

# Pacific Ombudsman Alliance ~ Network News

Fostering government integrity and good administration in the Pacific

Issue 23 – November 2010

## MESSAGE FROM OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

**Allan Asher**  
**Commonwealth Ombudsman**

I am very pleased to have been elected to the Board of the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance. When I was appointed as the Commonwealth Ombudsman one of my first priorities was to find about the relationships my office has with colleagues in the region, and how we engage with fellow offices to share our knowledge and experience.



*Allan Asher, Commonwealth Ombudsman*

I am delighted to find the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance such a vibrant and energetic organisation. I have already met officers from PNG, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Samoa and I am buoyed with their commitment and enthusiasm.

Over the next few years I hope to travel to many of our member countries, and will continue the tradition of warm welcome (in attitude, not temperature!) of Pacific visitors to Canberra.

## CORPORATE SPECIALIST FROM VANUATU

**Yan Dapang**  
**Principal Corporate Services**

Last month, in mid-October, Yan Dapang, Principal Corporate Services from the office of the Vanuatu Ombudsman, undertook a two week placement in Australia. Yan's areas of interest are human resources, finance, record keeping, and generating internal reports.

Yan spent the first week of a two week placement in the NSW Ombudsman's Office looking at ways of improving corporate services in Vanuatu. In particular, the Vanuatu Ombudsman's Office is about to undertake a reform process to streamline office reporting structures, position descriptions, case progression systems and internet presence and outreach.

Although the NSW ombudsman Office is considerably larger than the Vanuatu Office, Yan said that he will be able to transfer skills he had learnt into the Vanuatu context.

Yan spent the second week of his placement with the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office in Canberra, focussing on budget forecasting and the generation of internal case management reports. While in Canberra, Yan created automated spreadsheets for the Vanuatu Office which predict ongoing office costs according to scheduled increases over time.

Aside from the cold weather in Canberra during his stay, Yan enjoyed his time in the capital and gained a number of practical skills relevant to current office projects.



Please note that our office will close at 12.00 noon on 24 December 2010 and will reopen at 9.00 am on 5 January 2011



*Yan Dapang in his winter jacket in Canberra*

Yan said that it was helpful to look at and compare the two offices and their respective jurisdictions. He commented on the complex division of State and Commonwealth Government responsibilities and the benefits of gaining experience in both offices.

## COMPLAINT HANDLING WORKSHOP IN KIRIBATI

At the invitation of Wiriki Tooma, Secretary of the Public Service Office, Carolyn Langley and Lynley Ducker of the POA Secretariat went to Kiribati. The purpose of the visit was to look at the feasibility of setting up a non-legislative complaint-handling scheme for complaints about Kiribati government agencies.

Carolyn and Lynley talked about the benefits of complaint handling at a roundtable workshop for government officials. The officials from different ministries described how they currently manage their complaints, and the options for members of the public at the moment if they are unhappy with government services.



*Wiriki Tooma and Lynley Ducker at the PSO offices before the roundtable*

The roundtable discussed the pros and cons of having a centralised complaint system in one of the offices, such as the Public Service Office, or whether it was better for all the ministries to have functioning internal complaints systems.



*Front - Mrs Meere Tarereua (OIC, Human Resource Management Center, Public Service Office); Right - Mr Bwereti Tewareka (Assistant Secretary of the Public Service Office) Left - Mr Toani B Takirua (Deputy Secretary for the PSO) during workshop at the Kiribati Protestant Church RAK headquarters, Antebuka, Tarawa, Kiribati.*

Carolyn and Lynley also met with the Public Service Commissioner, and talked to the Australian High Commissioner to Kiribati.

The Secretariat is drafting a possible model of complaint-handling process to be further discussed by the government agencies.

Sadly, the visit was overshadowed by the sudden and untimely death of Taam Biribo, the Secretary to Cabinet, on Tuesday 5 October 2010. Taam had been part of the formation of the POA, and will be remembered for his commitment to improving government services in Kiribati. Mr Bruce Barbour, the New South Wales Ombudsman, wrote to the President of Kiribati on behalf of the POA expressing our condolences.

## TWO OFFICERS FROM OCPNG

### **Genly Doura and Geita Malawae**

Two office's from the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea, Finance Manager, Mr Geita Doura and Logistics Manager Mr Genly Malawae, spent two weeks in the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Office in Canberra.

Geita discussed budgeting and internal reporting with members of the Finance team, while Genly met with several different staff members of the office, discussing security, asset management, insurance, building management and other logistical matters.

Throughout their time in Canberra they were able to find useful documents and templates used by different specialist teams which could be modified and applied in the OCPNG context.

Genly and Geita expressed a drive to improve the effectiveness of their respective teams and greatly appreciated the opportunity to attend APSC training specialising in Excel Spreadsheet formulas. Geita said that he will be able to improve many aspects of his teams work through the Excel training by making some manual processes automated.

While they were in Australia, they were also able to watch the second AFL Grand Final, as well as the NRL Final, on the same weekend.

Coincidentally, three other members of the OCPNG were attending an intensive course at the Australian National University, and were also able to enjoy the double header.



## REPORT OF BOARD MEETING AUGUST 2010

The POA Board met by teleconference on 19 August 2010. The following new proposals were agreed to by the Board:

- An outreach project in the Solomon Islands, also attended and assisted by Vanuatu Ombudsman staff.
- A two-month placement for a senior investigation officer in the Cook Islands Ombudsman office, to start in early 2011.
- The Secretariat to develop an induction program for newly appointed Ombudsmen in the region.
- Support for the Vanuatu Ombudsman to reconvene a legislative reform discussion forum.
- Printing of a complaints aerogramme for the Solomon Islands Ombudsman
- Provision of administrative investigations training, and basic web design training, in the Solomon Islands.
- Collection of publicity and outreach materials to form a pool of content that can be drawn on by POA members.

The Board also noted that POA was in a good financial position with funds available for a wide range of activities.

The Board agreed that the next members' meeting would be in the Solomon Islands on 28 – 30 June 2011. The meeting would be expanded from the March 2010 meeting, with more time for individual member countries to talk about the specific issues they face. The meeting will also start to develop a longer-term program for the next three years.

If any members did not receive minutes of this Board meeting, please contact the Secretariat for a copy.



## FORENSIC ACCOUNTING TRAINING IN PNG

Richard Neish and Carolyn Langley travelled to Port Moresby to deliver some much anticipated training in forensic accounting. Over two days, they discussed ethics, corruption, fraud and financial investigation methods with officers from the Ombudsman Commission of PNG. It had originally been anticipated that this training would be of interest to those officers who undertake leadership investigations, but we discovered during the training that many administrative complaints now relate to financial matters, and skills in financial investigations are useful for investigation officers from all over the organisation.



*Officers for the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea listen intently during the recent Forensic Accounting Training*

The training evaluation forms, and the feedback received from the officers who attended the course, indicated that it was well received and valuable. The information provided will be used to further modify and shape the training program, and we plan to offer it again in 2011.



*Nerol Ilarupa receives her certificate from Richard Neish*

## PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER FROM OCPNG

### **Bonner Tito**

Public Bonner Tito, Media and Communications Manager from the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea, spent two weeks with the Public Affairs Team of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in Canberra.

The public affairs team thoroughly enjoyed hosting Bonner, during a busy period for team, heavily focused on finalising its Commonwealth Annual Report 2009–10. This was a shared experience, with Bonner remotely also finalising elements of OCPNG annual reports.

Bonner had the opportunity to sit and discuss communication challenges with each of the team, including outreach and engagement with Maeve Wingate, publications, reports and print coordination with publications officer Anne Delaney. Mark Koehler, a writer in the Canberra team spent time with Bonner discussing writing and editing of publications.

There was also time spent as a full team chatting about the shared challenges in both coordinating communications, as well as how to effectively support teams across the organisation, with diverse communication challenges.

Bonner spent time with three other teams across the Canberra office, including with the Indigenous Unit focused on the Commonwealth's programs in Northern Territory Indigenous communities, the Territories team and their work with agencies both in the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra, ACT) and external territories of Australia, as well as a new team preparing for work of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in his new role in 2011, as the Overseas Students Ombudsman.

The Canberra public affairs team wishes Bonner all the best as he renews his association with PNG radio in late 2010.

## FAREWELL TO GREG ANDREWS

Greg Andrews, Deputy Ombudsman, New South Wales, retired on 11 November. At its August meeting, the Board recorded its appreciation of Greg's work. His efforts and contributions have made an enormous difference to developing the network into the current alliance.



*Greg Andrews explains the finer points of complaint work, with Steve Ranck in 2009*

Greg will be very much missed. The Board hopes he will continue to make his expertise and experience available to POA.

A highlight of Greg's work with the POA was his 2008 liaison visit to Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Greg has also been an important link between the Ombudsmen of the Pacific and the Australian Parliamentary and Industry Ombudsmen.

The NSW Ombudsman has nominated Brendan Delahunty as his representative on the POA Secretariat.



*Greg Andrews (left) asks a difficult question at the APOR / POA meeting in March 2010*

## PALAUN OMBUDSMAN IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

In September, the Ombudsman of Palau, Mr Lucio Ngraiwet, accompanied by two officers from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Mr Jeffrey Antol and Ms Hila Asanuma, travelled to Brisbane to visit the Queensland Ombudsman's Office.

The Palaun delegation then travelled out to the Solomon Islands, to visit the Solomon Island's Ombudsman, Mr Joe Poraiwai, and the Chairman of the Leadership Code Commission, Mr Emmanuel Kouhota.

Their visit coincided with a visit to the Solomon Islands by the Vanuatu Ombudsman, Mr Pasa Tosusu. The Ombudsmen were able to exchange a great deal of information regarding running managing Ombudsman offices in small island countries, and the different ways of dealing with administrative investigations, and leadership complaints.

POA would like to express its gratitude and appreciation to the Solomon Islands Ombudsman and to the Chairman of the LCC for allowing the delegation into their offices, and being so generous with their time and hospitality.

## ANTI-CORRUPTION COURSE

**Dan Thomas**  
**Commonwealth Ombudsman**

In early October Dan Thomas attended an intensive course on anti-corruption run by Dr Peter Larmour. The course was also attended by master's students from the ANU Crawford School, and a number of public servants from across the NSW public service and the Asia-Pacific, including three officers from OCPNG.

The intensive course was run over 10 full days and was jointly delivered with the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption. The course looked at practical administrative investigations into corrupt conduct and theoretical discourse around risk factors for corrupt conduct to occur.

The smallish size of the class allowed for robust discussions on the material presented in the course which was attended by a variety of anti-corruption practitioners.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- The POA Board will be holding a face-to-face Board meeting in Wellington, New Zealand, on February 24<sup>th</sup> 2011. Please let the Secretariat know if you have any matters to put before the Board, including new proposals for activities or requests for assistance.
- Antonia Di Maio, from the New Zealand Ombudsman's office, will be spending two-months with the Cook Islands Ombudsman early next year.
- The next POA annual members meeting will be held 28 – 30 June 2011 in the Solomon Islands.
- A further forum on legislative reform for the Vanuatu Ombudsman's office will be held in Port Vila on 1 – 2 December 2010.

## CONTACT US

Articles and submissions are welcome. The *Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Network News* is published four times a year.

### **Contact us:**

To submit items for publication, or any other communication with us, please write to us at:

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