



Issue number 52

Accessing official information during the 2026 Election

In less than three months, New Zealanders go to the polls to decide who they want to lead this country. They will be selecting who will represent them, and who should be making the laws and policies that will affect our lives in the future.

It is now even more important that potential voters get official information as quickly as possible, and that information be accurate and reliable.

Growing reliance on social media as a source of news creates a risk that people may not be getting the big picture or a contestable view.

My team and I are rolling out a suite of initiatives to ensure government ministers and agencies pay extra close attention to their obligations under the Official Information Act (OIA) in the next few months.

We want ministers and agencies to work swiftly and transparently, responding with urgency, when they receive requests for official information so the public can make informed decisions on election day: November 7th.

For the OIA to work well, people requesting information must also play their part. That means requests are reasonable and as clear and targeted as possible.

We will be doing our part too. If anyone is unhappy about the way their request has been handled, contact us. We are geared up to deal with these complaints urgently.

By reviewing and investigating complaints, we help New Zealanders gain access to reliable information from official sources so they can test it against what they are being told on social media.

Information and resources to help the public, agencies, and ministers are now available on the Ombudsman website and are being updated regularly. You can see how we are tracking in our oversight of complaints about requests for information from ministers.

John Allen

Chief Ombudsman

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Serious failures at Ward 10A, Wakari Hospital



An inpatient forensic unit for adults with intellectual disabilities at Dunedin's Wakari Hospital has been closed and an independent investigation is underway following the Ombudsman's intervention and media coverage.

OPCAT inspectors identified serious failures in Ward 10A, including evidence of prolonged environmental restraint and long-term seclusion of patients.

The Ombudsman called on the Ministry of Health and Health NZ to immediately address potential human rights abuses at the ward. He will be closely monitoring progress and actions taken by both agencies.

[Read](#)

Calls for strengthened commitment from health agencies

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New resources for school administrators

We've worked with Rāroa Normal Intermediate, Karori Normal School, and GovHub (part of the New Zealand School Boards Association) to develop videos and a guide to help school board members and principals better manage official information requests and complaints. The new resources cover dealing with official information requests, effective complaint handling and good record keeping practices. They also explain how we are here to help.

Get on top of complaints handling and OIA requests

Watch

Watch

Read



Short term placements programme

Ombudsman staff from Thailand, Samoa, Cook Islands, and Tonga, joined us for two weeks of learning and events.

They buddied up with our investigators, met with core public sector agencies, toured Parliament, and saw the Treaty of Waitangi. They helped us connect with diaspora communities through meetings with community

Short Term Placement programme graduates with their certificates



Arran Jones, Chief Executive of Aroturuki Tamariki, Dr Claire Achmad, and John Allen

leaders, appearing on Samoa Radio, delivering bilingual presentations for us at events, and sharing insights from their work.

The short-term placements were sponsored by the Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship Programme and Vocational Short Term Training Scholarships.

Farewell to Children's Commissioner

Dr Claire Achmad recently finished her term as Children's Commissioner at Mana Mokopuna.

Mana Mokopuna is one of the oversight agencies of the Oranga Tamariki system, along with the Ombudsman, and Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor.

A passionate advocate for the rights of children and young people, we have enjoyed working alongside Claire and wish her all the best for the future.

We look forward to working with new commissioner, Jane Searle, who began her five-year term on 1 August.



Dr Claire Achmad, Arran Jones, and John Allen, were among the Interagency Hub visitors

Interagency hub

Representatives of the three Oranga Tamariki oversight agencies visited the newly established Interagency Hub (a multi-agency child-protection initiative that supports children of solo parents going to prison) in July.

The hub aims to provide a 'safety net' for at risk children.

It is led by Oranga Tamariki and includes Corrections NZ, Ministry of Education NZ, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, New Zealand Police and Ministry of Social Development NZ.



Former Chief Ombudsman, Sir Peter Boshier

Honorary IOI life membership

The International Ombudsman Institution (IOI) acknowledged Sir Peter Boshier's contribution to international development work with an Honorary Life Membership.

During his tenure as Chief Ombudsman, Sir Peter was Vice President of the IOI, Regional President of Australasia and the Pacific, Chair of the IOI By-Laws Review Committee, as well as a member of the UN Working Group. His contribution helped shape the strategic direction of the IOI and its structure.

Out and about



High school students from the lower North Island visited our Wellington office in July as part of the 2026 Strengthening Democracy project to learn about the role of the Ombudsman



We were at Te Herenga Waka | Victoria University of Wellington and Waipapa Taumata Rau | University of Auckland career open days to share information about our work with students



Te Rōpū Kaitiua at Te Tahawai Marae, located in Tāmaki Makaurau, invited us to participate in their ongoing kōrero about improving outcomes for rangatahi, in June

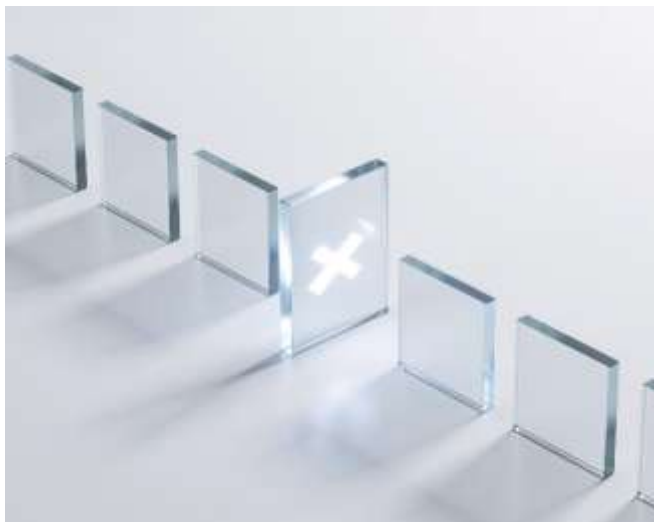


Our General Manager for Outreach and Engagement, Alex Schröder, shared our many guides, resources, and free online training materials with 'ACE' Adult Community Educators at their conference in May

Upcoming events

We are steadily working our way around the motu. Find out where we will be next by following us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

In short



PM's OIA response unreasonable

The Prime Minister should have identified and released a climate briefing note and related information to the Environmental Law Initiative when requested.

[Read](#)



Protecting media sources

Radio New Zealand was entitled to refuse requests for information on how two news articles were generated, including communications between the reporter and the source.

[Read](#)



Whistleblowing less likely

A third of whistleblowers lost their job, according to the latest nationwide survey. Fewer people are likely to report serious wrongdoing in their workplace than last year.

[Read](#)



Wāhine Māori in the criminal justice system

Wāhine Māori comprised 65% of the total female prison population, and 69% of those on remand, in April. We look at ways to address this disproportionality.

[Read](#)

Prisons not suitable for people with complex needs

People with complex mental health needs or intellectual disabilities are being held in prisons as specialist services are not available. We highlight the consequences for those in detention, and on remand.

[Read](#)

Submission on Corrections Amendment Bill

The Department of Corrections is exploring changes to the definition and management of 'extreme threat prisoners'. Our feedback is that the amendments don't resolve concerns raised by the Ombudsman.

[Read](#)



Repeated, multiple and extensive OIA requests

Four case notes about organisations' decisions to refuse official information requests using the 'vexatious' clause are now available.

[Read](#)

More news

Keep up to date with all our news.

[Read](#)

More resources

See all our guides, training modules, case notes, and other resources.

[Read](#)

Please also check out our social media channels for the latest news updates



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Ombudsman
Kaitiaki Mana Tangata

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