



**Local Government
Inspector**

Local Government Inspector

2026 Annual Report

Minister for Local Government

The Hon. Hannah Beazley MLA

In accordance with section 8B.17 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, I hereby submit for your information and presentation to Parliament the Annual Report for the Local Government Inspector of Western Australia for the period 1 January 2026 to 30 June 2026. The Annual Report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Financial Management Act 2006*.

Acknowledgement of country

We respectfully acknowledge Aboriginal peoples as being the Traditional Custodians of Western Australia. We acknowledge the enduring connection Aboriginal people continue to share with the land, sea and sky through both their ancestral ties and custodianship to Country. We pay our respect to Elders both past and present, and acknowledge the value brought through the collective contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Western Australia.

General enquiries

Local Government Inspector

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Contents

- Who is the Local Government Inspector? 2
- Message from the Local Government Inspector 3
 - Our reach 6
 - Enabling legislation 8
- What we do 10
 - Complaints 12
 - Investigations 17
 - Interagency referrals 20
 - Education and engagement 20
- Governance 23
 - Financial declaration 24

Who is the Local Government Inspector?

The Local Government Inspector (the Inspector) is an independent statutory officer appointed by the Governor of Western Australia to provide oversight and improve the accountability, decision-making and transparency of the state's local government sector. The Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety provides the staff resources to support the Inspector within the Inspectorate.

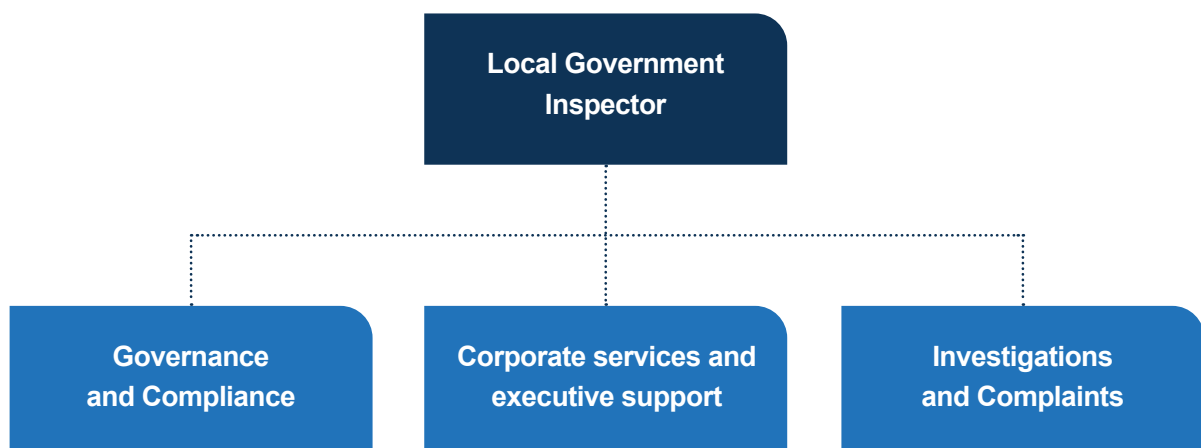
The role of Local Government Inspector was established as part of reforms included in the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024*, which commenced on 1 January 2026.

The Inspector is focused on ensuring local governments and their office holders comply with Western Australia's *Local Government Act 1995* and its associated regulations. The Inspector is backed by comprehensive investigation and prosecution powers.

The Inspector and Inspectorate officers identify and respond to emerging sector risks, assess complaints, conduct investigations and support continuous improvement through education and engagement. These functions are central to building public confidence in the integrity and capability of local governments across the state.

Tony Brown OAM was appointed as Western Australia's first Local Government Inspector on 20 October 2025, for a five-year term. The position is accountable to the Minister, the Crime and Corruption Commission, the Public Sector Commission, the Auditor General, the Ombudsman WA and Parliament as a public officer. The Local Government Inspector reports to the Minister for Local Government.

Learn more about the function of the Inspector and the work undertaken by the team at www.wa.gov.au/organisation/local-government-inspector



The Inspectorate has 19 full-time (FTE) permanent positions inclusive of the Local Government Inspector. Seventeen of these positions are occupied as at 30 June 2026.



Message from the Local Government Inspector

It has been an honour to be appointed Western Australia's first Local Government Inspector.

The commencement of the State Government's landmark reforms to the *Local Government Act 1995* on 1 January 2026 marked a significant step in strengthening governance, integrity and accountability across Western Australia's local government sector.

The establishment of the Local Government Inspector and the Inspectorate represents an important change in how Western Australia supports and regulates local government. Our approach brings together education, early intervention and enforcement, giving us the tools to address any non-compliance and dysfunction.

As expected for a new regulator, we received a high volume of complaints and enquiries as the sector and the community developed their understanding of the Inspectorate, the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024* and its associated regulations. Under Section 8B.13 of the *Local Government Act 1995* no Ministerial directions were given during this operating period.

My appointment of Monitors to five local governments during our first six months demonstrated both the practical application of the new legislative framework and the value of early intervention. Local Government Monitors provide me, as Inspector, with greater visibility and independent oversight of matters within local governments, while also giving those local governments the opportunity to strengthen decision-making, governance practices and internal capability.

These local governments had varying challenges requiring different degrees of support and intervention.

I tasked the City of Nedlands and Town of Port Hedland Monitors with supporting an incoming newly elected council and advising the administration after the completion of Commissioner appointments. I appointed Monitors to the other three local governments to address internal dysfunction and improve professional conduct.

One of the biggest concerns I have as Local Government Inspector is councils and administrations are not always working harmoniously in the best interests of the communities they serve. Strong relationships are integral to well-functioning local government and I expect to see productive and professional relationships within councils and between councils and their administration. To attract the attention of the Local Government Inspector for dysfunctional relationships is unseemly and detrimental to individual and collective reputations and weakens public trust in the sector.

As expected, it has taken time for industry and the public to understand what the Inspectorate is tasked with addressing and the powers available under the *Local Government Act 1995*. We have received complaints from people relating to matters which fall outside of our remit, such as neighbour or boundary disputes. These matters have been declined and complainants redirected to appropriate forums.

As Local Government Inspector, I have adopted an evidence-based, intelligence-led approach that directs our resources to where they can have the greatest impact. We identify problems early, work with local governments to address them and, where necessary, use the infringements and sanctions available to us under the Act.

Strong relationships are integral to well-functioning local government and I expect to see productive and professional relationships within councils and between councils and their administration.

Where issues do arise, our response will be fair, evidence-based and proportionate to the risk. Where it is just to do so, I will not hesitate to use the powers available to me to enforce the Act and ultimately drive improvement across the sector.

The Inspectorate brings together complementary compliance, governance and investigative expertise. Our team works proactively with the sector to encourage good practice and compliance with legislative obligations, while our investigations function independently assesses complaints and investigates allegations of serious misconduct or non-compliance. Together, these functions give us a regulatory model that can respond appropriately to different circumstances.

My focus throughout the rest of 2026 will continue to be on engagement, encouraging local governments to take responsibility and drive their own improvements. I've personally visited 22 local governments and engaged with the majority of the sector through sector events and presentations. I hope to visit many more of the 139 before the end of our first 12 months. It has been particularly rewarding to visit many of the smaller regional local governments.

There are 1,111 councillors and approximately 25,000 local government employees in Western Australia, not to mention the many contractors and others whose work is connected to our local governments. Collectively, they make a substantial contribution to the economic and social fabric of our State. Local government today is about so much more than roads, rates and rubbish. Councils and local government administration should deliver excellent service and value to the people they represent.

Our team works proactively with the sector to encourage good practice and compliance with legislative obligations, while our investigations function independently assesses complaints and investigates allegations of serious misconduct or non-compliance.

Overall, it has been a rewarding six months. I've enjoyed the challenge and I am proud of our team for building a new Inspectorate from scratch while simultaneously hitting the ground running, assessing complaints, conducting investigations and establishing relationships across the sector.

I would like to thank the State Government and, in particular, Minister Hannah Beazley MLA for their leadership and commitment to improving transparency and governance across local government. I also acknowledge and thank Director General Lanie Chopping and the staff of the Department of Local Government Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS), for their work developing new regulations and supporting Parliament to proclaim new sections of the *Local Government Amendment Act 2024*. I thank them for their efforts and their continued collaboration as we work together to support improvement across the sector.

We are also grateful for the invaluable collaboration of key integrity agencies, including the Public Sector Commission, Corruption and Crime Commission, Ombudsman WA, Office of the Auditor General and the Western Australian Electoral Commission.

Western Australians rightly expect local governments to exercise their powers with integrity, transparency and accountability. We trust councils and elected members to foster respectful decision-making, meet their legislative obligations and act promptly when governance concerns arise. Where those standards are not met, the Inspectorate will use the powers available to it under the Act to take action.

The years ahead provide an opportunity to build on the past six months and foster a culture of continuous improvement across Western Australia's local government sector. We look forward to working with local government authorities, elected members, integrity agencies and communities to strengthen local government and the confidence Western Australians place in it.

Ultimately, local government exists to serve its community. Together, we have an opportunity to usher in a new era for local government in Western Australia.



Tony Brown OAM
Local Government Inspector

Our reach

There are 139 local governments and six regional councils, totalling 145 entities in Western Australia, including the Indian Ocean Territories of Christmas Island and the Cocos (Keeling) Islands. They cover more than 2.5 million square kilometres stretching from the Shire of Wyndham East Kimberley in the north to the tip of the City of Albany in the south-west.





Enabling legislation

The Inspector operates within a broad statutory and regulatory framework, including using the following acts and regulations:

- *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003*
- *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913* (Criminal Code)
- *Criminal Investigation Act 2006*
- *Local Government Act 1995*
- Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996
- Local Government (Audit) Regulations 1996
- Local Government (Constitution) Regulations 1998
- Local Government (Elections) Regulations 1997
- Local Government (Financial Management) Regulations 1996
- Local Government (Functions and General) Regulations 1996
- Local Government (Local Government Inspector) Regulations 2025
- Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021
- *Public Sector Management Act 1994*

Key categories and terms

Adjudicators: Legal practitioners appointed by the Minister for Local Government and administered by the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety to assess and determine conduct breaches by council members.

Administration: Made up of local government employed staff including the Chief Executive Officer.

Allegation: A claim of wrongdoing. A single complaint or enquiry may contain several separate allegations.

Complaints: A complaint is a matter lodged with, or referred to, the Inspectorate for assessment in its capacity as the dedicated integrity agency for local government. Not all complaints fall within the Inspectorate's remit.

Complaint assessment: When the Inspectorate receives a complaint, it undergoes an initial assessment to determine, among other factors, if the allegations fit within its legislative remit or the matter should be transferred to another agency.

Council: Made up of elected members, the council plans for the future, governs local government affairs and manages the CEO's performance.

Council member: A person elected to the position of councillor, mayor or president.

Department: Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS) responsible for administering the *Local Government Act 1995*.

Enquiries: Any contact received by the Inspectorate that is not specifically to lodge a complaint. Enquiries are mainly questions from the sector and public.

Investigations: When the Inspectorate receives a matter that falls within our jurisdiction, we assess the matter and then determine if an investigation is required.

Monitor: A Local Government Monitor is appointed by the Inspector to a local government to increase transparency and provide guidance to the local government.

Prima facie: In the Inspectorate's work, this refers to the presence of sufficient evidence to establish a fact or raise a presumption unless disproved or rebutted.

What we do

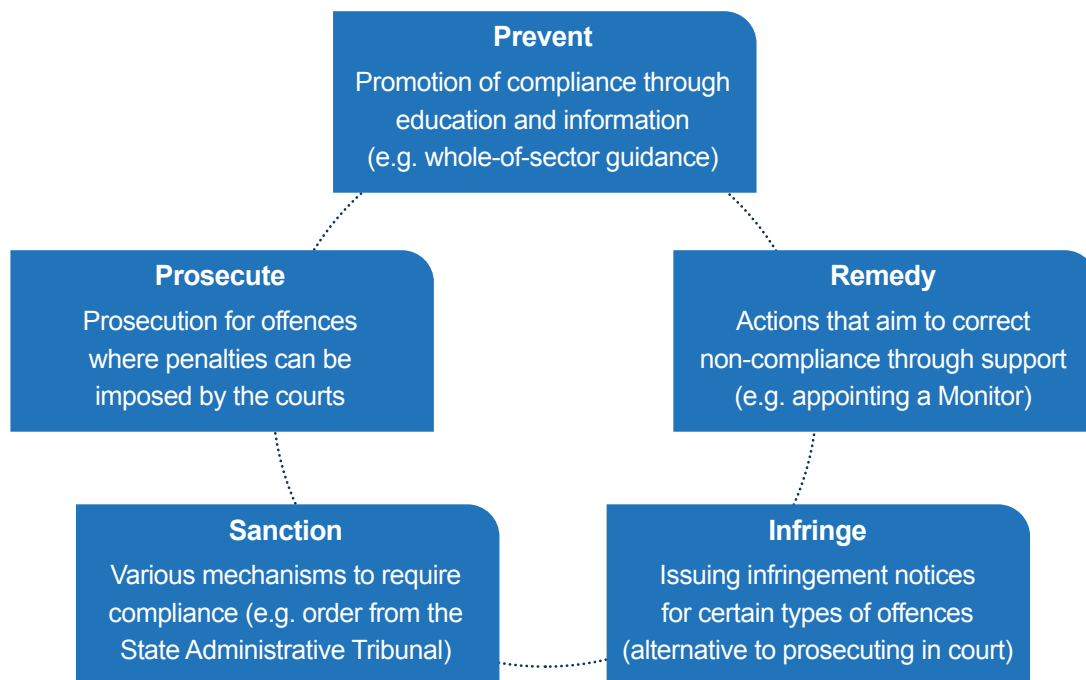
The Local Government Inspector's regulatory approach ensures statutory responses are proportionate to the level of risk, circumstances and available tools. This encourages self-regulation and voluntary compliance within the local government sector.

Our model prioritises early detection and intervention, supported by ongoing monitoring, targeted investigations, and timely, evidence-based decisions.

Regulatory action begins with low-level measures such as guidance and dialogue, escalating to formal compliance and enforcement action when necessary. Escalation is guided by the local government's compliance attitude and the severity of the risk, with more formal tools applied only when earlier interventions are ineffective or insufficient.

The Local Government Inspector adopts a proportionate, intelligence-led regulatory model, balancing education, early intervention and enforcement.

While supporting sector-wide improvement, the Inspector's primary mandate is to uphold integrity and safeguard the public interest through independent compliance and enforcement action.





General powers and functions of the Inspector under the *Local Government Act 1995*

The Local Government Inspector has the power to execute search warrants, entry powers, powers to compel individuals to answer questions (including evidence on Oath) and can compel a person to appear before an authorised officer and/or to give access to documents, information or property. Furthermore, the Inspectorate or authorised officer has the power to issue infringement notices in relation to a number of offences or matters relating to non-compliance.

Ten notices were served under Section 8B.43, which is a compulsory Notice to Provide (produce) Information. Failure to comply with a compulsory Notice to Provide Information carries a penalty of imprisonment for 12 months and a fine of \$12,000.

The Inspector commenced one investigation on his own initiative under Section 8B.10(1)(a)(iii) of the Act.

Schedule 8A.1 of the *Local Government Act 1995* lists specified offences of which the Inspector can initiate criminal (prosecution) being:

- Offences pursuant to the *Local Government Act 1995*
- Offences pursuant to the Criminal Code (WA)

The Inspector can also initiate prosecution of offences under the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996.

Complaints

Complaints handled by the Local Government Inspector and Inspectorate officers are focused and centre on integrity and conduct. Although concerns regarding rates charges, planning permits and waste collection are important to the community, these matters do not fall within the authority of the Inspector.

The *Local Government Act 1995* empowers the Inspector to receive and assess complaints. There are two types of complaints which can be made – a Breach Complaint and a General Complaint.

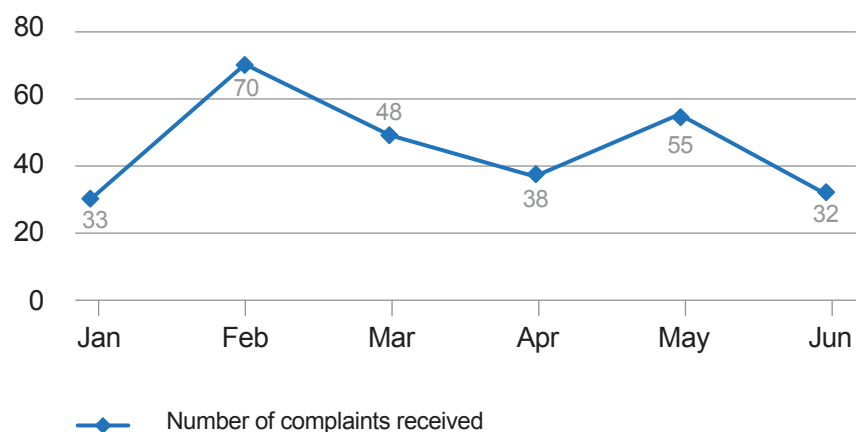
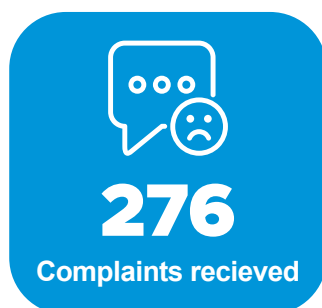
There are three types of breaches under the breach system: behavioural, conduct and specified.

Behavioural breaches

Behavioural breaches are connected to a local government's adopted code of conduct and are focused on personal integrity and use of social media, relationships with others and behaviour at council or committee meetings. They are predominantly dealt with by the local government concerned. The Inspector will refer a behavioural breach complaint to the local government for consideration and action as required.

NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

Including specified breaches



Data represented accurate as of 30 June 2026.

Conduct breaches

Formerly referred to as minor breaches, conduct breaches contravene the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 and include:

- Misuse of a local government resource.
- Securing personal advantage or disadvantaging others.
- Prohibition against involvement in administration.
- Relationships with local government employees.
- Disclosure of information/interests.

After conducting a preliminary assessment to ensure a complaint is valid, the Inspector refers the complaint and evidence to an adjudication process through the Principal Adjudicator and Deputy Adjudicator(s). The adjudication process has replaced the previous Local Government Standards Panel.

The Inspector must decline to accept a conduct breach complaint if the incident occurred more than 12 months before the complaint is received. The Inspector can also dismiss a complaint if considered frivolous, trivial, vexatious, misconceived or without substance. The Inspector must publish on the website any finding or order made by an adjudicator regarding a conduct breach. If the conduct breach is considered to be a recurrent breach, the Inspector can refer the matter to the State Administrative Tribunal.



**Number of complaints
dismissed**

27



**Number of complaints allocated
to adjudicator, including resolved**

81



Specified breaches

Formerly known as serious breaches, specified breaches are specified offences listed in Schedule 8A.1 in the *Local Government Act 1995* or prescribed in the Local Government (Local Government Inspector) Regulations 2025.

Specified offences include:

- Failure to vote at a meeting.
- Failure to disclose an electoral gift.
- Improper use of information.
- Disclosure of information about a complaint.
- Provision of false or misleading information about a complaint.
- Hindering or obstructing the Inspector, a Monitor or an investigator.

If the Inspector determines a complaint concerns a potential specified breach, it can be allocated to an Inspectorate investigator. After receiving a report on the investigation, the Inspector has a range of options available depending on the relevant section of the Act, including commencing a prosecution, issuing a caution or infringement notice, referring the matter to the State Administrative Tribunal or declining to take any action.

General complaints

General complaints are a new category dealt with by the Inspector and relate to breaches or non-compliance that are not related to a behavioural, conduct or specified breach. General complaints can be made against council members, committee members, employees, candidates for election as a council member and local governments. General complaints must allege breaches of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

ACTS AND REGULATIONS

Legislation/section reference	Allegation count
<i>Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913</i>	24
Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996	1
Local Government (Local Government Inspector) Regulations 2025	19
Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021	338
<i>Local Government Act 1995</i>	145
Outside of remit	5

COMPLAINANT TYPE:



Community member/
resident/ratepayer

124



Council member

114



Employee

49



Not for profit incorporated
association supporting local
government elected members

7



Other

8

Insights

The Inspectorate managed 276 complaints in the first six months of operation. Once complaints that alleged specified breaches were assigned to the Investigation team, there were 225 complaints alleging either conduct breaches of the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 or general breaches of the *Local Government Act 1995*.

The Inspector has the authority to dismiss matters that are misconceived, trivial, vexatious, without substance or where there is insufficient evidence to pursue the complaint. In the first six months, 27 matters were dismissed.

When they have been accepted following assessment, conduct breach complaints that allege breaches of the Local Government (Model Code of Conduct) Regulations 2021 are referred to the Principal Adjudicator for consideration. The adjudicators commenced in April and since then, 81 complaints have been allocated to them for a decision.

General complaints that allege non-compliance with the Act can be managed in a number of different ways. They are often referred to the Governance and Compliance team, but they can also be referred back to the local government for their action and attention or assigned to an investigator.

The number of new complaints peaked in February, where 70 new complaints were received. This is likely attributable to the Inspectorate being launched on 1 January and the associated media attention that came with the launch. Since then, the number of new complaints arriving in the Inspectorate has been fairly consistent.

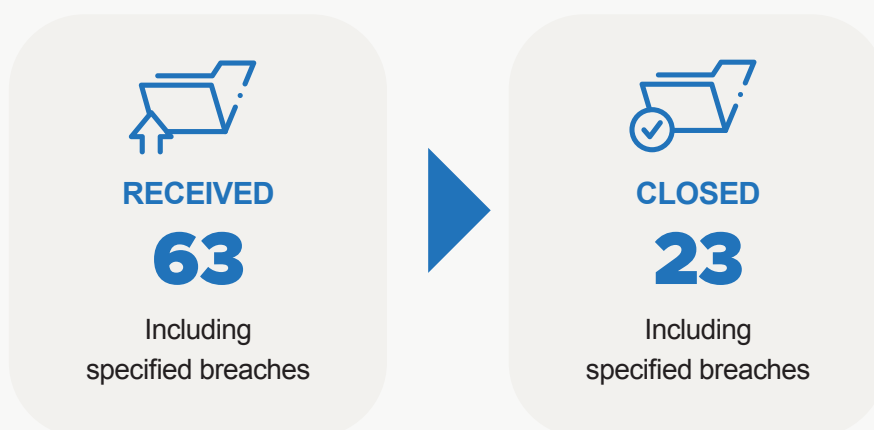
Community members made 124 complaints, including 50 conduct complaints and 53 general complaints. Council members made 114 complaints, which includes 66 conduct complaints and 18 general complaints. Employees of local governments accounted for 49 complaints, including 21 conduct complaints and 17 general complaints.

Of the issues identified in conduct breaches, regulation 18 is the most commonly alleged – where a council member uses their position improperly to cause an advantage for themselves or an advantage or a detriment to another person. This was seen in 81 complaints. The next most common allegation, regulation 17 – where a council member misuses local government resources – accounted for 41 complaints.

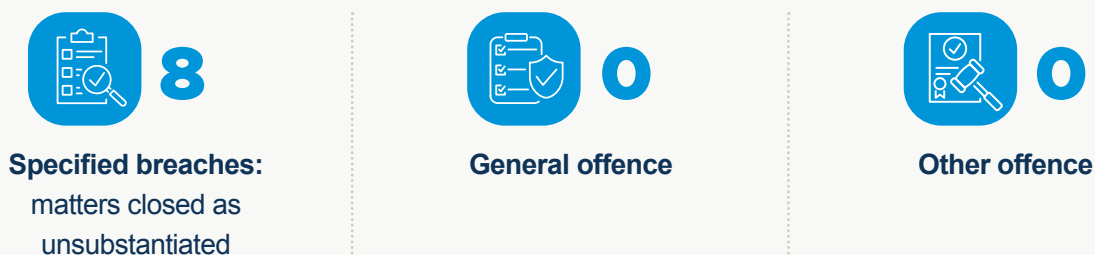
Investigations

The Inspectorate's investigative function looks into alleged breaches and offences under the *Local Government Act 1995*. The function also acts as an important deterrent, reinforcing expectations of lawful, ethical and transparent conduct by elected members and local government employees.

INVESTIGATION OVERVIEW



INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES





Insights

A total of 63 matters for investigation were received, 45 being specified breaches and 18 others not being specified breaches, reflecting the Inspectorate's ongoing role in assessing and responding to allegations of misconduct and non-compliance.

Since January, the Inspectorate finalised 33 investigation matters, 23 being specified breaches and 10 non-specified breach investigations. Investigation activity focused on assessing available evidence, ensuring procedural fairness and applying a risk-based approach to determine appropriate regulatory outcomes.

Of the matters concluded, eight specified breach investigations were found to be unsubstantiated.

No general offence or other offence matters progressed to an enforcement outcome during this period. A number of complex investigations remain active and will continue into 2026/27.

Case studies

A matter referred to an adjudicator

We received a complaint from a staff member at a local government. The staff member alleged a council member at that local government had made comments during a meeting suggesting she was incompetent and that this was a breach of Regulation 20.

Thanks to the requirements of Regulation 14G of the Local Government (Administration) Regulations 1996 and Section 5.23A of the *Local Government Act 1995* requiring all council meetings to be recorded and those recordings be made available to the public, we were able to listen to the meeting in question. This review provided sufficient evidence that the councillor had made a statement about a staff member that could have been considered a breach.

The matter was referred to the Principal Adjudicator for consideration.

A matter that was declined

The Inspector received a complaint from a community member that a councillor had declared an impartiality interest in an item but had remained in the council chamber and voted on that item. The item was quite controversial in the community and the councillor's vote was believed by the complainant to have been crucial in deciding the issue.

The complainant alleged a breach of regulation 22 – Disclosure of interests and Section 5.67 of the *Local Government Act 1995*, which requires elected members who have declared an interest in a matter to not participate in meetings.

A detailed assessment was made, including a review of the meeting minutes and the recording.

The council member did declare an impartiality interest in the matter, because they were friends with a community member who was involved in the issue. They did not declare a financial or proximity interest and it did not appear they were required to do so.

A council member is only considered to have breached regulation 22 if they have not appropriately disclosed an interest in a matter. We concluded there was no evidence to support this allegation, as it was clear from the minutes and the recording that an interest had been declared.

The specified offences relating to interests all relate only to financial or proximity interests and this is clearly defined in the Act. As the councillor in question had not declared a financial or proximity interest, then the allegation of a breach of the relevant section was also not supported by evidence.

We concluded the complainant did not fully understand the provisions in the Act and Regulations relating to interests and therefore the complaint was misconceived. As a result, the Inspector declined to accept the matter and the complainant was notified.

Connect with the Local Government Inspector



www.lginspector.wa.gov.au



contact@lginspector.wa.gov.au



Interagency referrals

Under the *Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003* the following matters were referred to the Inspector and by the Inspector to other agencies:

- Five referrals under Section 28 which were notifying the Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) of matters considered as serious misconduct.
- Two referrals under Section 40 which were matters in collaboration with or referrals between the CCC and the Local Government Inspector.
- One referral under Section 152 was for a Disclosure by the CCC or its officers.

Education and engagement

The Inspector performs education and information functions under subsection Section 8B.10 (1)(a)(v) of the *Local Government Act 1995*. Since commencing on 1 January 2026, the Inspector made 10 presentations to the local government sector at sector events and 22 presentations to individual local governments.

Three educational updates were issued to the sector addressing:

- Primary Returns on 20 January 2026.
- Compliance Audit Returns on 4 April 2026.
- Compliance Audit Returns on 15 June 2026.

The Inspectorate education and information function includes the use of Local Government Monitors as educational tools for early intervention. The Local Government Inspector appoints a Monitor to a local government to increase transparency for the Inspectorate and provide guidance to the local government. While Monitors are not investigators, they play a vital part in facilitating improvement and ensuring accountability.

The following Monitors have been appointed by the Inspector since 1 January 2026:

- Carol Adams was appointed to the City of Perth from 19 January – 19 June 2026.
- Albert Jacob was appointed to the City of Nedlands from 16 February – 14 August 2026.
- Gail McGowan was appointed to the City of South Perth from 25 February – 19 August 2026.
- Andrew Hammond was appointed to the Town of Port Hedland from 4 March – 19 August 2026.
- Dominique Mecoy was appointed to the Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale from 4 May – 2 August 2026.

Governance and compliance support to the sector is a key part of the Inspectorate's education and information function. Governance and compliance support staff track and gather information about the sector, use insights to guide education and provide advice on matters relating to the *Local Government Act 1995* and its associated regulations.

ENQUIRIES AND INTERACTIONS



426

Emails sent and received related to sector guidance and advice

53% of interactions



375

Calls to the Local Government Inspector on the public number

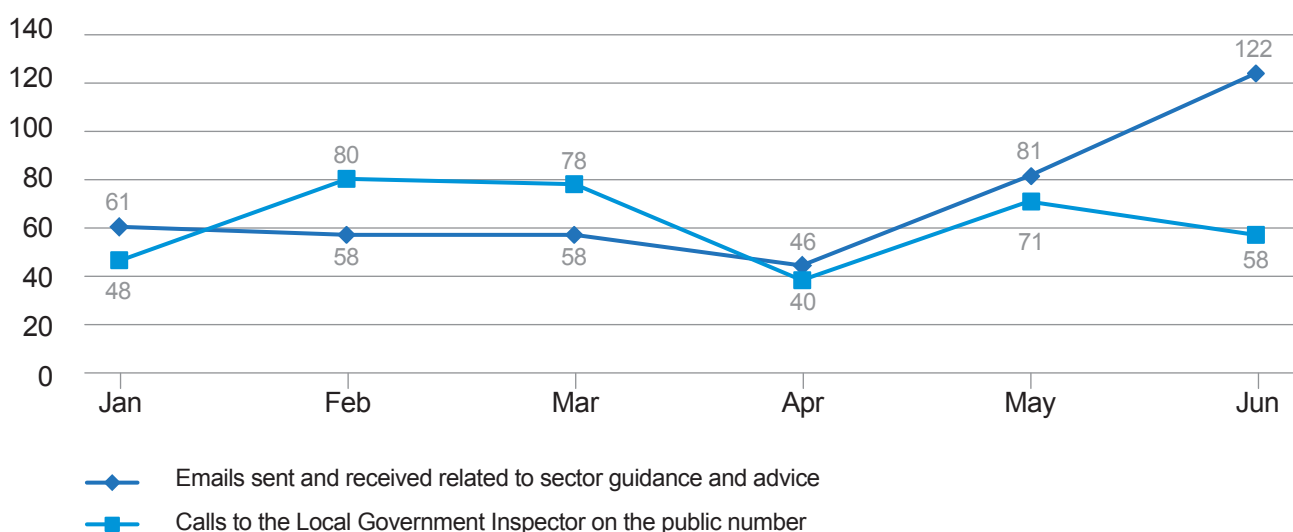
47% of interactions



801

Total interactions January – June

INTERACTIONS OVER TIME (JANUARY – JUNE)



Data represented accurate as of 30 June 2026.



426
email
enquiries

375
general
phone enquiries

Insights

A total of 426 email and 375 general phone enquiries were received in the reporting period.

The Inspectorate received enquiries throughout the reporting period from community members expressing frustration with decision-making at formal council meetings. The Inspectorate does not have statutory power to intercede in reported dissatisfaction with local government decision making, however we do examine the validity and openness of processes leading to decision-making and the information made publicly available after a meeting.

Case study

Compliance audit returns

Education is a priority for the Local Government Inspectorate. The Inspector issues updates to the sector on key educational or compliance matters. This year, changes to the Compliance Audit Return section of the Act and the Local Government (Audit) Regulations prescribe the conduct of an annual compliance audit return (CAR) process. Following statutory amendments effective 1 January 2026, regulations include 59 additional matters for audit examination, compared to previous years. This led to a new CAR portal being developed and launched in June 2026.

The Inspector issued communication to the sector on the new process, providing an update on the changes, material to assist with them and guidance on steps to take. Data from completed CARs will assist the Inspectorate in identifying common statutory non-compliance gaps and develop future education materials to uplift the sector's compliance capability.

Governance

Statutory reporting

Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 1992

The Inspector abides by the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety's Freedom of Information Policy. The Department provides FOI services to the Inspector and liaises with the community, public and media regarding FOI requests.

Three applications were received during the year and two were completed. The remaining application progressed into 2026/27.

Legislation impacting the activities of the Inspectorate

Corruption, Crime and Misconduct Act 2003

Disability Services Act 1993

Equal Opportunity Act 1984

Freedom of Information Act 1992

Financial Management Act 2006

Local Government Act 1995

Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024

Procurement Act 2020

Public Sector Management Act 1994

Public Interest Disclosure Act 2003

Salaries and Allowances Act 1975

State Records Act 2000

State Superannuation Act 2000

Work Health and Safety Act 2020

Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Act 1981 and the amended Workers' Compensation and Rehabilitation Amendment Act 1993

Public sector standards and ethical codes

No compliance issues arose during the 2025/26 year in relation to the Public Sector Standards. The Inspector monitors all complaints made to the office.

Equity, access, inclusion and substantive equality

The Inspectorate has adopted all the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety principles, standards or procedures in relation to equity, access, inclusion and substantive equality.



Financial declaration

The Local Government Inspector funding is provided and managed by the Department of Local Government, Industry Regulation and Safety (LGIRS). Amounts paid, expenditure and operating costs incurred during this reporting period are reported within the LGIRS Annual Report 2025/26. Human resources, staffing and recruiting, finance, IT and record keeping functions are supplied by the department.



Local Government Inspector

Local Government Inspector

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