

# Pacific Ombudsman Alliance ~ Network News

Fostering government integrity and good administration in the Pacific

Issue 35 – February 2015



POA members and the POA Secretariat attended a workshop on the final day of the NIS in Sydney.

## NATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS SYMPOSIUM IN SYDNEY

From 5-6 November 2014 the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the New South Wales Ombudsman and the Institute of Public Administration Australia hosted the 10<sup>th</sup> National Investigations Symposium in Sydney.

This event takes place every two years and offers an opportunity for public sector investigators and complaint handlers to explore a broad range of topics presented by industry experts.

POA members from were invited to attend the two day Symposium which was followed by a one day workshop hosted by the POA Secretariat.

Attendees included the Tongan Ombudsman, the Auditor-General from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, officers from Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea (OCPNG) and Senior Investigation Officers from the Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

The workshop was designed to expand on lessons learned through the Symposium and to allow participants to share their own experiences and challenges. Feedback was very positive for both the Symposium and the workshop with participants agreeing that the event was highly relevant and worthwhile.



*l-r NIS participants; Ieti Seiuli, Maybelline Unu, Philip Manetohua, Aisea Taumoepeau, Loukinikini Vili and Junior Patrick.*

## NEW ANTI-CORRUPTION PROJECT

In December the Commonwealth Ombudsman received Australian aid funding to conduct a new project working with POA members in the Pacific.

Over two and half years, this project will provide training for Ombudsman officers in report writing and financial investigations, in collaboration with the Pacific Island Centre for Public Administration (PICPA) based at the University of the south Pacific in Suva.

This project will also assist POA members to work as an integrity hub in their countries; bringing together other anti-corruption mechanisms to operate as an effective network against corruption.

## PNG TWINNING NEWS

The Commonwealth Deputy Ombudsman Richard Glenn met with members of the OCPNG and the Senior Management Team when he travelled to PNG in October 2014.

The visit was designed to build on the existing relationship between the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Chief Ombudsman of the OCPNG, Mr Rigo Lua.

The focus of discussions during this visit was monitoring and evaluating strategic planning, and incorporating results into future planning.

A delegation from OCPNG, consisting of the Secretary, Mr Joseph Molita, who is responsible for corporate services at the OCPNG, travelled to Australia in November 2014.

Mr Molita spent two days in Brisbane meeting with the Queensland Ombudsman and was then joined in Sydney by his colleague Mr Kualum Tande, a senior investigations officer, at the National Investigations Symposium.

Mr Molita then travelled to Canberra for further meetings and training courses as part of the current focus on support and mentoring of the senior management team at OCPNG.

## VISITORS FROM VANUATU

Two officers from the Office of the Ombudsman Vanuatu recently attended a one week complaint management activity held in Sydney and Adelaide.

The officers, Ms Anna George and Ms Vevleo George, were selected to undergo a practical training program looking at complaint receipt, initial assessment and the recording and management of complaint information.

This activity was jointly offered by the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the NSW Ombudsman and allowed the visiting officers an opportunity to work alongside officers in similar roles in the Australian environment. The delegation also visited the South Australian Ombudsman to get another perspective on complaint intake.



*(L-R) Katie Emmel, Anna George, Trudy Cutts and Vevleo George (standing) at the Adelaide office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman.*

Anna and Vevleo were able to experience firsthand the different approaches the Commonwealth and NSW offices use when dealing with similar processes such as complaint receipt, recording and filing of complaint information.

Both offices emphasised the importance of the initial contact with the public. Often the success of an investigation rests on the quality of information gathered and recorded at the early stages.

## SECRETARIAT VISIT TO FSM AND PALAU

In November 2014, two members of the POA Secretariat, Lynley Ducker and Carolyn Langley, were in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), to work with Mr Haser Hainrick, the Federal Public Auditor and in Palau to work with Mr Francis Llecholch, the Ombudsman.



*Australia's Ambassador to the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau and the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Dr Terry Beven with Carolyn Langley and Lynley Ducker at the Australian Embassy in Pohnpei.*

The aim of the Secretariat visit was to introduce the work of POA and the support that POA might be able to provide; and to work with both the Public Auditor and Ombudsman to design a support program for each office.

There is currently no Ombudsman in the FSM and Mr Hainrick's office is limited to taking complaints about financial actions of government officials. Mr Hainrick would like to extend his role to investigate complaints about non-financial matters and this will involve changes to the legal framework under which the office currently operates.

Mr Llecholch, the Ombudsman in Palau, is seeking legislative amendment to make the Ombudsman into a statutory office.

Mr Llecholch is considering more publicity around his role and POA have indicated their willingness to assist. The Ombudsman is also considering establishing permanent premises and staff for his office.



*The POA Secretariat met with Senators and Delegates in Koror, Palau. The Ombudsman Francis Llecholch is standing far right.*

## DETENTION INSPECTIONS IN SAMOA

The office of the Ombudsman in Samoa began a program of detention centre inspection under their new mandate as the Samoan National Human Rights Institution. With assistance from the Asia Pacific Forum, the Ombudsman has developed an inspection methodology to assess any facility where people are detained; including prisons, mental health facilities and police stations.

In January 2015, staff of the Ombudsman's office conducted a full week of inspections, including Tafagata and Vaiaata Prisons, Oloamanu Juvenile Detention Centre and the Mental Health Unit at Moto'otua.

The Pacific Ombudsman Alliance supported the presence of two external advisers; Michael Woodhead from the Commonwealth Ombudsman and Jacki Jones from the New Zealand Ombudsman's Office.





*Vai'a'ata Prison on Savai'i – the Inspections team and senior officers from the prison*

Using information from the inspections, the Ombudsman will make recommendations to the Ministry of Police and Samoa Prisons and Corrections Services. The overall aim is to achieve detention centres where people are treated with dignity, integrity and respect. The Ombudsman's findings and recommendations will be made in a report to Parliament and released to the public.

## OUTCOME OF RECENT BOARD

### NOMINATIONS

The term of the POA Board expired in October 2014, and a new Board was nominated and endorsed by the members. The current Board is:

- Colin Neave (Commonwealth)
- Rigo Lua (PNG)
- 'Aisea Taumoepeau (Tonga)
- Joe Poraiwai (Solomon Islands)
- Junior Patrick (Marshall Islands)
- Gillian Itsimaera (Nauru)
- Bruce Barbour (New South Wales).

The POA membership and Secretariat would like to sincerely thank outgoing Board members Dame Beverley Wakem and Kalkot Mataskelekele for their participation.

We would like to make special mention of Dame Beverley, who is a founding member of POA. The assistance provided by her office, and the personal support Dame Beverley has shown for her Pacific colleagues, has been a major factor in the success of our network.

## 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:

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