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WAKATANGATA

APOR E-NEWS

ISSUE 13: DECEMBER 2024

**News and views from integrity organisations in the Australasia and Pacific
Ombudsman Region (APOR)**

In this edition:

- Message from APOR President Cook Islands Ombudsman Niki Rattle
- New Taxation Ombudsman appointed in Australia
- Complaints resolution continues to be a focus with many Ombudsmen having record-breaking and high numbers of people coming to them for help.



Welcome to this edition of *Waka Tangata*

Kia orana colleagues and friends,

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to present to you this final edition of our APOR E-News *Waka Tangata* for 2024 as we anticipate the incoming year with all its good tidings. As we

approach this annual milestone, we commit to fostering democracy, human rights and the rule of law as well as strengthening our positive regional progress for the benefit of people in our nations.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this edition, on your behalf, I wish to farewell two of our colleagues from the APOR region.

Firstly, I acknowledge Chris Field who served as Western Australian Ombudsman for 17 years and was also President of the International Ombudsman Institute since 2021.

Secondly, I extend our sincere thanks and farewell to our former colleague Ombudsman Hamlison Bulu of Vanuatu for his excellent progress in developing Ombudsman services over five years. I wish them both well in their future endeavours.

Warmest regards,

Niki Rattle

APOR President

Cook Islands Ombudsman

Ofisa o le Komesina Sulufaiga Ombudsman Samoa Commonwealth

Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) Biennial Conference Report

The Samoa Office of the Ombudsman recently hosted the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) Biennial Conference on October 17-18, 2024.

The purpose of this conference was to hand over the forum's chairmanship and formulate a Declaration that will set the forum's strategic direction for the next two years. Acting Samoa Ombudsman Maualaivao Pepe Seiuli is CFNHRI's new chair for 2024-2026; this role was handed over from Hon. Providence Umurangi, Chairperson of Rwanda's National Commission for Human Rights.

The theme of the conference was "A sustainable culture of human rights towards a resilient common future." This is in alignment with the general CHOGM theme of resilience, sustainability and a shared future.



Pictured: Group photo at the CFNHRI Biennial Conference 2024

Presentations and panel discussions were given throughout the conference with representations from different areas of expertise on:

- Pillar 1: Resilient democratic institutions that uphold democracy, human rights and rule of law;
- Pillar 2: Resilient environment to combat climate change;
- Pillar 3: Resilient economies that support recovery and prosperity; and
- Pillar 4: Resilient societies that empower individuals for a peaceful and productive life.

At the closing of the conference, the Apia Declaration drafted by the Samoa Ombudsman Office/NHRI and the Drafting Committee of the forum was finalised and passed by unanimous vote of NHRIs present.

For more information and photos from the event, visit these Facebook links:

- [Read the day 1 post](#)
- [Read the day 2 post](#)

Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea

Over the past 12 months, three major achievements stand out for the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea.

Ombudsman Commission's law amendments certified by Parliament

On 21 December 2023, the Acting Speaker of the Parliament certified the Ombudsman Commission's laws paving the way forward for the Commission's investigations. The amendments also increase the Commission's jurisdiction over private companies who benefit from public funds. The project that started in 2013 was designed to ensure that the Ombudsman Commission is best placed to meet its Constitutional responsibilities into the future.

Recently resolved case highlights

The following cases highlight a number of successful resolutions:

1. Issuance of Teaching Certificates and Provisional Teachers Registration Certificates to about 445 Graduate Teachers who have waited since 2019 despite having met all the requirements.
2. The allegations of improper awarding of Citizenship by naturalization to a Government Minister was resolved when evidence was presented to clarify the misunderstanding.
3. Release of a Prisoner who overstayed his incarceration for over 16 months.
4. Removing a prisoner (former Policeman who was convicted of stealing) from the general prison facility to a secluded area after he was attacked several times which almost cost his life. His life was spared through the Commission's intervention.
5. It is common in Papua New Guinea for teachers to teach without pay while outstanding salary issues are negotiated. The Ombudsman Commission resolved the matter through negotiations and identified "recurring internal administrative failure in the system". Despite their registration with the Teaching Services Commission, most of those affected were either not admitted with the Teaching Services Commission or they were not registered and given File Numbers for purposes of registration with the "Alesco Payroll System". The matter was successfully resolved and those affected received their outstanding salaries.
6. The title of a government property which was acquired by a private supermarket chain was released to a faithful employee who served the Company for over 30 years. During his service with the Company, the employee had purchased 35,000 worth of shares and became a Shareholder. When the Company was sold, the title of the property was not released to the Employee. Through the Commission's intervention the Title was released to the Employee's daughter who was nominated as the "next of kin" as the Complainant had passed away after lodging his complaint.

7. A resident in one of the suburbs of the National Capital District complained that for over 20 years, no flowing water was provided to the residents in a suburb of the nation's capital. Through the Commission's intervention, the Government's Water Company installed a "water pressure logger" which eliminated the problem.

Ombudsman Tabitha Suwae appointed

The Ombudsman Commission was relieved after the appointment of Tabitha Suwae as an Ombudsman. The appointment marks a significant development for the Ombudsman Commission, as Ms. Suwae fills a position that has been left vacant for almost four years. In the meantime, Ombudsman Kevin Kepore, whose term as an Ombudsman expired on 9 October 2024, was appointed as Acting Ombudsman while the position of Ombudsman Accounting is advertised publicly to give an opportunity for potential candidates to apply, including Mr Kepore.

Ombudsman of the Solomon Islands

Ombudsman Office of Solomon Islands welcomes new investigation officers, farewells key staff to anti-corruption role

The Ombudsman Office of Solomon Islands is pleased to announce the addition of two skilled professionals to its ranks on 27 June 2024. The new appointments aim to bolster the office's investigative capacity, underscoring its commitment to addressing public complaints and enhancing governmental transparency. Additionally, the office bids farewell to its Director of Governance, who will take up a pivotal anti-corruption role.



Pictured: Mr Bobby Walakulu (left photo) and Mr Fenton Mania (right photo) take their Oath before the Ombudsman.

Joining the Ombudsman Office as investigation officers are Bobby Walakulu and Fenton Mania, both of whom bring valuable expertise and a shared dedication to upholding justice and accountability.

Bobby Walakulu steps into his new role with a wealth of experience gained from his time as a registry officer at the High Court of Solomon Islands. Walakulu's background provides him with a solid understanding of the court's administration process, which will be instrumental in conducting fair and efficient investigations. His knowledge of legal procedures is expected to add precision to the Ombudsman's investigative work and enhance the depth of analysis in handling public complaints.

Fenton Mania, a recent law graduate, also joins the Ombudsman Office with a fresh perspective and eagerness to contribute to the nation's integrity efforts. Mania's academic achievements in law and his dedication to justice will be invaluable in his new position. As an investigation officer, Mania will play a key role in examining complaints, and developing insights into the public's grievances against various institutions.

A farewell and congratulations to the Director of Governance



Pictured: Ombudsman, Mr Fred Fakarii (left) with Former Director Governance Mr Rex Akomae in a brief farewell ceremony.

In addition to these new appointments, the Ombudsman Office extends congratulations and well-wishes to its outgoing Director of Governance, who has been appointed to lead the Prevention and Education Unit of the Solomon Islands Independent Commission Against Corruption (SIICAC). This transition represents a significant step forward in the nation's broader anti-corruption framework. While this move is undoubtedly a gain for SIICAC, it marks a notable loss for the Ombudsman Office.

As Director of Governance, the departing staff member was instrumental in streamlining governance policies and improving the office's operational standards. His efforts have been central to fostering a culture of accountability within the office, and his leadership will be missed by colleagues and partners alike.

The Ombudsman Office of Solomon Islands remains committed to its mission of promoting transparency, accountability, and good governance. The recent appointments and reassignments reflect its adaptive approach in response to the country's evolving needs in integrity and justice.

Te Mato Akamoeau - Ombudsman Cook Islands The Ombudsman Office of the Cook Islands – Te Mato Akamoeau celebrated their 40th Anniversary on the 26 September 2024. The special event was well attended by the recognised three pillars of the nation with the Prime Minister Mark Brown, traditional leaders, and the village Pastor Nanai who blessed the event. The 60 guests included the New Zealand High Commissioner Catherine Graham, Australian High Commissioner Phoebe Smith, government staff, civil social society partners and friends, as well as the New Zealand Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier with his staff and the Tonga Ombudsman 'Alisi Taumoepeau.

The special guests of the day were the families of the former Ombudsmen of 40 years who were bestowed with traditional black pearl shells which had been engraved. These gifts were presented to the families of those who had passed on and to the two who attended. Fun was had by all with good music, delicious lunch and reminiscing conversations.

Post event the staff from the New Zealand Ombudsman conducted investigation training for the staff of the Ombudsman Office of the Cook Islands.

Ombudsman Tonga

Internal training and learning

While the Office of the Ombudsman Tonga has been busy with business as usual in its international engagement, community outreach and Ombudsman Act investigations, it has also been focusing on internal learning and professional development for staff.

Drawing on expertise within the Office, the Ombudsman Tonga has been conducting in-house training to enhance knowledge on outputs of the office, principles of good governance, and solutions to issues that may assist the staff and the work of the office.

The following training areas have been of particular note for staff:

- The Office corporate plan and annual report
 - Led by Mr. Roman Vaihu (Chief Executive Officer) and Mrs. Luseane 'Aho (Senior Accountant), the training elaborated on the contents and significance of the corporate plan, and its direct relationship to operations of the Office and how it structures and guides staff and their work.
- Legal training
 - The Ombudsman Act 2001
 - Foundational to the establishment, authority, functions and operation of the Office, it is important staff are familiar with the Ombudsman Act. The Ombudsman, 'Alisi Numia Taumoepeau KC, led this training.
 - The investigation manual
 - The Investigation manual contains guidance on the procedure of investigations to ensure alignment with the Ombudsman Act, as well as consistency and quality. Mr. Roman Vaihu, who has also held the role of Director of Investigations, led this session with staff.

The legal training sessions evoked spirited and constructive legal discussions amongst the staff and their trainers. The Office intends to continue its internal trainings as it strives for excellence in its work.

Ombudsman New Zealand

This will likely be the last Waka Tangata with Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier at the helm of the New Zealand Ombudsman. Peter has served as Chief Ombudsman for the last 9 years and resigned in March 2024 upon reaching the age of 72, a requirement of the New

Zealand Ombudsmen Act but has remained in office until a successor is appointed by the Officers of Parliament Committee.

The success of Peter's leadership in this role is on full display in the latest Annual Report which shows another record year for the Ombudsman of New Zealand, with 2023-2024 having the highest number of complaints and protected disclosures being completed ever.

In addition, over the past year there has been comment and submissions made on 35 legislative, policy, or administrative proposals, and advice has been provided to public sector agencies on 356 occasions, and 108 places of detention have been visited.

Chief Ombudsman Peter leaves also with an innovative first for the office, as civics teaching resources were released in September.

Ombudsman civics and fairness teaching resources for schools

After noting international studies that revealed a wide disparity of civics understanding for students in New Zealand, the Ombudsman saw an opportunity to help close that knowledge gap by offering these learning resources to schools.

The aim is to help students understand important concepts around fairness and social justice, their rights, and the laws that protect them in a way that's relevant and age-appropriate. The materials include slide decks, videos, case studies, and suggested activities as part of a comprehensive teaching resource.



Callum Green, Head of Faculty Social Sciences at Burnside High School said, "This resource makes students aware of how to access the Ombudsman and helps them navigate how the Ombudsman works and what its role in a functioning democracy is."

"I would encourage all those teaching the social science learning area to use the resources. There has never been a more important time for ākonga [students] to know what their rights are."

View these resources on the Ombudsman website: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/fair.

Recent publications and reports

- [Annual report 2023–24](#)
- [Official Information Act \(OIA\) and Local Government Information Management Act \(LGOIMA\) complaints information for January to June 2024](#)

- [Case note - Ombudsman issues stinging criticism of Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children](#) over failing to properly investigate reports of assaults and violence against pre-school and primary-aged children
- [Case note](#) - Ombudsman publishes details of investigation into Associate Health Minister's refusal to release information on author of tobacco policy advice
- [Chief Ombudsman's latest self-initiated investigations into official information practices](#) will include two council-controlled organisations for the first time
- [Chief Ombudsman issued two cases notes with concerns that some school boards are failing to act fairly](#) when children are facing disciplinary action, decisions on enrolment or other decisions that affect their education
- [Whistleblowing guidance released](#) on how to report concerns
- New Zealand Sign Language guides released:
 - [Official Information Act guide – a series of explainer videos](#)
 - [Reasonable Accommodation Guide](#)

Queensland Australia

Commemorating 50 years

As mentioned in the May issue of *Waka Tangata*, the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman has reached a significant milestone in 2024, celebrating 50 years since its establishment.



To commemorate, we have published a booklet containing significant events in the Office's history, [Marking 50 years of service to the community](#).

Over 50 years many things change. We grow. We learn. While there has been significant change, this Office's commitment to fairness and improvement is unwavering. For over half a century, the Office has given the people in Queensland free, impartial and confidential service.

Recent publications and reports

- [Annual report 2023–24](#)
- [Inspector of Detention Services annual operational report 2023–24](#) - the first annual operational report for the Inspector of Detention Services (IDS) function.
- The first two IDS inspection reports:
 - [Cairns and Murgon watch-houses inspection report: Focus on detention of children](#)
 - [Cleveland Youth Detention Centre inspection report: Focus on separation due to staff shortages](#)
- [Forensic Disability Service – second report](#) - a review of the implementation of recommendations made in the Office's 2019 Forensic Disability Service report
- Easy read explainers about:
 - [Queensland Ombudsman](#) – how to make a complaint and what to expect
 - Inspector of Detention Services – what we do on an inspection and what happens afterwards. Specific versions for [prisons](#), [youth detention centres](#) and [watch-houses](#)
 - [Cairns and Murgon watch-houses: Focus on children 2024 inspection](#)
 - [Cleveland Youth Detention Centre 2024 inspection](#).

Commonwealth Ombudsman Australia

The Commonwealth Ombudsman continued its core work in helping people and improving government. In 2023–24, the Office received 24,679 complaints from members of the public, compared to 22,950 last financial year. Centrelink was the most complained about Department, followed by the National Disability Insurance Agency, Child Support (Services Australia), Home Affairs, and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts.

During 2023–24, the Office improved its service by:

- making early resolution of complaints a greater focus
- meeting or exceeding all quality assurance standards across general complaint handling
- making meaningful improvement towards meeting complaint handling timeframes and telephone wait times.

Last financial year, the Office produced 29 reports from investigations into systemic issues, under specific Ombudsman roles and as the Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM).

As the Commonwealth NPM Coordinator for OPCAT (Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture), the Office released the Commonwealth NPM report in May 2024.

[Read the Commonwealth NPM report](#)

In July 2024, the Australian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) published its first Annual Report.

[Read the NPM Annual Report](#)

New National Student Ombudsman function soon to commence

In the coming year, the Office is expanding its functions with the establishment of the National Student Ombudsman (NSO) function, which is due to commence on 1 February 2025, subject to the passage of legislation. The NSO will take complaints from university students about their higher education provider's policies, procedures and decisions.

Valued partnership with the Ombudsman Republic of Indonesia (ORI)

The Office continued its valued partnership with the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (ORI) with a visit to Jakarta in July. The Ombudsman was pleased to host several delegations and study groups in Australia from Indonesia, Malaysia and Fiji in recent months. The Ombudsman has also become a Director of the Australasia and Pacific Ombudsman Region of the International Ombudsman Institute.



Pictured: Bilateral meeting between the Ombudsman Republic of Indonesia (ORI) and the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, in Jakarta, Indonesia, July 2024.



Pictured: Malaysian delegation led by Deputy Law Minister, the Honorable Kula Segaran, to Canberra, Australia, October 2024.

The Inspector-General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman (IGTO) in Australia New Taxation Ombudsman appointed

Inspector-General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman (IGTO), Ruth Owen, was appointed in July 2024 and since then has been developing a corporate plan (to be published during November) and defining her strategic approach to her role. Ruth Owen's focus is how to maximise the impact that the = Office can have on the administration of the tax and superannuation systems across Australia.

Notable changes that will be implemented include:

- raising the profile of the IGTO agency and making the community aware of the role of tax complaints in promoting the integrity of the tax system
- improving relationships with key stakeholders across the public service, community and tax sector, including those agencies under the IGTO's oversight
- addressing the backlog of complaints and improving service to customers, including simplifying and streamlining processes
- reshaping how the office undertakes systemic (own motion) reviews – making them shorter, sharper, and more focused
- making written communications and reports much more accessible and easy to read –
 - [see an example here of the first report published on 31 October](#)
- reviewing the capability and skills mix within the agency in advance of a change in the operating model
- being more disciplined and transparent in setting priorities
- exercising all levers available to exert influence or create positive impact.

The Treasury are currently reviewing the resources of the IGTO and the outcome of that review will address the large risk of having insufficient resources to fulfil the IGTO's remit.



Pictured: Australian Inspector-General of Taxation and Taxation Ombudsman, Ruth Owen, at a speaking event.

New South Wales Ombudsman

Investigations into inmate discipline

In August 2024, the NSW Ombudsman tabled two special reports following investigations into inmate discipline.

The *Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres* report followed an investigation involving a systemic examination of how inmate discipline is managed across all correctional centres. The inmate disciplinary system deals with inmates who are alleged to have committed a 'correctional centre offence' while in custody. The investigation carried out a trend analysis of the more than 57,000 inmate discipline charges determined between 2018 and 2023 and conducted an in-depth review of a sample of over 350 individual determinations. The investigation found a systemic failure across all correctional centres to follow the requirements of the legislation and the relevant policies in relation to inmate discipline.

[Read the report of the Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres.](#)

The *Investigation into actions taken against bystander inmates following an incident at Clarence Correctional Centre* report concerned an investigation into actions taken by the private operator of Clarence Correctional Centre against inmates who witnessed an assault on an officer by an inmate, at the centre in September 2023. Following complaints made to us by some of those inmates, we investigated further and found that procedural requirements designed to ensure a fair inquiry had not been followed, and that inmates were found guilty despite relevant evidence (including CCTV footage) not supporting such findings.

[Read the report of the Investigation into actions taken against bystander inmates following an incident at Clarence Correctional Centre.](#)

Assessment of whether the State child protection department is protecting children at risk

The report assessed whether the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) is meeting its three core child protection responsibilities to: respond to any child reported at risk of significant harm who requires an investigation; improve the safety and wellbeing of children in out-of-home care and secure safe, permanent homes for them; and intervene early to prevent escalation of risk of harm to children, and keep families together.

Our report concluded that DCJ cannot demonstrate that it is meeting any of these key responsibilities, and that the NSW child protection system operates in a disconnected, fragmented way which is reflected in the poor tracking of outcomes achieved for children. Noting that the need for broad scale system reform has already been acknowledged by the government, we made 7 recommendations aimed at supporting that reform.

[Read the protecting Children at Risk report](#)

[Read the summary report](#)

[Watch the video](#)

Casebook of complaints and investigations

Casebook July 2024 was the first of what will be biannual reports featuring case studies illustrating how we achieve our strategic outcomes. It provided a summary of investigations

conducted and a sample of complaints handled by the NSW Ombudsman from 1 October 2023 to 30 June 2024.

The report contained a range of case studies to promote shared learning about how to improve decision-making and administrative processes for those we oversight.

Additionally, the case studies inform Parliament and the public about the work of the Ombudsman by demonstrating ways in which we have held agencies to account and how we have reached positive outcomes for the people of NSW.

[Read Casebook July 2024](#)

[Watch the video.](#)

Recent publications and reports

- [NSW Ombudsman Annual Report 2023-2024](#)
- [NSW Child Death Review Team Annual Report 2023–24](#)
- [Investigation into inmate discipline in NSW correctional centres](#)
- [Investigation into actions taken against bystander inmates following an incident at Clarence Correctional Centre](#)
- [Protecting children at risk: an assessment of whether the Department of Communities and Justice is meeting its core responsibilities](#)
- [Casebook July 2024: Investigations and complaint-handling case studies](#)



Pictured: NSW Ombudsman staff Benjamin, Kerrin and Travis at the 52nd Koori Knockout – an annual Aboriginal Rugby League event held in Bathurst, NSW.

Ombudsman Western Australia

In what has been a challenging year for the Western Australian Ombudsman, the staff have continued to achieve great results in the last year, namely:

- The office finalised 95% of complaints within 3 months. They received 2,437 complaints and 12,019 enquiries from the public.
- In relation to our important function to review child deaths and family domestic violence fatalities, the office:
 - Received 139 notifications of child deaths of which 49 went to investigation;
 - Received 29 reviewable family and domestic violence fatalities; and
 - Made eight recommendations about ways to prevent or reduce these deaths and fatalities.

- The Reportable Conduct Scheme expanded on 1 January 2024 to cover additional categories of conduct and additional sectors. The Scheme provides independent oversight of how organisations that exercise care, supervision or authority over children handle allegations of, and convictions for, child abuse by their employees. In 2023-24, we received 696 notifications of reportable conduct and, arising from the Ombudsman's involvement, organisations took 97 actions to prevent reportable conduct.
- We tabled in Parliament a report on giving effect to the recommendations arising from the Investigation into family and domestic violence and suicide.
- We completed a report of the monitoring activities of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations under Part 4 of the Criminal Law (Unlawful Consorting and Prohibited Insignia) Act 2021 for the period ending 23 December 2022, which was tabled in Parliament by the Attorney General.
- As part of the regional awareness and accessibility program, staff from the office, along with staff from the Energy and Water Ombudsman, the Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman, the Australian Financial Complaints Authority, the Health and Disability Services Complaints Office and the Equal Opportunity Commission visited Esperance, Kalgoorlie, Carnarvon and the Gascoyne region of Western Australia.

Ombudsman Victoria

In October 2024, Victorian Ombudsman's office tabled its annual report in Parliament. Here are some highlights from the year's work:

Complaints

Over the course of the year, the office received 18,031 complaints that were within its jurisdiction. It resolved 94% of complaints within 30 days.

The most common themes in complaints were correspondence, communications and records; decision making; buildings and facilities; inadequate remedies from complaints; and health services and access to medical care. The office received 4,327 complaints that engaged human rights, and there were significant increases in complaints about financial

issues such as fees and charges, which may reflect cost of living pressures in the community.

Through enquiries and engagement with complainants and agencies alike, the office helped to negotiate over 8,400 remedies, often to resolve complaints without a formal investigation.

Conciliation

This year, the office conciliated 52 complaints, raising 105 issues. In total, 92.9 per cent of conciliations resulted in a resolution, including 41 apologies or admissions of error and \$85,820 in ex gratia payments to complainants.

Complaint System Reviews

In addition to resolving complaints informally and investigating decisions of public authorities, the Ombudsman has the power to review agencies' complaint-handling practices. Over the course of the year, the office finalised three reviews, covering a local council, a university, and Victoria's Public Advocate. The reviews made 24 recommendations, and the agencies accepted all of them.

Investigations

The office completed 19 formal investigations during 2023–24, and agencies accepted 89 per cent of recommendations made to them. In total, the office tabled nine reports in Parliament, covering social housing, access to healthcare for Aboriginal people in prison, building permits, charges for zero- and low-emission vehicles, and the alleged politicisation of the public service.

Office of the Ombudsman, Hong Kong SAR, China



This year marks the 35th anniversary of our Office. The Office is going to host the International Ombudsman Summit with the theme “Ombudsman in a Changing World: Learning from the Past; Preparing for the Future” and 35th Anniversary Reception on 3 December 2024. A series of colourful art and cultural programmes will be arranged on 2 and 4 December for all participants to experience the many charms and attractions of Hong Kong.

Mr Jack Chan, the Ombudsman, has set out three strategic focuses for the Office in the coming years. First of all, the Office will go full steam ahead with the use of mediation to resolve complaints from the public, respond to public demands promptly, and reduce conflicts in society to bring about social cohesion, with a view to revitalising the economy and improving people’s livelihood. Another strategic focus is to promote interdepartmental collaboration. Effective interdepartmental collaboration is indispensable to efficient and people-oriented public administration as well as good governance. When handling relevant cases, the Office will request all departments and organisations concerned to take follow-up action and fully collaborate with other agencies. The third strategic focus is to continue instilling a “positive complaint culture” in society and encouraging members of the public (especially the younger generation) to express views in a positive and constructive manner with the aim of improving public administration.

In the first seven months of 2024/25, over 270 cases were concluded by mediation. In the same period, the Office successfully handled 94 cases involving inter-departmental collaboration. Meanwhile, around 30 full investigations, which required in-depth probing or involved systemic issues, were completed. The Office also completed two direct investigation operations. In these full investigations and direct investigation operations,

about 60 recommendations were made to the relevant government bureaux and departments.

Control Yuan

Control Yuan Committee on Social Welfare and Environment Hygiene Affairs inspects Ministry of Labor

The Committee on Social Welfare and Environment Hygiene Affairs conducted circuit supervision and inspection of the Ministry of Labor (MOL) on 18 October 2024, led by Control Yuan President Chu Chen with Members. The inspection examined workforce supply and demand conditions amid industrial shortages, occupational safety and disaster prevention measures, labor insurance funds, and employment safety funds. The Committee additionally visited an exemplary enterprise for "friendly workplace" to understand its implementation of optimising employee healthcare provisions and workplace enhancement measures.



Pictured: President Chen (4th left) and CY Members conduct circuit supervision at the Ministry of Labor.



Pictured: President Chen (5th left) and CY Members visit an exemplary enterprise for "friendly workplace".

Examination of workforce issues and labor fund management

According to the National Development Council's Population Estimation Report, Taiwan's working-age population is declining, with the demographic dividend projected to end in 2028. Committee Convener Member Li-Chiung Su stated during the exchange that responding to workforce demographic trends, along with the forecasting, planning, development, and utilisation of labor resources, will be central to future labor policies and constitute a key mandate for the MOL.

President Chu Chen noted that during her six-year tenure at the Executive Yuan's Council of Labor Affairs (predecessor to the MOL), various important labor laws and pension systems were established. She emphasised that workforce development faces greater challenges ahead. The President called on the MOL to develop proactive solutions to enhance labor rights protection and optimise labor fund utilisation. Members additionally expressed their concerns regarding migrant workers' rights, occupational accident rates and disability compensation, heat injury prevention measures, employment redesign for middle-aged and elderly workers, and employment assistance for veterans and new immigrants, offering their recommendations.

Please send feedback and contributions to the *Waka Tangata* editorial team, based
in the New Zealand Ombudsman's office

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