

Strategic Plan 2025–30

We pursue fairness
for the people of NSW



Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land of New South Wales on which our people live and work. We pay our respects to all Elders past and present, and to the children of today, who are the Elders of the future.



Artwork (right):
Growth and Future, Dalmarri Aboriginal Artists (2025).

Introduction from the Ombudsman

The NSW Ombudsman is an independent integrity agency that has, for five decades, pursued fairness for the people of NSW.

We do so by striving to ensure that those entrusted with public power and resources fulfil their responsibilities and treat everyone fairly.

Our functions are now wide-ranging, evolving significantly over the past half century since we were first established.

It remains the case, as it was in 1975, that anyone has the right to complain to us if they believe they have been treated unfairly by those we oversight, or to report to us any concerns they have about possible maladministration.

We act impartially in the public interest: to resolve, informally if possible; to investigate, formally using Royal Commission-like powers if necessary; and to report, including to Parliament if warranted. In doing so, we are both looking back to ensure accountability, and looking forward to find remedies, learn lessons and promote change.

Increasingly, our functions today also encompass the explicitly pro-active and systemic monitoring and reviews of a range of systems and programs.

Importantly, we also work with those we oversight to equip them with resources and learnings to enhance their own capacity to improve fairness and prevent maladministration. We have heard from our stakeholders that they highly value and want more of this support from us.

Uniting all our functions and people is our overarching strategic purpose:

We pursue fairness for the people of NSW

This strategic plan sets the direction for this purpose over the coming years, and aims to focus and streamline our efforts for the greatest impact.

The Plan has been shaped by our people, guided by our legislative functions, the expectations of our stakeholders, and the changing environment in which we operate.

Our strategic goals call on us to work collaboratively and cohesively across all our functions, impelling us to:

- Foster trust in our services, ensuring they are accessible and effective, especially for those who need us most
- Leverage our skilled but limited resources to amplify our impact, focusing on the most important issues with a sense of proportionality, urgency and cut through
- Build relationships and work positively with the sectors we oversight, empowering them to improve systems and learn together

The Plan also recognises the imperative of investing in our people and systems, to continuously improve and sustainably build our excellence into the future.

Underpinning all of our work are our organisational values, central among which is our unwavering commitment to ethical and fair conduct in all that we do – *Integrity Always*.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Paul Miller'.

**Paul Miller
NSW Ombudsman**

Our purpose

Our purpose

We pursue fairness for the people of NSW

Our strategic purpose means the following to us:

We pursue...



The word pursue is an active word, capturing our ongoing efforts to work with complainants, agencies and all our stakeholders. It recognises that fairness is an ideal, and one that requires persistent and vigilant focus and effort.

fairness...



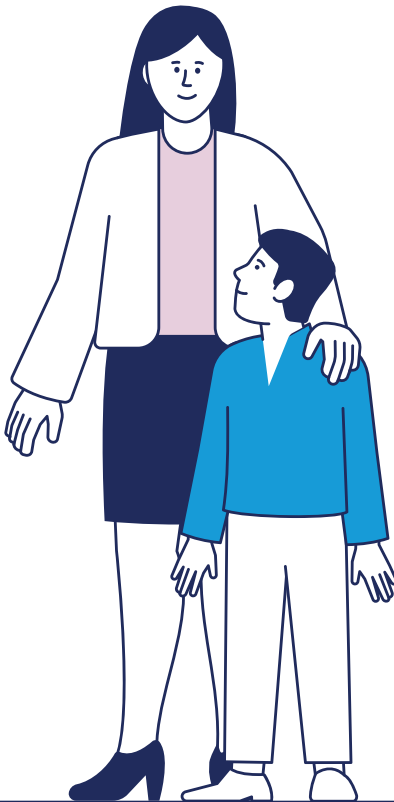
We act in the public interest, pursuing fair processes and fair outcomes at all levels from individual decisions and actions through to systems design and operation. It impels us to also exemplify fairness in our own work.

for the people of NSW...



This means every individual and all communities who rely on the services of government and community service providers.

It will always be necessary for the Ombudsman to scrutinise those invested with public power and resources to see that they act lawfully, reasonably and fairly. Fairness is our ideal, its relentless pursuit is our calling.



Our role

Our role

Our functions are conferred on us by Parliament, primarily through the *Ombudsman Act 1974*, the *Community Services (Complaints, Reviews & Monitoring) Act 1994*, and the *Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022*.

Our functions can be broadly grouped into the following 3 categories:

Complaints and Investigations

Facilitating and handling complaints about, and where necessary investigating, the conduct of public authorities and community service providers.

We focus on the early and effective resolution of complaints with tools including referral, inquiries, and conciliation. We can undertake formal investigation (on complaint or own motion) where we identify conduct that may constitute serious or systemic maladministration.

This work is supported by engagement with diverse communities to help them navigate the complex public and community services sector landscape, and to enhance confidence in making effective complaints, including through dedicated support for public sector whistleblowers.

Systems Oversight and Reviews

Oversighting compliance and performance of specified NSW Government and community sector programs and systems through monitoring, auditing, inquiries, conducting reviews and reporting.

These include:

- the NSW Government’s Aboriginal programs
- the public interest disclosures (whistleblowing) scheme
- NSW Government-funded community services, including child protection services
- where certain children have died, the government and community service responses (both before and after death)
- the systems and practices that public authorities and service providers use to deal with complaints
- other legislative powers or schemes, such as the mandatory disease testing scheme.

We also provide staff and support to the Child Death Review Team for the exercise of its functions¹.

Sector Capacity Building and Education

Delivering tools, guides and other resources, and providing educational and training services, to support capacity building by public authorities and community service providers.

This includes sharing data, lessons and insights, and designing practical and cohesive recommendations for improvement.

Our educational focus is on those areas aligned to our role, where we are recognised as leaders with expertise and authority: complaint handling; whistleblowing; investigation practice; and good administrative decision-making and conduct.

¹ The Child Death Review Team has a separate strategic plan, which is available on our website: <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au>

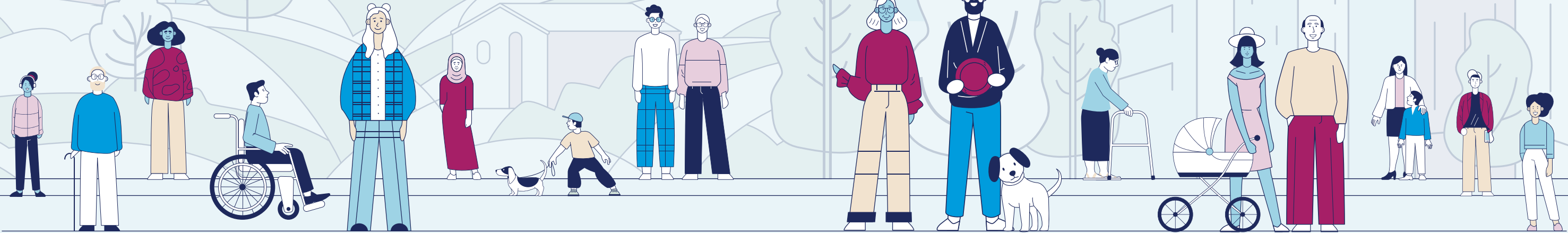
Our strategic goals and priorities

Strategic purpose

We pursue fairness for the people of NSW



- .....
Foster trust and enhance accessibility of our services
Provide accessible and effective services
- .....
Amplify our impact by promptly addressing the most important issues
Proactively identify and bring to light what needs to change to improve fairness
- .....
Drive improved sector capability to embed fairness
Support agencies with advice and guidance consistent with our independence and functions
- .....
Grow our capabilities for the future
Invest holistically in our people and systems to achieve organisational excellence, now and into the future





Foster trust and enhance accessibility of our services

Provide accessible and effective services

We work in the public interest and in doing so provide services to the people of NSW, both individually and collectively; public and community service agencies; and the NSW Parliament.

The focus of this goal is on the accessibility and effectiveness of our services across all our functions and for all stakeholders.

Our priorities 2025-2030

- Promote and build awareness and understanding of our functions
- Focus engagement with people and communities who need us most
- Flexibly apply our resolution toolkit to address unfairness and best meet the diverse needs of the people we serve
- Continuously improve stakeholder experience



Drive improved sector capability to embed fairness

Support agencies with advice and guidance consistent with our independence and functions

We are uniquely positioned to help prevent maladministration and enhance fairness in the sector we oversight by sharing lessons and insights, and providing advice and guidance to agencies.

Our goal is to drive sector capability by becoming increasingly proactive as thought leaders in the essential domains related to our jurisdiction and functions.

Our priorities 2025-2030

- Improve sector capability through our best practice training and tools in complaint handling; PIDs; investigations; and good administrative conduct
- Be thought leaders on emerging issues of fairness in public administration
- Leverage and externally share our learnings and expertise across our functions



Amplify our impact by promptly addressing the most important issues

Proactively identify and bring to light what needs to change to improve fairness

Our jurisdiction is wide and there are many issues we could look at. We hold others to account by bringing to light what needs to change to improve fairness. By sharpening our focus, we can better target our resources to identify, prioritise and address important issues.

Our goal is to enhance the impact our work has through improved external engagement and internal coordination – guiding us on the issues we need to act on and how. We seek to leverage data, streamline our processes to be action-oriented, and apply proportionality and urgency to our work. The more proactive and faster we are at identifying and addressing emerging issues, the greater our impact.

Our priorities 2025-2030

- Invest in community engagement and building constructive stakeholder connections
- Use enhanced data analytics to identify and prioritise issues
- Develop and apply a structured framework for targeting and delivering all monitoring functions
- Enhance transparency and stakeholder input into the identification and prioritisation of systemic inquiries and reviews



Grow our capabilities for the future

Invest holistically in our people and systems to achieve organisational excellence, now and into the future

Our people and systems are the foundation for our success and shape our path to achieving our strategic objectives.

We will be forward-looking with focus on our technology and the tools that can support us with our work.

We will continue to bring to light what needs to change to improve fairness. We will do this, as we always have, with independence and impartiality, an objective, open-minded and courageous evaluation and reporting of the evidence, an unrelenting focus on the public interest, and a commitment to fairness both in the outcomes we seek and the way we do our own work. These are some of the features of our 'Ombudsman-craft'.

Our priorities 2025-2030

- Develop our people through investment in learning and continuous improvement to exemplify Ombudsman-craft, leadership and ethical public service
- Nurture a respectful and inclusive culture to drive and deepen our values
- Strengthen connection and collaboration across the office
- Leverage technology and AI adoption in a safe and ethical way

Our values

Our values

Our values lie at the heart of who we are as an organisation, forming the foundation of how we perform our functions and achieve our strategic goals.

They inspire us to be our best selves.

Central among our values is our unwavering commitment to ethical and fair conduct in all that we do – *Integrity Always*.

Proudly Independent

We operate objectively, impartially and ethically in our pursuit of fairness.

Purpose Driven

We are purpose-driven in every action, working constructively to serve the people of NSW with courage and perseverance.

Integrity Always

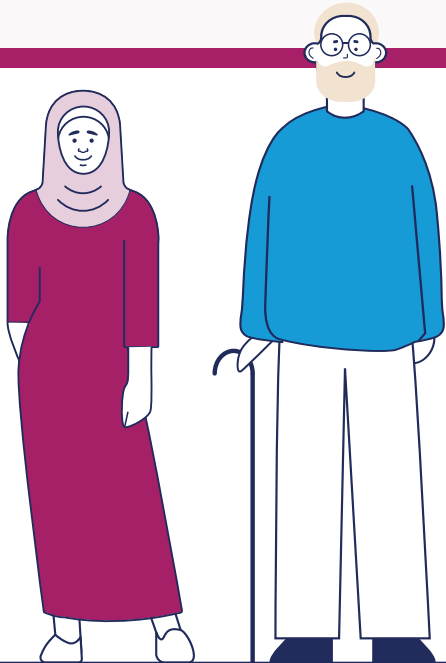
We follow the letter and intent of the law, operate within our statutory role, communicate honestly, transparently and respectfully, make fair decisions that serve the public interest, and behave to the same high standard we expect from others.

Inquiring Minds

We are open-minded, inquisitive and focused on continuous improvement, seeking out pathways to achieve impactful outcomes in the public interest.

Better Together

We are committed to working together towards our shared goals and achieving the best outcomes for the communities we serve, leveraging our collective strengths and diverse perspectives.



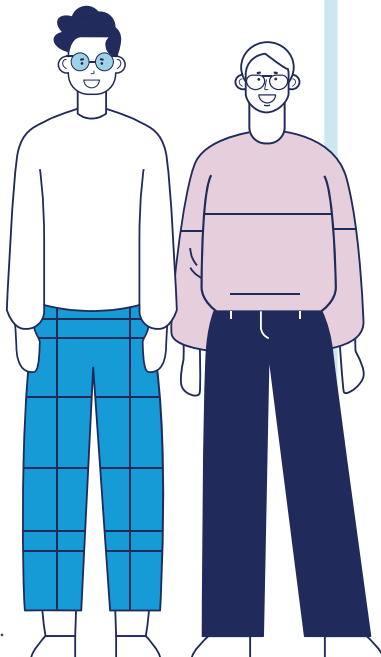
How we will measure and report on the plan



How we will measure and report on the plan

The NSW Ombudsman outcomes and key performance indicators² are used to measure and report on our performance and each of our strategic goals are aligned to the Ombudsman outcomes. The People Matter Employee Survey is another key source of information we review for tracking our progress on the strategic plan.

The implementation of the strategic plan is overseen by the Board of Management and will be reported on in our annual report.



NSW Ombudsman outcomes

Our 4 outcomes



Outcome 1: Providing accessible and effective services to the public, resolving complaints fairly.



Outcome 2: Holding agencies to account for serious maladministration and system failures.

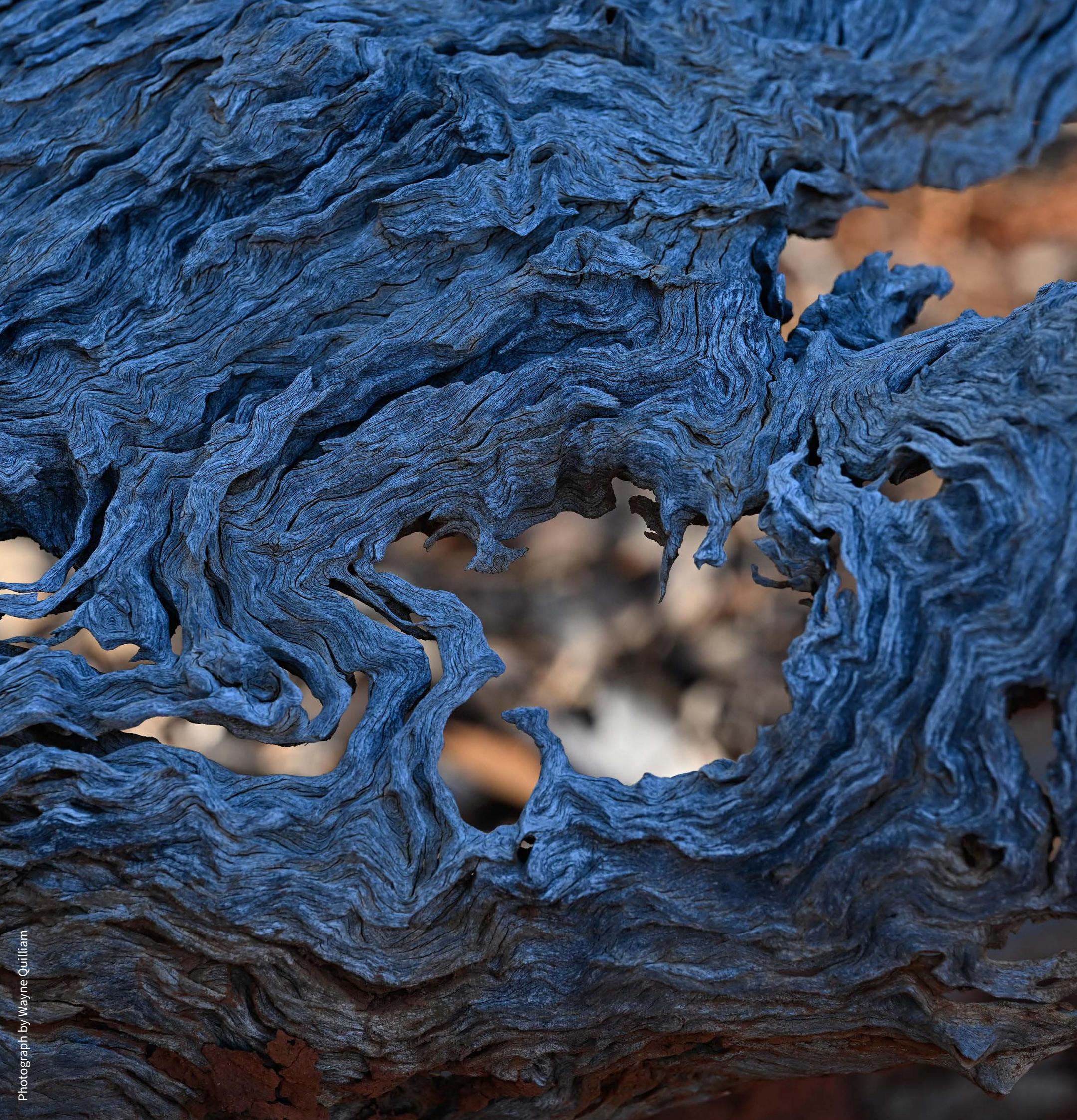


Outcome 3: Positively influencing public administration and community services delivery.



Outcome 4: Supporting Parliament to exercise its functions.

² Published on [our website](#).



Photograph by Wayne Quilliam

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