

[View this email in your browser](#)

WAKATANGATA

APOR E-NEWS

ISSUE 13: JUNE 2024

News and views from integrity organisations in the Pacific and Australasia

In this edition:

- we farewell former APOR President Deborah Glass and welcome new President Cook Islands Ombudsman Niki Rattle
- three new Ombudsman have been appointed across the APOR
- Queensland's Ombudsman celebrates 50 years
- Hong Kong celebrates 35 years and
- New Zealand's Chief Ombudsman is re-elected as a Regional Director of APOR and Second Vice President of the IOI.



Message from APOR Regional President

Kia orana

It was a great honour to be elected Regional President by the membership of the Australasia & Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) last November.

As the newest Ombudsman in the APOR, I was nervous about adding extra regional and international responsibilities onto my small team in the Cook Islands. However I also saw it as an excellent opportunity for development within our office. The status that comes with being APOR President with 18 members across the region, and as a Director of the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), is immeasurable and a privilege for me and my small Office of four people, particularly as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Cook Islands Ombudsman on 26 September 2024.

Zealand Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier and the New Zealand International team. Your support has enabled my office to embrace our new role and responsibilities with confidence. Thank you all.

The recent IOI World Conference in The Hague, as well as being a real eye opener for me, was a great opportunity to meet and work with the IOI Secretariat and the six regions represented there. It was exhilarating to be part of such an enormous gathering of experts from other Ombudsmen's offices around the world. Chairing my first APOR General Meeting was very exciting and naturally a highlight for me. The enthusiasm of people at the conference during the week has really encouraged me to explore in much more detail what I learned around the conference theme of 'Act together for our tomorrow'.

Thank you again to the membership of APOR for your support. I look forward to continuing our work together.

Niki Rattle

APOR President

Cook Islands Ombudsman

Commonwealth Australia

Ombudsman welcomes Malaysian delegation

In February 2024, Commonwealth Ombudsman Iain Anderson met with a Malaysian delegation to discuss Australia's Freedom of Information (FOI) scheme and the work of the Office.



Pictured: The Hon. YB Tuan Khoo Poay Tiong, MP and the Hon. Mr. Zahari Kechik, Parliament of Malaysia, along with senior Malaysian government officials, the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ) and the Centre to Combat Corruption & Cronyism (C4) with Iain Anderson, Commonwealth Ombudsman, and Lisa Collett, Chief Operating Officer, Commonwealth Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman also participated in an online conference, 'Structuring the Malaysian Ombudsman', organized by the Centre to Combat Corruption and Cronyism (C4) in Malaysia the following month.

Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM), the NPM Coordinator and one part of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) NPM, as the ACT Ombudsman.

Engagement continued in May 2024, with the Ombudsman participating in the 13th International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) World conference in The Hague, and the Deputy Ombudsman and Chief Operating Officer speaking at the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (ORI) Leadership Forum in Indonesia.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Taxation Ombudsman have published [How to tell people they owe the government money](#).

The publication outlines the following five best practice principles:



Cook Islands

Cook Islands Ombudsman farewells two valued team members and welcomes another

Te Mato Akamoeau farewelled two valued team members, Elizabeth Nootai and Jean Nootai, who have been integral to the Ombudsman's Office.

Elizabeth, who had been with the Office since 2018, left in February to become National Disability Coordinator at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Her leadership, passion, expertise and dedication to the Ombudsman's Office profoundly impacted the team, driving many of their successes. The team deeply appreciated her invaluable contributions, and will miss her dearly. They wish her continued success in her new role.

Jean, who has been with the Office since 2020, will transition to Cook Islands Tourism Corporation as an Industry Development Coordinator. Her innovative ideas and unwavering commitment have greatly benefited the Office. They will miss her contributions and collaborative spirit, but are excited to see her apply her talents in the tourism sector and wish her every success in her new role.

As the Office bid farewell to Liz and Jean, they warmly welcomed Edouard Bataillard. Edouard joins them from



genuinely excited to take on this new role," Edouard said. "I am eager to learn, grow, and share my knowledge and skills."

The team look forward to the new perspectives and energy Edouard will bring.

Hong Kong SAR, China

Hong Kong welcomes new Ombudsman

Hong Kong has welcomed a new Ombudsman. Jack Chan began his five year term on 1 April 2024. He was appointed by the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government under The Ombudsman Ordinance (Cap 397).

Mr Chan is a seasoned and experienced former senior government official who has served the Government for nearly 40 years. He was appointed Under Secretary for Home Affairs in the fifth-term Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, and was Acting Secretary for Home Affairs from January to June 2022.



Mr Chan replaces Winnie Chiu who had been in the role since April 2019.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Hong Kong Office. An international ombudsman conference with a celebration event will be held in Hong Kong in December 2024. Members are invited to attend these functions, the details of which will be provided soon.

The Office is preparing its 2024 Annual Report. The year saw a decline in complaints with 4,000 complaints received, the lowest in five years. The Office completed approximately 4,400 cases, more than they had received. The Office was able to achieve, and even exceed, all performance pledges in handling enquiries, new complaints, re-assessment and review of complaints.

Over 180 cases were concluded by mediation. Promotion and training on mediation will continue to increase the use of this effective and efficient resolution method. Meanwhile, just over 90 full investigations were completed, which required in-depth probing or involved systemic issues. The Office also completed 10 direct investigation operations. These full investigations and direct investigation operations, resulted in over 180 recommendations being made, more than 90 percent of which have been accepted by the relevant bureaux and departments.

New Zealand

Chief Ombudsman re-elected as Director of APOR

Pacific Ombudsman Region and as the Second Vice President of the IOI. As Regional Director, he will continue to support the promotion of ombudsmanship, encourage regional cooperation, and represent the Australasian Pacific Ombudsmen Region (APOR) on the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) Board.



International Self-Assessment Tool now available

A new International Self-Assessment Tool to help Ombudsmen Offices, particularly in the Asia Pacific region determine whether their functions and capabilities are of regional and international best practice has been developed by the New Zealand Ombudsman.

The tool will help inform strategic planning, prioritise focus areas and monitor change over time. Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier said the aim is for Ombudsmen's offices in the region to help each other meet international best practice.

Thanks to the Ombudsman Western Australia; Te Mato Akamoeau, Cook Islands Office of the Ombudsman; Ofisa o le Komesina Sulufaiga, Samoa Office of the Ombudsman; and Office of the Ombudsman, Hong Kong, China for their assistance with this work. The tool is available on the New Zealand Ombudsman website.

[Go to the International Ombudsman Self-Assessment Tool](#)

Chief Ombudsman launches new website for children and young people

A new website to support children and young people in care or custody has been launched by the Ombudsman's Office in New Zealand. The website has been developed to ensure children and young people in care or custody know where to get help if they need it and how to make a complaint. The website has been designed with the help of children and young people who have experienced care or custody in New Zealand.

The website is child-friendly and is available in English and Te Reo Māori at Nau-mai.nz



Visit from German politicians

The Ombudsman's Office recently hosted the German-Pacific Group of Friends of the German Parliament, a group of cross party Members of Parliament from the Bundestag (General Federal Parliament). The German parliamentary friendship group cultivates bilateral contacts with other national parliaments around the world. The group was visiting New Zealand to learn about governance systems and how NZ supports vulnerable people, to share practices and to build an ongoing relationship. Germany does not have a federal Ombudsman and there was a real interest from them in NZ's role and functions.



Pictured: Members of the German delegation with staff from the New Zealand Office of the Ombudsman.

Recent publications

[Children in care: complaints to the Ombudsman 2019–2023](#) found that child agency Oranga Tamariki needs to change on a scale rarely required of a government agency.

Papua New Guinea

Ombudsman Commission's investigation saves former policeman

A former police officer serving a two year prison sentence for stealing has been moved to another correctional facility for his own safety following an investigation by the PNG Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman commenced an administration investigation into allegations of human rights violations within a correctional institution following a complaint from the former police officer that he had been physically assaulted and threatened by high risk prisoners who had a 'general hate feeling against all police personnel'.

The investigation confirmed that the complainant was brutally assaulted by other prisoners three times within seven days, requiring medical treatment.

Following the outcome of the investigation the prisoner was moved to another section of the facility to await his appeal to the higher courts. The investigation has also led to a commitment by a Member of Parliament to fund the construction of a building for separate confinement for convicted police officers and members of other disciplinary forces as well as political and high-ranking public officials. The confinement building is intended to dissolve the possible human rights violations and the overcrowding issues faced at the correctional facility.

Five unlawfully detained juveniles released from police custody



The youths were arrested and detained for the alleged theft of copper wire from buildings that were burnt down during civil unrest on 10 January 2024. The Prime Minister declared a State of Emergency at the time suspending government and police officials.

Enquiries by the Ombudsman into the detention of the youths 12 days after they were arrested found they had been unlawfully detained without proper charges being laid against them. The youths were released the following day and some were also assisted to enrol in school. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General Juvenile Justice Service will work with police concerning future juvenile cases.

Editor's note: The APOR community sends its best wishes to our Papua New Guinea colleagues following the devastating landslide in Enga Province recently.

New South Wales

Report on unlawful and wrong use of automation in debt recovery

The NSW Ombudsman has tabled a report about its investigation of Revenue NSW's garnishee order system which it uses to recover unpaid fines and other debts due to the State. Revenue NSW is the Government's taxation and debt recovery agency and utilises automation for the administration of garnishee orders (under which funds are taken from a person's bank account and redirected to Revenue NSW).

The Ombudsman found that Revenue NSW's conduct in using the garnishee order system amounted to maladministration.

Recommendations were made to Revenue NSW to provide better information to debtors and improve safeguards.

Project to map the use of automated decision-making systems in the public sector

In March 2024, the Ombudsman tabled a report In Parliament about its project to map how the public sector is using or planning to use automated decision-making (ADM) systems in the performance of their functions (mapping report).

The mapping report represents the first such attempt in NSW and includes a list of 275 ADM systems and artificial intelligence tools reported to be in use or planned.

The report follows on from a [2021 report](#) concerning the use by agencies of artificial intelligence and other technology to support or augment administrative decision-making.

[Read the ADM mapping report.](#)

New initiatives in support of whistleblower scheme

A new Whistleblower Support Unit and a public sector-wide Public Interest Disclosures (PID) Community of Practice has been set up by the NSW Ombudsman to support implementation of new whistleblower legislation which came into force last October.

The PID Community of Practice currently has around 100 members from government agencies and will continue to grow. Meanwhile the Whistleblower Support Unit will contribute to a 'speak up' culture by ensuring that public officials have access to resources, information and referral to support if they are planning to, or have made a PID.



Pictured: Tom Millet, Principal Engagement Officer, Public Interest Disclosures Unit, Systems Oversight Branch delivers a workshop to public officials on the new PID Act

Recent publications and reports

- [Revenue NSW – The lawfulness of its garnishee order process report tabled in Parliament](#)
- [A map of automated decision-making in the NSW Public Sector: A special report under section 31 of the Ombudsman Act 1974](#)

- [Biennial report of the deaths of children in New South Wales: 2020 and 2021](#)

Queensland

Celebrating 50 years



The Office of the Queensland Ombudsman is marking 50 years of service to the community this year, celebrating a significant milestone.

The Office commenced under the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1974, which established its core functions to independently investigate administrative actions of government departments and authorities, public universities and local councils.

To this day the Queensland Ombudsman continues to champion the rights of Queenslanders in an impartial and confidential manner – principles established by the first Ombudsman, Sir David Longland.

Over 50 years, their role has grown and changed under these acts:

- Ombudsman Act 2001 – introduced a proactive function of assisting agencies to improve the quality of administrative practices and procedures.
- Public Interest Disclosure Act 2010 – in 2013, commenced as oversight agency for reviewing the management of public interest disclosures, providing education and advice to agencies
- Inspector of Detention Services Act 2022 – promotes the humane treatment of detainees and the prevention of harm through reviews, inspections and independent reporting.

Thousands of investigations over 50 years have been carried out. Many reports have been tabled in Parliament, recommending improvements on issues ranging from child safety to forensic disability services; from workers safety to councillor conflicts of interest.

Solomon Islands

The ongoing fight against corruption and maladministration was top of mind for Principal Investigation Officer, Philip Manetohua when he attended the first Integrity Professional Foundations training programme in Port Moresby in May. Facilitated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration with Griffith University of Australia, the programme aims to equip officers with advanced skills essential for combatting corruption and addressing bad administrative conduct.



Pictured: Participants of the first ever Integrity Professional Foundations course held in Port Moresby from 2 to 3 May 2024.

The participation of the Ombudsman's Office in this training underscores the institution's dedication to enhancing its capacity in the ongoing fight against corruption and maladministration. By investing in professional development opportunities like this, the Office seeks to strengthen its effectiveness in upholding ethical standards and promoting accountability within the public sector.

The training was attended by people from various institutions in Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. This collaborative effort aligns with Solomon Islands' broader strategy to combat corruption comprehensively and foster a culture of transparency and integrity.

Through initiatives like the Integrity Training Programme, the Ombudsman's Office aims to bolster confidence in its ability to address malfeasance and serve as a beacon of accountability within the nation of Solomon Islands and its Melanesian neighbouring countries.

South Australia

South Australia appoints new Ombudsman

was appointed to the Office in January this year. She replaces Wayne Lines.

Emily, a former Deputy Ombudsman for six years, came to the role from the Department of Human Services where she was Registrar of the Screening Unit. The Screening Unit carries out checks to assess the risk of a person working with vulnerable people.



Emily has extensive legal experience practising as a lawyer in the United Kingdom, New South Wales and South Australia, and for a period was Acting Equal Opportunity Commissioner.

Emily's appointment was recommended by State Parliament's Statutory Officers Committee and was endorsed by both Houses of Parliament. She has been appointed for a seven year term.

Emily says that, in addition to continuing to provide an accessible, timely complaint resolution service and holding government to account by investigating serious and systemic issues, she is looking forward to developing the preventative functions of her office including education and evaluation. "It is by delivering on all these functions that an Ombudsman can make real impact," she says.

Taiwan

Control Yuan Chairperson of NHRC attends ICERD International Review Meeting

The Control Yuan National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) participated in the first Review Meeting of the ROC's Initial Report under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which was conducted by the Executive Yuan on 22 April 2024.

Chairperson Chen highlighted that the ICERD was the first United Nations Human Rights Convention signed and ratified by the government. She expressed satisfaction that the government had proactively adhered to the international obligation to safeguard human rights by submitting a national report in compliance with the ICERD.



Pictured: Chairperson Chu Chen (front row, fourth right), Premier of the Executive Yuan Chien-Jen Chen (front row, fifth right), and international experts pose for a photo

To draft an independent opinion on Taiwan's Initial Report on the Implementation of the ICERD, the NHRC conducted 12 expert consultation meetings and symposiums with civil society organizations and government agencies. Additionally, the NHRC visited indigenous communities, gathered concerns from the general public regarding ethnic issues, and assessed the Government's progress and challenges in implementing the ICERD. This information will be shared with the international review committee for their consideration.

Chairperson Chen said that given the historical oppression experienced by Taiwan's indigenous peoples and the increased presence of new residents, migrant workers, and political refugees following Taiwan's democratization and economic growth, a key current objective of the Government is to advance equal protection of the human rights of all ethnic groups in Taiwan.

Embracing diversity, fostering equitable coexistence among various cultural backgrounds, is essential for societal advancement. Chairperson Chen also expressed her hope that international experts will offer guidance during the international review to align Taiwan's human rights practices with global standards.

Samoa

The latest police recruits in Samoa are now more knowledgeable about the mandate of their office and the importance of their role as police officers thanks to the Ombudsman Office. The Office was invited by the Ministry of Police, Prison and Correction Services to run a session for the new recruits in February. It provided an ongoing and valuable opportunity for their Good Governance and Special Investigation Units to raise awareness and implement practices of good governance such as transparency, rule of law and accountability.

In addition to that session, the Ombudsman has worked with the Ministry of Police to place complaint boxes at remote police and prison outposts to give those people living remotely

Victoria

End of an era

December to April was a bustling time in the Victoria Office as it coincided with Deborah Glass' final months as Victorian Ombudsman.

Deborah's commitment to transparency and integrity leaves a lasting legacy. During her time as Ombudsman she tabled 99 reports to Parliament and made 608 recommendations - 95 percent of which were accepted.

New powers were added to the Ombudsman legislation including public education, the use of conciliation to resolve complaints and conducting review of agencies' complaint handling policies and procedures. She also oversaw more than 150,000 complaints from citizens about public organisations. Her final report [Reflections on 10 years](#) looks back on a decade of work; the highlights and the challenges.



New Ombudsman

New Victorian Ombudsman Marlo Baragwanath was welcomed to the Office in March. Marlo brings more than 25 years of legal integrity and public sector experience to the role. Prior to her appointment, Marlo was the Chief Executive Officer of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, and before that, was the State's first Victorian Government Solicitor. She initially worked in private legal practice, and began her public sector career at the Ombudsman's office in 2001 as a policy officer and went on to hold senior leadership roles at WorkSafe and the Victorian Building Authority.



Marlo is the sixth Victorian Ombudsman and brings a wealth of experience that will enhance the 50-year legacy of the Victorian Ombudsman's office. Her appointment is for 10 years.

Shared values of fairness and integrity continue as the foundation upon which the office will develop its strategic vision for the future.

Reports

[Alleged politicisation of the public sector](#) – In December 2023 the Office tabled this highly anticipated report. It was one of the more intensive investigations conducted in the Ombudsman's 50-year history and found that creeping politicisation is a reality in Victoria.

[Investigation into healthcare provision for Aboriginal people in Victorian prisons](#) – The 2024 year commenced with this report. It found the lack of input by Victoria's First Nations

[Social housing complaint handling – progress report](#) – released a few weeks later is a follow up on the extensive 2022 report into Victoria’s social housing complaint handling system.

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

[Submit feedback](#)

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

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).