

# Pacific Ombudsman Alliance ~ Network News

Fostering government integrity and good administration in the Pacific

Issue 36 July 2015



*Officers from the Ombudsman Commission of PNG (OCPNG) with staff and students from the University of Queensland following roundtable discussions about proposed changes to the OCPNG legislative framework*

## OCPNG ROUNDTABLES IN CANBERRA AND BRISBANE

The Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea, (OCPNG) in cooperation with the Australian National University and Queensland University, invited staff and students to participate in a number of consultations in relation to the legislative framework under which the OCPNG operates.

The consultations were held on 27 April at the Australian National University in Canberra and on 29 April at the University of Queensland, in Brisbane and were led by Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari.

The OCPNG is an instrument, a guardian and a defender of the Constitution of Papua New Guinea. The Members of the OCPNG, through the Review Committee, wanted to hear the views of the people of Papua New Guinea in relation to this important Review. All views and opinions were welcomed and both consultations resulted in interesting and broad-ranging discussions.

## PACIFIC GOVERNANCE AND ANTI- CORRUPTION WORKSHOP

The inaugural workshop under the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Governance and Anti-Corruption (Pacific) program took place in Suva, Fiji between 30

June and 2 July 2015. Attendees were invited from ombudsman and other integrity agencies from 11 countries across the Pacific region.

Dame Meg Taylor, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) opened the workshop.



*Dame Meg Taylor gives the workshop opening address*

Dame Meg spoke passionately about the need for all Pacific countries to work together using the Framework for Pacific Regionalism as an opportunity to acknowledge and recognise shared challenges.

The workshop heard presentations from Mr Sione Tekiteki, the Regional Governance Advisor at the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Annika Wythes from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and Ms Siteri Rabici, Principal Officer Research and Development, from the Fiji Independent Commission Against Corruption (FICAC).

The group also discussed how to identify and define corruption, and had a practical session on the mechanics of best practice complaint handling.

On the third day the group undertook a tour of FICAC at the invitation of Deputy Commissioner Mr George Westlake Langman. At FICAC, they followed the complaints process from intake to resolution. This was a useful exercise in seeing how the principles of complaint management operate in practice.



*Workshop participants at FICAC*

The Governance and Anti-Corruption (Pacific) project will continue for another two years, including further workshops with this group of participants. There will also be in-country activities designed to assist our Pacific Ombudsman Alliance members to strengthen their in-country anti-corruption networks and mechanisms.

## **APOR MANUAL**

In 2009 the Australasia-Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) – a sub-region of the International Ombudsman Institute – funded a publication containing comprehensive information of all its ombudsman members. In April 2015 POA funded an updated and revised version of this manual.

The new manual contains information about the Ombudsmen in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific region including Hong Kong and Taiwan. Each Ombudsman has a chapter setting out their functions, powers, past Ombudsmen, litigation, major reports and contact details.

### **AUSTRALASIA AND PACIFIC OMBUDSMAN REGION INFORMATION MANUAL 2015**

It is interesting to compare the changes between 2009 and 2014. Most APOR members have expanded functions and new oversight roles. It is clear that governments throughout the region are increasingly using the Ombudsmen for a range of oversight and accountability tasks.

There have also been improvements in many of the smaller offices in statistical reporting, accessibility for the public and engagement between Ombudsmen and government departments.

Two new chapters have been included since 2009 for the new Ombudsmen in Palau and Tuvalu.

The report is available at [www.ombudsman.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.gov.au) under “Publications and Media” or contact the POA Secretariat.

## **DIGITAL FORENSIC TOOLKIT**

The Office of the Auditor-General, Republic of the Marshall Islands (OAG), is looking to expand its in-house capability in the area of investigation.

In early 2014, the POA provided technical assistance to the OAG, through a computer forensics professional who played a major role in a fraud investigation that required retrieving information from confiscated computers.

Inspired by this, the Auditor-General of the Republic of the Marshall Islands proposed to POA to provide funding assistance to bring this capability in-house.

With the support of POA, the OAG was able to successfully acquire a digital forensic toolkit, comprised of a Tableau Forensic Duplicator and an Encase Forensic Software, a combination of which is in line with the global standard of digital investigation.



*Jaston Anjain, Chief of Investigations and Junior Patrick, Auditor-General, with the new equipment*

Trainings are currently underway and the OAG is looking to fully utilize this system in future investigations.

## CHIEF OMBUDSMAN VISITS AUSTRALIA

The former Chief Ombudsman of the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea, Mr Rigo Lua, visited Melbourne in March for meetings with the Victorian Ombudsman, Ms Deborah Glass; the Commissioner of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, Mr Stephen O'Bryan; and Commonwealth Ombudsman, Mr Colin Neave.

Topics covered in the meetings included modern management practices, strategic and annual plans, internal security and investigation, working with oversight agencies and working with the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance in the years ahead.

Mr Lua also attended a seminar on corruption in PNG at the Australian National University, Canberra.

## TRAINING IN SAMOA

In May the POA supported two officers from the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Michael Woodhead and Ron Colley, to facilitate Core Investigations Skills training in the Office of the Ombudsman, Samoa.

The three-day training course covered a range of topics on complaint management and investigation principles. Of particular interest to the office was the discussion on good record-keeping, and how to improve the management of information and recording of decisions.

Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma took this training opportunity to re-inforce the core values of the office to his officers; including integrity, accountability, transparency, independence and fairness.



*Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma (centre front), his staff and the training team*

Mr Colley also provided advice on strategic budgeting and business planning. The Office of the Ombudsman has taken on new roles and recruited new staff over the past year. It is now in the process of positioning itself as a vital pillar of Samoa's integrity framework.

Mr Woodhead provided advice on the current education and outreach plan, the Office of the Ombudsman State of Human Rights Report 2015, and the draft Regulations for the Special Investigations Unit.



## COOK ISLANDS PLACEMENT

Ms Sarah Murphy, Principal Advisor with the New Zealand Ombudsman's Office, spent six weeks working with the Cook Islands Ombudsman in August 2014. Ms Murphy is a lawyer and was able to provide advice to Ombudsman Tini and his staff about both specific complaints and the office's general legislative authority.

The Cook Islands Ombudsman has a number of complex functions, including a new function under the Police Act 2012 where the Police Commissioner has to report to the Ombudsman any cases of serious harm or death caused by the police.

The Cook Islands Ombudsman's office has five full-time staff to manage all its functions. Ms Murphy conducted several interactive workshops with all investigative staff on notification processes, analysis, and drafting final reports and other documents.

Ombudsman Tini thanked New Zealand Chief Ombudsman, Dame Beverley Wakem, for the placement, saying that Ms Murphy demonstrated a real appreciation of the local working environment, and a high level of professionalism.



*Sarah Murphy at the Cook Islands Ombudsman's office*

*Photo courtesy of Cook Islands News – full article at <http://www.cookislandsnews.com/national/local/item/47432-help-arrives-for-ombudsman-s-office/47432-help-arrives-for-ombudsman-s-office>*

## KIRIBATI CUSTOMER SERVICE

### LAUNCH

The POA is very pleased to support the Kiribati Public Service Office (PSO) in its customer service improvement campaign. This campaign is part of a broader PSO initiative to improve the quality of service to the public, which also involves:

- Putting in place a performance framework for public servants
- Improving the quality and rigour of recruitment into the public service
- Developing a customer service standard for all agencies
- Supporting agencies to develop and display their own customer service statement.

As part of this campaign, complaint handling is monitored and administered by Customer Service Supervisors in line Ministries, who then report back to the PSO on these complaints.

The PSO has been working hard to raise awareness about the public's right to good service from government officials. This includes noticeboards and branding of the PSO official minivan.

With POA funding, the PSO has installed a suggestion box and a photo board of all their staff, to enable easier feedback and complaints. The PSO is also using radio programmes on awareness of customer service, as it is the most efficient means of communicating with the public.



*Signage outside the PSO in Tarawa. The words ask – What is customer service? Who are your customers?*

## WORKSHOP IN TONGA

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) held a workshop in Tonga in May on Governance and Anti-Corruption for Civil Society Organisations.

Mr Clinton Parker from the Commonwealth Ombudsman's International Team was invited to the workshop as part of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's new aid-funded project working with POA members. More information on this project is in the article "Pacific Governance and Anti-Corruption Workshop".

The purpose of the Tongan workshop was two-fold. Firstly, it sought to enhance participants' understanding and awareness of corruption and the Government's anti-corruption agenda. Secondly, participants were provided a platform to discuss and share knowledge and information on possible ways to address corruption in a country context.

The group talked about corruption, what it meant for them, and what made it easy, or hard, to identify and challenge corrupt behaviour. Although everyone was willing to tackle corruption, the group raised concerns about traditional cultural practices of giving gifts and hospitality. There was lengthy debate and discussion about some of the challenges, possible solutions and stakeholder responsibilities.



*The Hon Vuna Fa'otusia, Tongan Minister for Justice stresses the importance of Anti-Corruption work in Tonga*

Mr Parker was particularly impressed with the Tongan youth representatives, who gave interesting insights into how they saw the effects of corruption in Tonga.



*Mr Pilimisolo Tamoua from the Tongan Office of the Commissioner for Public Relations answers questions about complaint issues*

Not only were the youth speakers able to recognise the challenges, they were also able to come up with positive and practical solutions to make a change. For example, networking and sharing information. Youth groups have been working on a project called '1000 stories' that describe young people's experiences.

## BOARD MEETING IN MAY

The Board of POA held a teleconference meeting on 20 May 2015.

The Board noted reports on ten activities that had been completed since the last meeting, and a further four that were in train or about to commence.

The Board also approved a number of new proposals, including assistance with developing legislation for the Ombudsman in Palau, purchasing forensic imaging equipment for the Auditor General in the republic of the Marshall Islands, and funding places for attendance at the Australian Public Sector Anti Corruption Conference (APSACC) 2015.

The Board discussed the on-going funding situation, with Australian and New Zealand aid funding to POA due to finish on 30 June 2016. The Board and the Secretariat are investigating possibilities of working more closely with other bodies, such as the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat.

The Board also moved a special resolution to record its appreciation of the contribution of NSW Ombudsman Bruce Barbour. The Board noted that the POA would not have been able to do its work without the personal commitment and support of Mr Barbour and his office.

## VANUATU PLACEMENT

Claire Roberts, an Investigation Officer from the Commonwealth Ombudsman's office, spent two weeks with the Vanuatu Ombudsman in June. This was a follow up to the successful placement in Australia of two officers, Ms Anna George and Ms Vevleo George, looking at complaint receipt, initial assessment and the recording and management of complaint information.

Ms Roberts' tasks in Vanuatu were to assist the Ombudsman's office with assessing and developing a plan in two main areas; filing / records management and complaint management. The Vanuatu Ombudsman moved to new premises in 2014, and is considering digital records management and how to better manage existing paper files.



*The old and the new – changing records management in the Vanuatu Ombudsman's office*

During the placement, Ms Roberts inspected the existing document management system and worked with the Ombudsman's office on a timeframe and process to digitise investigation and corporate

records; some of which date back to the commencement of the Ombudsman's office.

Investigation officers shared their knowledge and experience in the investigation process to develop a vision for a whole-of-office complaints management process. This process tracks individual complaints from receipt to investigation and finally to reporting by the Office publicly and in the annual report.

Ms Roberts also met with officials from other parts of the Vanuatu government to assess potential training and development opportunities. POA may be able to assist in developing and delivering training on conducting administrative investigations.

Most importantly, the relationship between the offices of the Commonwealth and Vanuatu Ombudsman was greatly developed and strengthened by this placement. Further visits are planned in the coming months.

## TONGAN COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Commissioner for Public Relations in Tonga, Mr 'Aisea Taumoepeau, visited Australia and New Zealand and met with his Ombudsman counterparts in May. Mr Taumoepeau was accompanied by his newly appointed Chief Executive Officer, Ms Linda Folaumoetu'i.



*Commissioner Taumoepeau, Mr Paul Menzies QC and Ms Folaumoetu'i in Sydney*



The Tongan Office is currently undergoing a re-building process, following Mr Taumoepeau's permanent appointment to the role. The Office is recruiting new investigative staff and has new premises. There is also legislative change in progress to change his title to "Ombudsman".

Mr Taumoepeau and Ms Folaumoetu'i met with the New South Wales, Commonwealth, Victorian and New Zealand Ombudsmen and staff. The visits included wide-ranging discussions of the different ways of managing an ombudsman's office on a broad span of issues - from staff selection to complaint databases to relationships with government agencies.



*Commissioner Taumoepeau, Victorian Ombudsman Ms Deborah Glass and Ms Folaumoetu'i in Melbourne*

## **OMBUDSMAN UPDATES**

### **Papua New Guinea**

The Chief Ombudsman of Papua New Guinea, Mr Rigo Lua, was retired from his position in May when he reached the statutory age limit. Mr Lua has requested re-appointment from the Ombudsman Appointments Committee, which has asked for further legal advice on the situation before making a decision. In the meantime, the Committee has appointed Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari as Acting Chief Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman Appointments Committee also appointed Mr Michael Dick as a new Ombudsman in Papua New Guinea.

### **New South Wales**

New South Wales Ombudsman Mr Bruce Barbour's appointment ended on 30 June 2015, after 15 years as Ombudsman. Mr Barbour was a co-founder of the POA, and has been an invaluable source of assistance, advice, and guidance for the network and its members.



*Bruce Barbour at the POA members' meeting in Wellington, New Zealand*

The POA would like to thank Mr Barbour for his friendship and support, and wish him the very best for the future.

Former Commonwealth Ombudsman and Australian Information Commissioner Prof. John McMillan will take over from Mr Barbour as NSW Ombudsman from August 2015. Prof. McMillan will take up the role in an acting capacity for a period of two years.

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Australian Public Sector Anti-Corruption Conference (APSACC) 2015**

APSACC 2015 is a premier biennial event hosted by Australia's leading anti-corruption agencies – the Crime and Corruption Commission (QLD), the Independent Commission Against Corruption (NSW) and the Corruption and Crime Commission (WA). Each of these organisations has its own charter to

combat corruption and official misconduct and help raise public sector integrity.

To be held in Brisbane, Australia the program commences with pre-conference workshops on 17 November 2015 followed by a two-day conference program on 18 and 19 November 2015 featuring Australian and international speakers in plenary sessions and four concurrent streams.

For further information please visit the APSACC 2015 [website](#).

### Secretariat changes

The current Director of the POA Secretariat, Lynley Ducker, is leaving the office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman at the end of July 2015 after six years in her role as Director, International and Territories. The POA would like to thank Lynley for her hard work and leadership of the Secretariat over the past years, and wishes her well in her future career.



*Lynley Ducker at the POA members' meeting in Adelaide, South Australia*

## POA WEBSITE

For more information about the POA, its activities and helpful publications and resources check out the website [www.pacificombudsman.org](http://www.pacificombudsman.org).

## CONTACT US

Articles and submissions are welcome. To submit items for publication, or any other communication, please write to us at:

*Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Secretariat  
Commonwealth Ombudsman  
GPO Box 442  
Canberra ACT 2601  
AUSTRALIA*  
or Email: [pacific@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:pacific@ombudsman.gov.au)

Previous issues of *Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Network News* are stored electronically and are available at [www.pacificombudsman.org](http://www.pacificombudsman.org).

*Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Network News* is supported by Australian and New Zealand aid.