
WAKATANGATA

APOR E-NEWS

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News and views from integrity organisations in the Pacific and Australasia



Welcome to this edition of *Waka Tangata*

Kia ora, Talofa lava, Halo, Hello, Kia orana, Alo keta, Greetings fellow APOR Members,

There's no doubt in my mind that the first half of 2025 has been a mix of joyous and sad occasions as there's been a few changes in the APOR world.

A sad time for us was the retirement of our good friend, colleague and the former Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand, Peter Boshier. Peter was a pillar of wisdom, fortitude, mana and exemplary leadership at a local, regional and international level. We wish him and his lovely wife Sheryl well in their future endeavours.

At the end of March, we warmly welcomed and embraced incoming Chief Ombudsman for New Zealand, John Allen, into APOR, and we anticipate a mutually enriching relationship going forward. Recently, Ombudsman Jack Chan of Hong Kong was appointed as the new APOR Regional Director, filling the vacancy left by Peter Boshier. We congratulate Jack on his new role. Equally pleasing, was the news that Ombudsman Hamlison Bulu has been reappointed as the Vanuatu Ombudsman. We extend warm congratulations to Hamlison and wish him a successful extended tenure. Bevan Warner has also been appointed as the Ombudsman for Western Australia. Congratulations to Bevan and welcome to APOR!

I am thrilled to inform you all that my wish to consult with the five remote islands that make up the northern group of the Cook Islands was successfully delivered from 5 to 9 May on the establishment of the National Human Rights Institution within the Office of the Ombudsman. I believe this to be an important initiative to build trust, strengthen voices,

and initiate engagement with these communities and these were the exact results gained during this visit. We braved the rough seas to reach the remote islands, both by air and boat to have a much-needed face-to-face dialogue.

In this edition, you'll see several other worthwhile and innovative initiatives that have taken place throughout the region – just some of the stories that you will read include:

- New South Wales Ombudsman has added an AI Assistant to their website. This enables queries about the office's functions to be answered and supporting information on how to submit a complaint to be provided 24/7
- NSW also launched a confidential and anonymous Whistleblower Support Hotline for NSW public officials who have either reported, or are thinking about reporting, serious wrongdoing in the state's public sector
- Samoa's Office of the Ombudsman continues to run a radio and television talk show as a key part of their commitment to raise public awareness about the various roles and core services of their Office
- Victoria's Ombudsman has published a new edition of the resource: *Good practice guide: Complaint handling for Victorian public sector organisations* to help the public sector handle complaints more effectively
- The first International Ombudsman Summit, which attracted around 140 participants from about 40 countries and regions across six continents was hosted by the Office of the Ombudsman, Hong Kong SAR, China.
- An important event coming up is the 37th APOR Conference. This year, it will be hosted by the Control Yuan of Taiwan in Taipei from 3 to 5 September with the theme *Diverse Practices and Developments in Ombudsperson and Human Rights Work*.

Happy reading!

Kia Manuia e te katoatoa.

Warmest regards,

Niki Rattle

APOR President

Cook Islands Ombudsman

Cook Islands

Building Trust, Strengthening Voices: The Ombudsman's community engagement initiative

"The Cook Islands Ombudsman plays a vital role in fostering trust and accountability in the country's public sector, ensuring that government agencies serve the people with integrity and transparency," said Ombudsman Niki Rattle. Reflecting this commitment, the Ombudsman Office delivered four targeted workshops in April and May 2025—engaging community representatives, traditional leaders, and the Cook Islands Police Service—as part of a broader strategy to strengthen accountability and empower communities.

The sessions were aimed to improve understanding of complaint mechanisms, reduce barriers to lodging complaints, and build sustainable relationships with key stakeholders.

They focused on the Ombudsman's role, cultural and societal barriers to raising complaints, and how to make an effective complaint. Participants explored real-life scenarios and shared insights from their communities. "These sessions created space for honest conversations about the barriers people face when raising concerns," said Compliance Lead, Destiny Tara Tolevu. "They helped shift perceptions—showing that complaints, when used constructively, can lead to meaningful change."

Police sessions focused on strengthening mutual understanding of institutional roles, responsibilities, and shared commitments to public service. Officers from across ranks participated in open, confidential discussions designed to build trust and encourage peer-level dialogue. "Our sessions with Police have been a valuable step towards building mutual understanding and creating a more responsive approach to handling complaints and information," said Investigations Lead, Metua Taurarii.



Pictured: The Cook Islands Police service attending one of the targeted workshops facilitated by the Cook Islands Ombudsman team

These workshops represent a step towards more open and responsive governance, helping to strengthen trust between institutions and the communities they serve.

Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)

Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI)

Following the annual meeting held in Geneva, we are pleased to have the opportunity to share our experiences and ideas with our NHRI colleagues from around the world. With human rights, international law, and the multi-lateral system facing mounting pressures across the globe, NHRIs from all regions convened to strengthen cooperation and develop strategic approaches to promote and protect human rights amid complex global challenges.

This event was co-hosted with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and co-funded by the European Union. Participants examined strategies to combat gender-based violence, implement legal reforms, challenge stereotypes through education, and strengthen institutional frameworks for gender inclusion. The conference culminated in the adoption of an Outcome Statement that reaffirms the urgency of countering pushbacks on gender rights, strengthening accountability through NHRIs, and upholding international human rights commitments.



Pictured: Acting Ombudsman, Maualaivao Pepe Seiuli and Director, NHRI, Ulugia Rose Toese attend the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) Annual Meeting

Tanumalala and Oloamanu Prison Visit – Special Investigation Unit

On January 31 2025, the Special Investigations Unit (SIU) of the Office of the Ombudsman conducted a special site visit to Tanumalala and Oloamanu Prisons, for complaint box

checks and inspections. It was also time to touch base with management on specific administrative issues. This visit reaffirms our commitment to ensuring transparency, accountability, and the protection of human rights within correctional facilities.



Pictured: Samoa Ombudsman Office staff with Tanumalala and Oloamanu Prison staff during a visit and inspection

Radio 2AP Ombudsman Office Awareness Talk Show

As an essential part of our awareness efforts nationwide, a radio and television talk show with TV9 and Radio 2AP has been a regular commitment for us. Senior Engagement Officer, Mamea Jerry Ah Kee, Principal SIU Investigation Officer, Leota Taalo Leota, and Principal Multimedia Engagement Officer, Michael Tamanikaiyaroi represented our office this time around, to raise public awareness about the various roles of the office and the core services we provide.

The team also used the opportunity to announce upcoming events like their outreach visit to Savai'i, where they will be at the Salelelologa Market for two working days. The aim of this visit is to assist the public with relevant information about the Ombudsman's services including complaint handling and human rights matters.



Pictured: Senior ECU Officer, Afoa Gagau Jerry Ah Kee with Principal SIU Investigation Officer, Leota Ta'alo Leota and Principal Multimedia Engagement Officer, Michael Tamanikaiyaroi

Ombudsman New Zealand

Farewell and Welcome to the Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand

After two terms as New Zealand's Chief Ombudsman, Peter Boshier left office on Friday 28 March, 2025. To farewell Peter, an official event was held at Parliament, hosted by the Speaker of the House, and with many dignitaries, international Ombudsmen colleagues, family and friends in attendance.

Before he departed, Peter released a report 'Reflections on the Official Information Act'. The report reflected on his nine years in office and was published alongside seven official information practice reports about organisations meeting their timeliness obligations under the Official Information Act 1982.

Read [the media release](#), [the 'reflections' report](#), and the [seven practice reports](#)

The Chief Ombudsman also provided a final report to Parliament upon leaving office. [The way I see it: Report by the Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier, December 2015–March 2025](#) reflects Peter's personal thoughts on his time as Chief Ombudsman.

The office thanks Peter for his service and wish him all the very best for the future.

A warm welcome to New Zealand's 9th Chief Ombudsman: John Allen

John Allen's term as the new Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand began on 31 March 2025.

John's background comprises senior roles in law, business, and chief executive leadership roles at several large organisations. John has also served across a diverse range of boards in many sectors – including education, finance, technology, arts and culture and health and disability – for more detail see John's profile here:

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/about-ombudsman/who-ombudsman>



More recent and notable publications, reports and updates

Strategies

- **Te Ao Māori strategy - 'Te Rautaki Māori a Kaitiaki Mana Tangata'** was released in December 2024 and is underpinned by the threads of Te Tiriti, tikanga Māori, and values drawn from Te Ao Māori. This strategy marks a new phase in the office's commitment to equity, cultural responsiveness, and building trusted relationships with tangata whenua. [Read Te Rautaki Māori a Kaitiaki Mana Tangata](#)
- **International Development and Engagement (IDE) Strategy** – an updated version of the IDE Strategy was published in December 2024 to guide the international work of the Ombudsman New Zealand in the period January 2024 to June 2026. [Read the new strategy](#) and [a news item about the strategy](#).

Places of detention – reports

- **Aged care monitoring observations 2021 to 2024** – in March 2025, the Ombudsman released a thematic report summarising insights from visits made to secure aged care facilities between 1 July 2021 and 30 June 2024. The Chief Ombudsman was concerned that people can be placed in secure aged care facilities in New Zealand without the proper legal authority. [Read the media release](#), [the aged care monitoring report](#) and [the 'at a glance' snapshot of the report](#) – which shows what is working well, along with areas for improvement.
- **Human rights abuses at an Auckland Prison unit** – this report released in December 2024, outlines serious concerns about the Prisoners of Extreme Risk Unit (PERU) at Auckland Prison. The report says the conditions and treatment in the PERU are cruel, inhuman and degrading, and in breach of the United Nations Convention against Torture. [Read the report](#) and [the media release](#)

New Zealand's international engagement



Pictured: Chief Ombudsman NZ Peter Boshier and the Indonesian Ombudsman Chairman, Mokhammad Najih

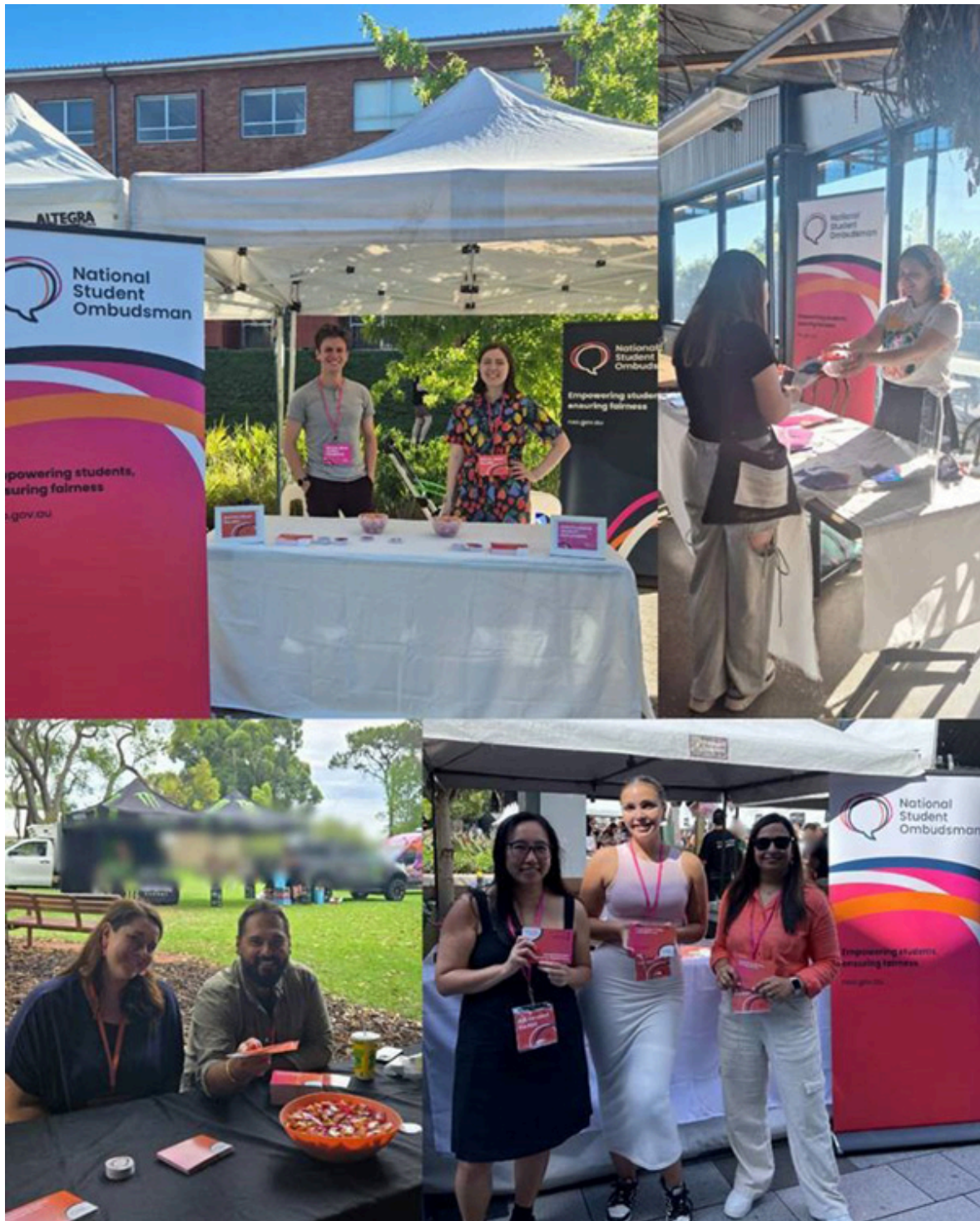
- Building good governance in Southeast Asia – in February, the Ombudsman New Zealand signed a new bilateral arrangement with the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. The arrangement will see a joint technical working group set up to share knowledge, and expertise, and allow both offices to work together on areas of mutual interest.
- Supporting freedom of information in Fiji – in December, the Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand took part in a conference led by UNESCO on global and regional trends on the right to information, showcasing its best practice work to oversee and enforce New Zealand’s official information legislation. These learnings will assist Fiji in supporting a culture of transparency in alignment with the Fiji Information Act 2018.
- UN adopts resolution recognising role of Ombudsmen – in late 2024 the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution on the role of Ombudsman and mediator institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law. The UN Resolution is an important tool in securing worldwide recognition for the work of Ombudsman and mediator institutions as well as the important role of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) as the global network of Ombudsmen. [Read the resolution](#)

Commonwealth and ACT Ombudsman, Australia

National Student Ombudsman (NSO) role

The Commonwealth Ombudsman continued its core work in helping people and improving government. On 1 February 2025, our new role as National Student Ombudsman (NSO)

commenced. The NSO takes complaints from university students about their higher education provider's policies, procedures and decisions. We received our first complaint just 15 minutes after opening and 100 days on, we've now handled 1,155 contacts from students.



Pictured: The NSO team has travelled across the country, attending university orientation events and student-facing activities

Ombudsman Republic Indonesia (ORI) visits

In May 2025, our Ombudsman welcomed three Ombudsman Republic Indonesia (ORI) Ombudsmen to Australia as part of our continued partnership. The partnership between the Office and ORI was established in 2000 and is one of the longest-running relationships between an Australian and an Indonesian government agency. The Office also delivered

online whistleblowing training and continues to support ORI to build a mediation-training package for their staff.



Pictured: ORI Ombudsman, Robertus Na Endi Jaweng, Commonwealth Ombudsman, Iain Anderson, ORI Ombudsman, Dadan Suparjo Suharmawijaya and ORI Ombudsman, Hery Susanto.

Office reports produced

Our Office continued to produce reports from investigations into systemic issues, under specific Ombudsman roles and as the Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM).

- In March 2025, the Office published the report [Ombudsman Oversight of Covert Electronic Surveillance](#), which covers the Ombudsman's findings from 54 inspections conducted between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024 across 22 Commonwealth, State and Territory law enforcement and integrity agencies.
- In May 2025, the Office as the ACT Ombudsman published the report [What's fair? Collecting historical debts](#) about the ACT Revenue Office and the processes it was using to collect land tax debts that were between 6 to 17 years old.
- In May 2025, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (the Office) also released the [Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism Annual Report 2023-24](#).

New South Wales Ombudsman

50th anniversary

This year our Office is celebrating 50 years since the appointment of the first Ombudsman, Kenneth Smithers CBE, and the start of independent oversight of public administration in NSW.

Part of our [website](#) has been dedicated to the foundation story of the NSW Ombudsman and a history report capturing key changes and impact over time will be published soon.



Pictured: Steve Panozzo, 'The Public Lamp of Scrutiny' [cartoon], 1994. First reproduced NSW Ombudsman Annual Report 1993–94. © Steve Panozzo, courtesy: the artist.

Launch of Whistleblower Support Hotline

In November 2024, our dedicated phone line was up and running for NSW public officials who have reported, or are thinking about reporting, serious wrongdoing in the NSW public sector. The Hotline is confidential, independent and can be accessed anonymously.

Hotline operators provide information about ways to make public interest disclosures and what to expect from the process of making a report. Information is also provided about protections for whistleblowers in NSW and where to find further help if needed.

Access further information about the Hotline here: [Support for whistleblowers](#)

Mandatory disease testing report

The NSW Ombudsman monitors the *Mandatory Disease Testing Act 2021* (NSW), which commenced in July 2022. In February 2025, the Ombudsman tabled the first report on the mandatory disease testing (MDT) scheme in Parliament – setting out observations of the first 18 months of operation. Key observations included that:

- the majority of applications were made where there was no real risk of transmission to a worker
- statutory protections for third parties subject to applications were ineffective
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were disproportionately impacted.

The Ombudsman recommended the Government consider whether the MDT Act should continue. A further 60 recommendations were aimed at clarifying problematic aspects of the MDT legislation, and ensuring the scheme is administered as fairly and transparently as possible.

Read the [Mandatory disease testing in NSW: Monitoring the operation and administration of the Mandatory Disease Testing Act 2021 report](#) and watch the [video](#).

Aboriginal programs oversight

Since 2014, the NSW Ombudsman has been responsible for monitoring and assessing OCHRE – Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment; the NSW

Government's flagship plan for Aboriginal affairs.

In January 2025, the Ombudsman tabled the report: *OCHRE 2024: Current status and future direction*. The special report to Parliament detailed the Ombudsman's assessment of OCHRE over the past 10 years, its current status, and perspectives offered by Aboriginal communities on directions for the future.

While OCHRE initiatives appear to have contributed to positive change in communities, by focusing on strengths and ensuring government collaborates with Aboriginal leaders and communities, the report identified significant areas for improvement and made several recommendations to strengthen initiatives.

A core recommendation was made that the NSW Government unequivocally recommit to OCHRE as the state's overarching plan for Aboriginal affairs. This should include embedding OCHRE's principles into legislation, strengthening governance and accountability mechanisms, and ensuring sustained investment in its initiatives.

Read the [OCHRE 2024: Current status and future direction report](#) and [Community guide](#), and watch the [video](#).

Aboriginal child protection functions complaint handling system review

In November 2024, the NSW Ombudsman tabled the report: Review of the DCJ Complaint System in respect of its Aboriginal Child Protection functions.

The report followed a comprehensive review of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) system for handling complaints from, or involving, Aboriginal families in the child protection system.

The review focused on understanding DCJ's complaint handling system, the foundational elements underpinning it and how well it is operating in practice. Several issues were identified with the system, which was found to be failing to adequately cater for Aboriginal complainants.

The NSW Ombudsman made recommendations to improve DCJ's complaint handling system at a foundational level, starting with a recommendation that DCJ develop a plan for overarching system reform.

Key recommendations also included improving accessibility and better managing the risk of detrimental action against complainants, establishing a centralised complaint investigation function, better integrating policies and procedures, adopting fit-for-purpose case management system and data analysis functions, and improving complaint resolution practices.

Read the [Review of the DCJ Complaint System in respect of its Aboriginal Child Protection functions report](#) and [Community summary](#), and watch the [video](#).

AI assistant

In February 2025, an AI Assistant went live on the NSW Ombudsman website. The online tool is always available to respond to queries about the office's functions and provide supporting information on how to submit a complaint.

The AI Assistant is accessible from every page on the website. Access further information here: [About our AI Assistant](#)

Recent publications and reports

- [NSW Ombudsman Annual report 2023-24](#) and [video](#)
 - [Oversight of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 Annual Report 2023-24](#) and [video](#)
 - [Supporting youth in out-of-home care \(OOHC\) - Digital toolkit](#)
 - [Casebook January 2025: Investigations and complaint-handling case studies](#) and [video](#)
 - [Effective Complaint Management Guidelines](#), [video](#), [information sheets](#) and [eLearning](#)
 - [Apologies guide](#) and [video](#)
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Ombudsman Western Australia

New Ombudsman appointed

Bevan Warner has been appointed as the Ombudsman for Western Australia, and started on 9 June. For the last seven years, Bevan has been the Chief Executive Officer of Launch Housing in Melbourne, a community housing organisation dedicated to ending homelessness. At the same time, he was director of a number of housing and homelessness organisations. Prior to this, Bevan was the Managing Director of Victoria Legal Aid from 2008 to 2018 and General Manager of Legal Aid Western Australia for 11 years. Deputy Ombudsman, David Robinson, who has been acting in the Ombudsman's role since February 2024, has returned to his substantive position.

Significant workload increase

In the January to April 2025 period, we experienced a significant increase in workload compared to the same period in 2024:

- 35% increase in complaints received
- 7% increase in complaints investigated
- 184% increase in notifications of child abuse under the Reportable Conduct Scheme

Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme report tabled

On 30 April 2025, the Ombudsman's report, [Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme: A review of systems to protect children](#) was tabled in the Western Australian Parliament. The report examined the compliance of organisations with legislative requirements to have systems in place under Western Australia's Reportable Conduct Scheme. The Scheme compels heads of organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children to notify the Ombudsman of allegations and convictions of child abuse by their employees and then investigate the allegations. The Ombudsman oversees these investigations. The Scheme covers organisations in a range of settings including schools, religious institutions, childcare centres, hospitals, detention centres and out-of-home care. Deputy Ombudsman, David Robinson, said: "Some organisations had made significant progress in implementing the systems required by the Scheme, however, further

work is required with only 39% of organisations reporting that they had implemented all required systems.”

Ombudsman Victoria

Investigation report tabled: Support when children are sexually abused at school

*** Warning: This update discusses child sexual assault and may be distressing to some readers. ***

In February, the Victorian Ombudsman tabled an investigation report: [Support when children are sexually abused at school: The Department of Education's response to abuse in a Victorian primary school](#).

The investigation identified systemic gaps in the Department of Education's policies, procedures and practices in managing child sexual abuse and found significant flaws in how the department responded to two incidents.

The report made four recommendations, including better support for child victim-survivors, their families, principals and more emphasis on a 'no wrong door' approach for allegations of child abuse.

New edition – Good practice guide: Complaint handling for Victorian public sector organisations

To help the public sector handle complaints more effectively, the Victorian Ombudsman has published a new edition of the [Good practice guide: Complaint handling for Victorian public sector organisations](#). This second edition aligns with the revised Australian Standard for complaint handling.

The guide steps through creating the right conditions for complaint handling, receiving and responding to complaints effectively, and learning from complaints data to improve systems and practices. It is accompanied by a downloadable model policy template and sample outcome letter.

Strategic plan 2025–29

'Victoria is fair' is the vision that underpins the Victorian Ombudsman's new [Strategic plan 2025–29](#) that launched in March. This vision distils the office's aspiration for a fair Victoria where human rights are protected and promoted; people are kept at the centre of decision-making, and public bodies are open and accountable.

The plan also identifies four strategic themes to guide the work of the Office in the years ahead – prevention, oversight, communities, and people and systems.





The Victorian Ombudsman has tabled an investigation report examining responses to child sexual assault in a Victorian primary school.



The second edition of the Good practice guide: Complaint handling for Victorian public sector organisations aligns with the revised Australian Standard for complaint handling.



The Victorian Ombudsman has published its new [Strategic plan 2025-29](#), underpinned by a new vision: 'Victoria is fair'.

Office of the Ombudsman, Hong Kong SAR, China

Strengthening ties - fostering international cooperation

Since assuming Office in April 2024, Ombudsman, Jack Chan, led a delegation to attend the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) World Conference in The Hague, Netherlands, in May and the Board of Directors Meeting of the Asian Ombudsman Association in Istanbul, Turkey, in June last year. In August, Mr Chan also visited the National Commission of Supervision in Beijing.

In December, we hosted the first International Ombudsman Summit, which attracted around 140 participants from about 40 countries and regions across six continents. This

Summit provided an important platform to exchange experiences and best practices with international counterparts.

To further enhance collaboration, the Office signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Cooperation with representatives from eight countries and regions across five continents, including Curaçao, Hawaii (the United States), Indonesia, Korea, Macao, Ontario (Canada), Slovakia, and Zambia.

In May this year, Mr Chan led a delegation on an official visit to Morocco. As Chairman of the Standing By-laws Committee and a member of the UN and International Cooperation Working Group, he attended the IOI's Board of Directors' Meeting and exchanged views with fellow IOI members.



Pictured: IOI Standing Bylaw Working Group

Mr Chan has recently been appointed as APOR Director. The Office expresses its sincere gratitude for APOR members' trust and support, and we are eager to collaborate with you all to strengthen public administration oversight and ombudsmanship.

Our Office is committed to fostering international networking by regularly organising various events and activities. We will keep members informed about upcoming events and activities.

Control Yuan of Taiwan



The 37th APOR Conference, 3 to 5 September 2025

The Control Yuan of Taiwan will host the 37th APOR Conference in Taipei from 3-5 September 2025, under the theme *Diverse Practices and Developments in Ombudsperson and Human Rights Work*.

With a commitment to promoting good governance and strengthening human rights values, the 37th APOR Conference will bring together ombudspersons from across Australasia and the Pacific, along with leading experts and academics from Taiwan and around the world. This event will serve as a platform for sharing insights and experiences, encouraging meaningful dialogue, and fostering regional and international connection and collaboration.

Details of the agenda are as follows:

- Day 1 to 3 September (Wednesday) Afternoon:
The 37th APOR Members' Meeting and Welcome Reception
- Day 2 to 4 September (Thursday):
A full-day International Conference on *Diverse Practices and Developments in Ombudsperson and Human Rights Work*, featuring:
 - a keynote speech
 - three seminar sessions on the following topics:
 - 'How to increase citizens' awareness of the work and mission of ombudspersons'
 - 'The Practice and Implementation of the National Preventive Mechanism'
 - 'Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law.'
 - a gala dinner in the evening.
- Day 3 to 5 September (Friday):
Optional cultural programs will be arranged, providing distinguished guests with a unique opportunity to experience Taiwan's distinctive culture.

The Control Yuan warmly invites all APOR members to participate in this landmark event. Stay tuned for further updates. For inquiries and registration, please contact the International Affairs Committee at iac@cy.gov.tw

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi, engari he toa takitini
My success is not my own, but from many others
