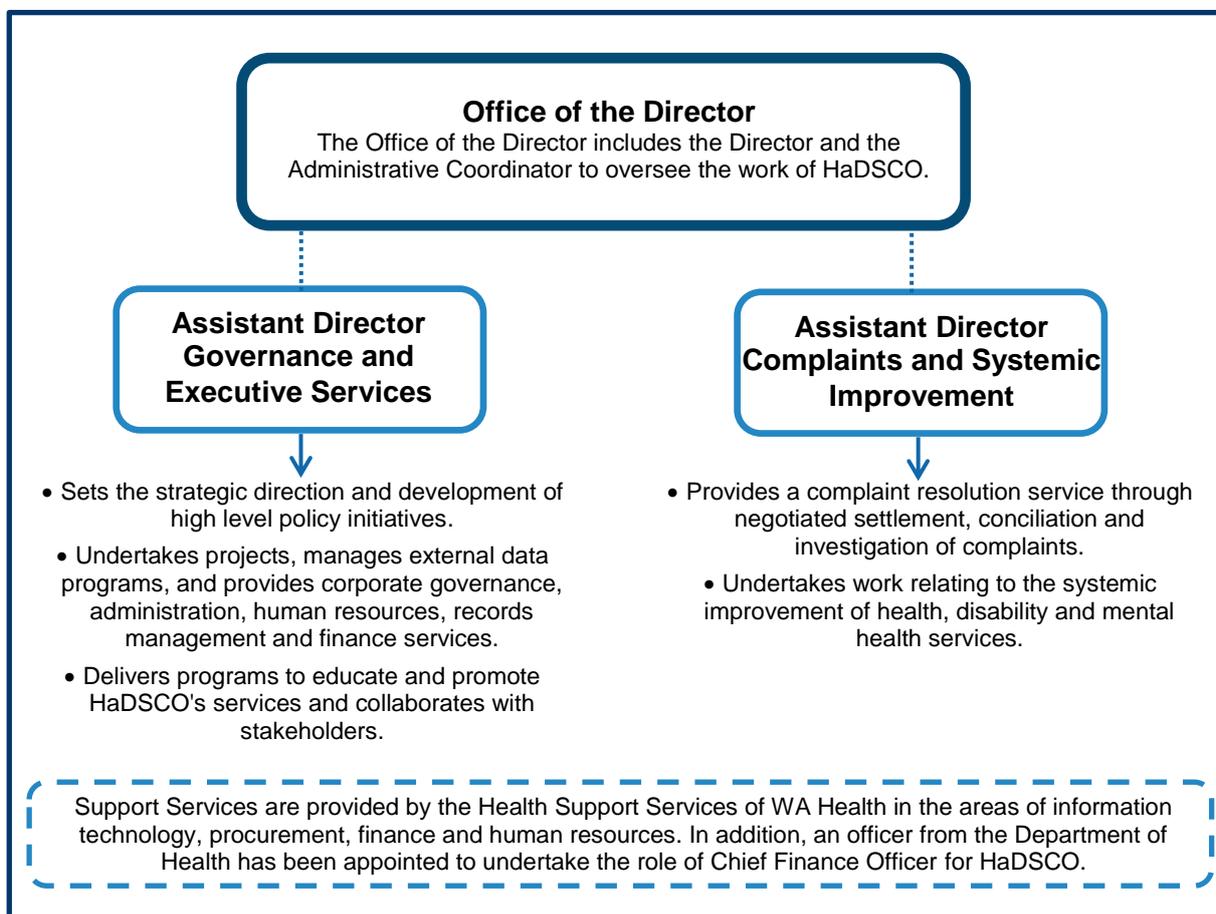
1.4 Performance Management Framework

We function as an Office in the Performance Management Framework to achieve our outcomes in the context of the wider Government goal of *Strong Communities: Safe communities and supported families*.

Government Goal	Agency desired outcome	HaDSCO Service	Key Effectiveness Indicator	Key Efficiency Indicator
Strong Communities: Safe communities and supported families	Improvement in the delivery of health and disability services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assessment, negotiated settlement, conciliation, and investigation of complaints 2. Education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints 	Proportion of recommendations resulting in implementation by providers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Percentage of complaints closed within legislation timeframes 1.2 Average cost per finalised complaint 2.1 Education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints

1.5 Organisational structure

HaDSCO's organisational structure as at 30 June 2018 is represented below.



1.6 Our Strategic Direction

HaDSCO's Strategic Plan 2017-2021 sets out the Office's vision, mission and values, and outlines four areas of strategic focus. Throughout this Annual Report we provide an overview of performance aligned to these four areas.

Our Vision

Supporting improvements to health, disability and mental health services for Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories through complaint resolution.

Our Mission

Improvement in the delivery of health and disability services through our two service areas.

- **Service One**

Assessment, negotiated settlement, conciliation and investigation of complaints.

- **Service Two**

Education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints.

Our Strategic Focus Areas

- **Complaints (Receive, Resolve, Reform):** Manage complaints in a professional, impartial, confidential and efficient manner with quality outcomes.
- **Educate and train (Engage, Evaluate, Educate):** Inform, educate and empower the community and service providers to prevent complaints.
- **Governance (Cooperate, Comply, Communicate):** Deliver our services within a sound governance framework.
- **Respond to changing environments (Review, Respond, Redefine):** Respond appropriately to our changing environment

Our Values

In all our operations and relationships we value:

- **Honesty:** We act with honesty and integrity, providing an impartial complaints resolution service about health, disability and mental health services, and in providing programs to educate and train in the prevention and resolution of complaints.
- **Accountability:** We are accountable for our actions and deliver our services within a sound governance framework.
- **Dedication:** We provide our services with dedication and commitment, ensuring we meet the needs of the public, Ministers, service providers and other external stakeholders.
- **Supportive:** We work together as a team and are supportive of our colleagues in the workplace.
- **Confidentiality:** We treat information received with confidentiality and comply with the provisions of our guiding legislation.
- **Objectivity:** We work in an independent Statutory Authority and undertake our work with objectivity and impartiality.