

Office Overview

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1.1 From the HaDSCO Director

I am very proud of the achievements made by the Office in 2019-20 to improve health, disability and mental health services through complaint resolution, community engagement and education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints.

While the Office has been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, business continuity arrangements resulted in minimal impact on services and strong governance and accountability were maintained. Staff developed a COVIDSafe Roadmap to enable agile and responsive service delivery while maintaining a safe work environment for employees. This enabled the refinement of business processes and implementation of innovative solutions which will bring long term benefits for our stakeholders.



There were no disruptions to our complaints resolution function and HaDSCO met or exceeded all Key Performance Indicator targets for complaints, which is a credit to the staff who were operating in uncharted times. There were 297 redress outcomes achieved for individuals who brought their complaints to HaDSCO, which represents a 58% increase compared with 2018-19. There were also 53 service improvements implemented through our complaints process, a 66% increase compared with 2018-19. I appreciate the willingness of service providers to participate in HaDSCO's complaints resolution process to identify redress opportunities and system improvements.

The Office received 161 complaints specifically about COVID-19 matters between 26 February 2020 and 30 June 2020, representing 17% of complaints over this period. The Office played an important role enabling members of the community to raise specific issues about service provision during the pandemic. I was pleased that the Office was able to make arrangements with service providers to streamline complaint resolution processes to minimise impact on their service delivery during the pandemic.

The Office connected with the Western Australian community on many occasions through stakeholder engagement and outreach, including in collaboration with other accountability agencies and State Government departments. This included regional visits and metropolitan outreach with diverse community groups. The Office collaborated with Linkwest to present information to regional Community Resource Centres through video link which enabled significant outreach to non-metropolitan areas. The arrangement with Linkwest enabled HaDSCO to further engage with the regions during the pandemic.

1 During the year, the Office continued to contribute to reform initiatives across the health, disability and mental health sectors at both a State and National level to support improvements in these sectors.

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On 21 May 2020, the Minister for Environment; Disability Services; Electoral Affairs announced that Western Australia and the Commonwealth had agreed to defer the transition of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) quality and safeguarding functions to the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission to 1 December 2020. During the year, the Office continued to implement a range of initiatives in preparation for transition. As a member of the NDIS Interface Steering Committee, the Office continued to contribute to the sector wide work program to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent whole-of-government approach to support Western Australians with disability.

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For both the health and mental health jurisdictions, HaDSCO continued to recognise and promote the enduring strategies in the Sustainable Health Review (SHR) Final Report. Access to person-centred services is a primary consideration when dealing with complaints. The enduring strategy covering great beginnings and a dignified end of life is particularly relevant with the passage of the voluntary assisted dying legislation through the State Parliament in December 2019. Following the commencement of the *Voluntary Assisted Dying Act 2019* which is expected in mid-2021, HaDSCO will be able to receive complaints about the voluntary assisted dying process. Complaints about end of life care are an important area of work for the Office where HaDSCO staff add value by facilitating complaint resolution and the identification of service improvements.

Consistent with the SHR's recommendation focussing on workforce capability, the Office collaborated with Edith Cowan University to develop an on-line learning video for undergraduate nurses and midwives. The video included information about learning from complaints to educate practitioners at the earliest stages of their careers about the benefits of patient-centred care and communication. In addition, a number of complaints were used as de-identified case studies by service providers for education and training to strengthen workforce capability. The Office also shared de-identified data about complaint trends to assist providers to identify safety and quality improvements.

Improving mental health outcomes continues to be a focus. Complaints about mental health services continue to increase. In 2019-20, HaDSCO received the highest volume of complaints about these services since the implementation of the *Mental Health Act 2014*. Since 2014-15, there has been a 36% increase in complaints.

The Office continued to strengthen governance measures during 2019-20. The Office received approval from the Treasurer; Minister for Finance; Aboriginal Affairs; Lands to become a Budget Paper 2 agency and will receive a direct service appropriation for 2020-21. The Office also established an Internal Audit Committee, which was further strengthened in response to the update to the *Treasurer's Instruction 1201 Internal Audit*. These initiatives collectively demonstrate an ongoing commitment to strong governance, accountability and transparency in service delivery.

These achievements and others highlighted in this report provide benefits for individuals who contact our Office, for those who provide health, disability and mental health services, as well as the Western Australian community more broadly.

My sincere thanks to my staff and to those who engaged with the Office during 2019-20 to improve outcomes for individuals who access health, disability and mental health services.



SARAH COWIE
DIRECTOR



1.2 Key highlights 2019-20

Key Highlights 2019-20

Complaints

2,629 Complaints received



297

Redress actions facilitated for individuals

53



Service improvements implemented as a result of HaDSCO's involvement

Educate and Train



Developed an on-line learning video for undergraduate nurses and midwives

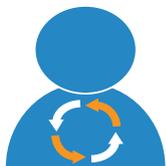


Delivered **200** outreach activities with stakeholders across metropolitan, regional and remote regions

Developed an information sheet outlining 'How to complain about a disability service' in Easy English



Respond to changing environments



Contributed to health, disability and mental health reforms at a State and National level

Governance



Developed a Workforce Diversity Plan and published HaDSCO's Service Charter

Developed a COVIDSafe Roadmap to enable agile and responsive service delivery



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1.3 Who we are

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office (HaDSCO) is an independent Statutory Authority providing an impartial resolution service for complaints relating to health, disability and mental health services in Western Australia and the Indian Ocean Territories, covering the public, private and not-for-profit sectors, and prison health services.

Functions

The functions of HaDSCO are set out in the 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*. HaDSCO's main functions under these Acts 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.



HaDSCO is responsible to the
**Deputy Premier; Minister for Health;
Mental Health;**
Honourable Roger Cook MLA

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

The Health and Disability Services Complaints Office was established in 1996 and, until November 2010, it 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*.

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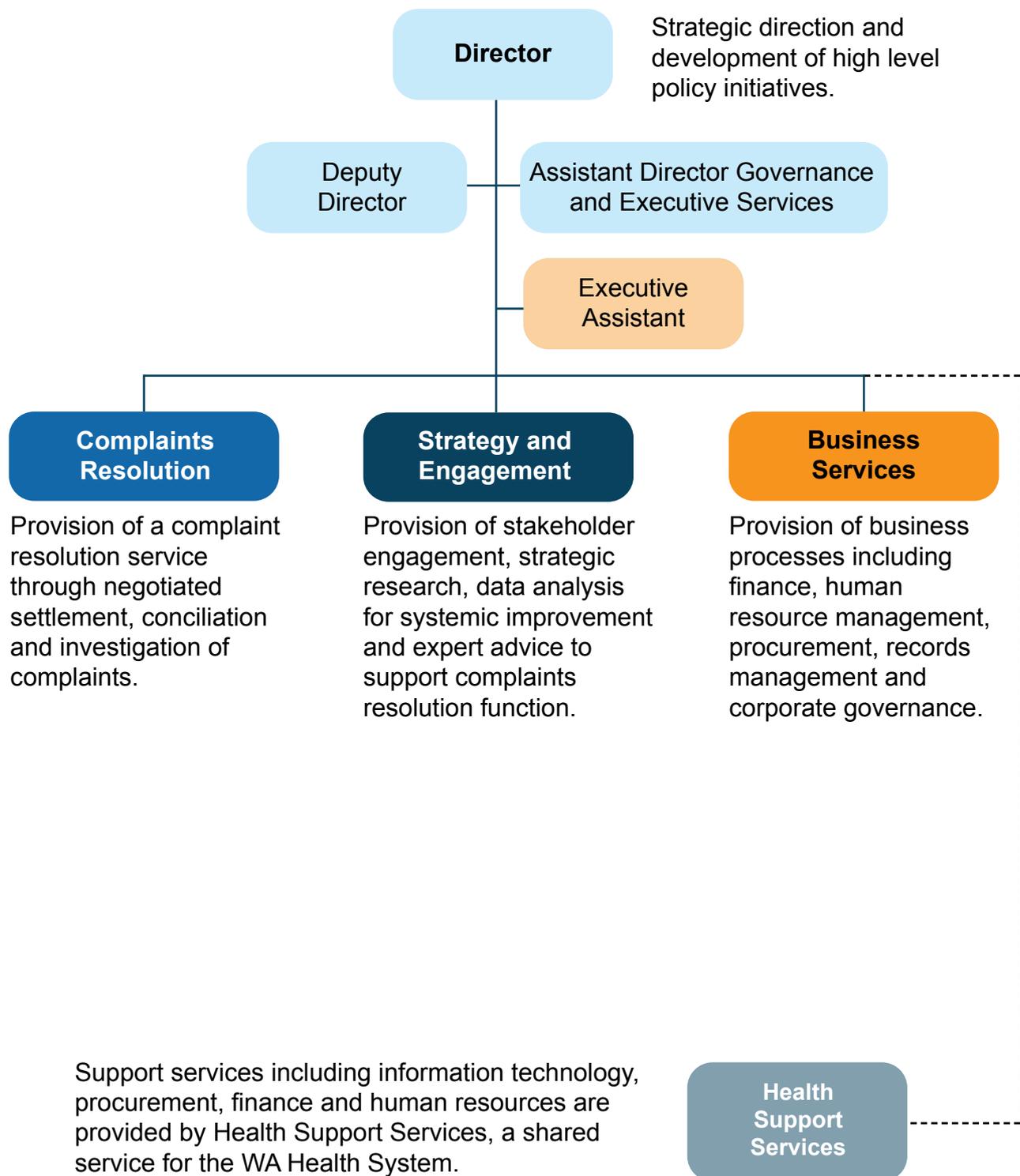
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1.4 Organisational structure



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1.5 Performance Management Framework

HaDSCO operates within the following Performance Management Framework to achieve services and outcomes in the context of the wider Government goal of Strong Communities: Safe communities and supported families.

Government Goal Strong communities: Safe communities and supported families			
Outcome	Services	Key Effectiveness Indicator	Key Efficiency Indicator
Improvement in the delivery of health and disability services.	Service One Assessment, negotiated settlement, conciliation and investigation of complaints.	Proportion of recommendations resulting in implementation by providers.	1.1 Percentage of complaints closed within legislation time frames.
			1.2 Average cost per finalised complaint.
	Service Two Education and training in the prevention and resolution of complaints.		2.1 Average cost per presentation, awareness raising, consultation and networking activities.



1.6 Strategic direction

HaDSCO's Strategic Plan 2017-21 sets out the Office's Vision, Mission and Values (see below). The plan also sets out four strategic areas: Complaints, Educate and Train, Respond to Changing Environments and Governance (see opposite page).

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 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

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Complaints

Receive, Resolve, Reform

Manage complaints in a professional, impartial, confidential and efficient manner with quality outcomes

- We ensure our services are accessible to all individuals who wish to make complaints about services provided by the health, disability and mental health sectors.
- We provide an impartial, efficient and high quality complaints service to resolve individual complaints through complaint assessment, negotiated settlement, conciliation and investigation.
- We work with the relevant parties to facilitate redress where appropriate and to identify systemic improvement.

Educate and Train

Engage, Evaluate, Educate

Inform, educate and empower the community and service providers to prevent complaints

- We contribute towards keeping communities well informed about complaints resolution processes across the health, disability and mental health sectors.
- We monitor and evaluate systemic trends in our complaints to inform opportunities for improvement, including through engagement and education.
- We provide guidance to service providers to assist in the development of appropriate internal complaints management systems that are 'fit for purpose'.

Respond to Changing Environments

Review, Respond, Redefine

Respond appropriately to our changing environment

- We work with internal and external stakeholders to identify and evaluate emerging issues.
- We embrace and manage change in a work environment that is flexible and innovative in service design.
- We adapt our service delivery to meet the changing needs of stakeholders.

Governance

Cooperate, Comply, Communicate

Deliver our services within a sound governance framework

- We operate in accordance with high level ethical principles, abide by all public sector requirements and are respected for our integrity.
- We attract, develop and retain a skilled workforce with a culture which supports team work, professionalism, impartiality and responsiveness.
- We demonstrate our accountability to stakeholders by providing access to the principles, policies and procedures that govern our operations, and detail our commitment to them.

