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Our governance

Our corporate governance framework guides how we manage our business, minimise our risks, and meet our legislative obligations. Our systems are based on strong ethical foundations and our commitment to fairness, accountability and transparency.

The following committees oversee our corporate governance:

- Executive Management Group
- Advisory Council (see page 29)
- Audit and Risk Management Committee (see page 31)
- Information Steering Committee.

Executive management group

The executive management group (EMG) assists the Ombudsman in the stewardship of EWOQ and plays an important role in:

- setting and monitoring the strategic direction
- monitoring financial and non-financial performance
- promoting innovation, research, continuous improvement and quality client service
- ensuring the optimal use of human, financial and information resources and infrastructure.

In 2019-2020, our executive management group members were:

Jane Pires

Energy and Water Ombudsman

Jane Pires was appointed Energy and Water Ombudsman in December 2016 and has more than 30 years of experience in customer service and complaint management, including extensive senior executive experience in dispute resolution, mediation and conciliation.

As Energy and Water Ombudsman, Jane is committed to providing all Queenslanders with access to a free, fair and independent dispute resolution service, contributing to improved service delivery in the energy and water sectors, and fostering a culture of excellence within the team.

With a Master of Business Administration majoring in dispute resolution, Jane is the Australian representative on the committee for international standard 'ISO 10002:2018 Quality management — Customer satisfaction — Guidelines for complaints handling in organizations'. She chairs the Queensland chapter of the Thriving Communities Partnership, and served on the board of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals Australia (SOCAP) for 10 years.

Eleanor Bray

General Manager

– Strategy, Operations and Governance

Eleanor Bray oversees our strategy, governance and operations, including finance, risk and compliance, IT, policy and research, and reporting. With an extensive background in finance, IT and customer experience, Eleanor has worked in both the public and private sector, predominantly in water, energy and mining. She joined EWOQ in April 2020 following the retirement of Lyn Stevens, who had managed corporate services at EWOQ since the scheme was established as Energy Ombudsman Queensland in 2007.

John Jones

General Manager

– Assessment, Investigation and Resolution

John Jones leads the complaint investigation and dispute resolution functions of the office, providing a timely, effective and independent way of resolving disputes. He also represents EWOQ at forums with state and national jurisdictional regulators, and industry and consumer representatives. He first joined the organisation in July 2007 as General Manager Operations for Energy Ombudsman Queensland.

Leonie Jones

Manager – People, Capability and Culture

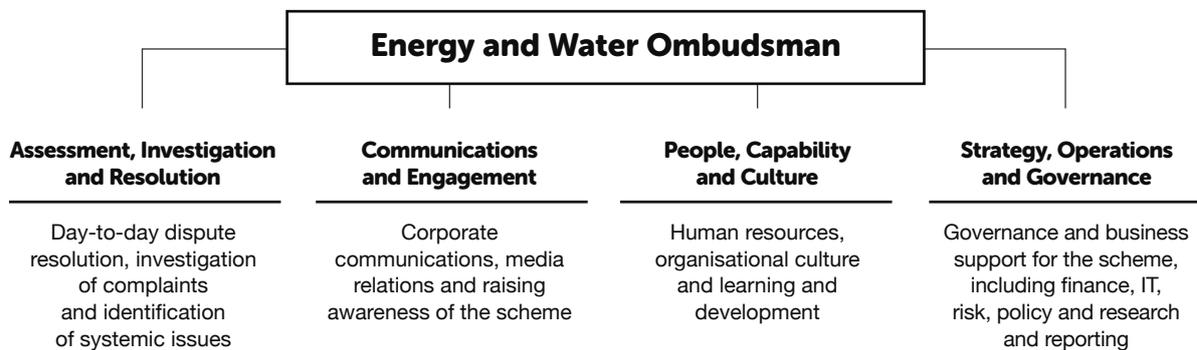
Leonie Jones joined the newly formed People, Capability and Culture team in March 2019 as Manager. Having previously worked in a human resources management role for our shared service provider, and with over 25 years' experience within the public service, Leonie brings with her a depth of management and HR experience. Leonie is accountable for managing and implementing a range of strategic human resources, organisational culture and development initiatives that support EWOQ's strategic objectives.

Sonia Cahill

Manager – Communications and Engagement

Sonia Cahill has led the newly formed Communications and Engagement team since its inception on 1 July 2019 and is responsible for raising awareness of the scheme. She joined EWOQ in August 2017 and has a background in corporate communications, media relations, publishing, and website and social media management in both public and private sectors in Australia and abroad.

Organisational structure



Advisory Council to the Energy and Water Ombudsman

The Advisory Council monitors the independence of the Energy and Water Ombudsman scheme and provides advice to the Energy and Water Ombudsman and the Minister responsible for energy and water on policy, procedural and operational issues relating to the *Energy and Water Ombudsman Act 2006*. This helps to ensure the scheme is fair and effective for consumers and suppliers.

Advisory Council membership

The Advisory Council meets every quarter and includes an independent chair and at least six other members appointed by the Minister on the Chair's recommendation and after consultation with scheme participants, consumer groups and community welfare organisations. See pages 8-9 for the Chair's message and advisory council members.

There must be an equal number of other members representing industry and consumer interests. Under the Act, at least two of the industry members must represent the interests of energy retailers, at least one must represent the interests of energy distributors, and at least one must represent the interests of the water entities.

The Chair may hold office for up to five years, however, there is no restriction on the length of terms of ordinary members. On appointment to the Advisory Council, members receive an induction to help them understand the scheme and how the office operates.

Council members represent the interests of the sector and must act in the best interests of the scheme when exercising their council responsibilities.

Roles and responsibilities of council members

The EWOQ Advisory Council Handbook details the roles and responsibilities of council members, while the Advisory Council Code of Conduct helps council members discharge their responsibilities under the *Public Sector Ethics Act 1994*. While not a prescriptive code, it contains the ethics, principles and values which council members have agreed to put into practice. Both documents are available from our website.

Council members are entitled to meeting fees approved by the Governor-in-Council, and reimbursement of reasonable costs incurred for attending council meetings, based on the Remuneration Procedures for Part-time Chairs and Members of Queensland Government Boards.

See Appendix 2 for details of fees paid to council members during 2019-2020.

 Visit www.ewoq.com.au/advisory-council to learn more

See pages 8 and 9 for the Chair's message and a list of advisory council members.

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Human rights, code of conduct and ethics

Human rights

Queensland's new *Human Rights Act 2019* recognises 23 categories of human rights and acknowledges the responsibility of public sector employees to respect, protect and promote the human rights of all individuals.

EWOQ is committed to acting in a way that is compatible with our human rights obligations when we promote our services and interact with the community.

The Act commenced on 1 January 2020 and requires Queensland's public agencies, including EWOQ, to act or make decisions that are compatible with these rights. Section 97 of the Act also requires that EWOQ publish details of any:

- human rights actions taken during the reporting period
- human rights complaints received, including:
 - the number of complaints received
 - the outcome of the complaints
 - any other information prescribed by regulation relating to complaints
- review of policies, programs, procedures, practices or services undertaken in relation to our compatibility with human rights.

Since 1 January 2020, EWOQ has taken the following steps to further the objectives of the Act:

- Training has been provided to team members on how to identify and prevent human rights issues, and how to respond to a human rights complaint.
- A review has been commenced of certain policies, procedures and plans to ensure these documents promote and are compatible with human rights. Seven policies, procedures and plans were reviewed for compatibility with human rights during 2019-2020.
- A human rights working group has been created to handle issues concerning human rights.

EWOQ received no human rights complaints between 1 January 2020 and 30 June 2020.

Code of conduct and ethics

At EWOQ, we are required to make ethical decisions, be accountable for our actions and demonstrate integrity. We are committed to fostering a positive organisational culture that values and promotes ethical leadership and decision making.

All employees are required to observe the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service. The principles and values in the Code are incorporated into our policies and procedures as well as individual performance plans. All new team members undertake ethics and code of conduct training during their induction. Refresher training for code of conduct is provided annually. Mandated training in fraud control and corruption prevention was completed to all team members during 2019-2020, along with a tailored online program about bullying and harassment for employees.



Testimonial

"The staff were extremely helpful. They explained the process and managed my matter beyond my expectations. I thought the process would be hard and drawn out, but it was very quick. I received phone calls and emails confirming each step of the process and to provide me with an update."

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Risk management and accountability

Risk management

Risk management is an integral part of strategic and business planning, and the everyday activities of EWOQ.

In accordance with section 23 of the *Financial and Performance Management Standard 2019*, EWOQ is committed to implementing risk management strategies that ensure efficiency and effectiveness in meeting our objectives, while also providing a safe and healthy workplace for our team.

Audit and risk management committee

Members of the Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC) are appointed by the Energy and Water Ombudsman. The committee provides independent comment, advice and counsel to assist the Ombudsman's oversight of:

- the integrity of EWOQ's financial statements and internal controls
- compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- the process relating to internal risk management and control systems
- the performance of the internal audit function.

The two external members of the committee are Queensland public sector employees and consistent with the Remuneration Procedures for Part-time Chairs and Members of Queensland Government Boards do not receive additional remuneration in relation to this committee.

Currently, the committee members are:

- Irene Sitton, Chairperson
- Fiona Trenear, external member
- Eleanor Bray, internal member

ARMC observes the terms of the Audit and Risk Management Committee Charter and has due regard to Queensland Treasury's Audit Committee Guidelines.

During 2019-2020, the committee met on four occasions and invited both external and internal audit representatives to regularly attend meetings.

Key achievements for 2019-2020

- Endorsed the financial statements 2018-2019 and considered all audit recommendations by external audit.
- Endorsed the strategic and annual internal audit plan for approval by the Energy and Water Ombudsman.
- Monitored ongoing risk management activities within the organisation.
- Monitored progress of the annual internal audit plan and outcomes from audits undertaken.
- Reviewed the Risk Management Framework and policy.



Testimonial

"Everything has worked out perfectly and my retailer is currently removing the default thanks to you. I really can't thank you enough I'm so happy with the outcome!"

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Risk management and accountability

Internal audit

Our internal audit function is undertaken by the Corporate Administration Agency (CAA) and managed through a service level agreement.

The internal audit workplan is directed through a strategic and annual plan developed in consultation with the Audit and Risk Management Committee and approved by the Ombudsman, which has due regard to professional standards and *the Audit Committee guidelines: Improving accountability and performance* issued by Queensland Treasury.

Internal audit activities can include financial, compliance and operational reviews; information system and data integrity reviews; and special review assignments as requested by management.

This team reports to the Audit and Risk Management Committee and operates independently of our management and our external audit function.

Key achievements for 2019-2020

Provided reports to the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the Energy and Water Ombudsman on the results of internal audits undertaken, as well as monitored and reported on the implementation of recommendations:

- assets and portable equipment
- corporate card
- procurement, purchasing and accounts payable.

Business continuity management

Our external service provider CAA maintains a business continuity plan which provides for the recovery and/or continuity of our information technology, human resources and finance functions. We have a comprehensive business continuity plan which was invoked in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our entire team successfully conducted our operations remotely as the office closed for a period of time. Plans that meet health guidelines for a safe return to the workplace were developed and are in place.

Information systems and record keeping

As a public service office, we are required by legislation and government standards to keep and maintain proper records of our activities. We are committed to meeting our governance responsibilities under the relevant Acts, applicable legislation, state government Information Standards, Queensland State Archives Standards and best practice methods outlined in applicable International Standards.

Right to information and protection of personal information

We are committed to providing the community with open and transparent access to information about our services and activities. Consistent with the *Right to Information Act 2009* and *Information Privacy Act 2009*, we proactively release information held by our office unless, on balance, it is contrary to the public interest to provide the information.

All requests for information received during 2019-2020 have been released under the Administrative Access Scheme. We also participated in the Office of the Information Commissioner Queensland (OIC) Privacy Awareness Week and contributed to the s185 annual report.

External dispute resolution scheme

Since 2015-2016, we have been recognised as an external dispute resolution scheme by the Office of the Australian Information Commission (OAIC) under the *Privacy Act 1988*. We are required to report on serious or repeated interference with privacy or systemic privacy issues relating to these bodies to the OAIC every quarter.

We are also required to provide OAIC with an annual report including a range of data relating to complaints investigated under this jurisdiction.

Mandatory online reporting

The following datasets are published on the Queensland Government open data website (www.data.qld.gov.au):

- consultancy spending
- language services expenditure
- overseas travel expenditure.