

Pacific Ombudsman Alliance ~ Network News

Fostering government integrity and good administration in the Pacific

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SOLOMON ISLANDS LEADERSHIP CODE COMMISSION HOSTS LEGAL OFFICER



(L-R Jerry Suku, Decima Regutule, Enly Sade, Edward Juvia, Chairman Emmanuel Kouhota, Alfred Kadi, Gregory Parkhurst, George Oli)

THE SOLOMON Islands Leadership Code Commission (LCC) hosted Gregory Parkhurst, a Legal Officer from the Commonwealth Ombudsman, on a four week placement in September-October 2012. Gregory's task was to assist with key legislative reforms, provide general legal advice and support, and scope areas for future POA support to the LCC.

The proposed legislative reforms will be critical in improving the effectiveness of the LCC to administer the Leadership Code and keep leaders accountable to the Solomon Island people. The LCC performs a vital role in defining, promoting and managing integrity, disclosure, government contracts, conflicts of interest and the ethical management of public funds.

The proposed amendments broaden the LCC's jurisdiction to cover a wider range of leaders' assets and business transactions. Under the new legislation the penalties for serious cases of misconduct would be significantly increased. Currently, the LCC has the power to impose a maximum fine of SBD \$5,000.

The proposed amendments also include a Tribunal function to be performed by the LCC. This would enable the Commission to directly enforce its own fines and apply other disciplinary sanctions.

During his placement, Gregory worked with the Chairman of the LCC, Emmanuel Kouhota, to prepare a schedule of amendments for consideration by the legislative drafter. Gregory also:

- developed resource material to assist in the interpretation and application of key provisions in the Leadership Code legislation
- updated correspondence templates
- revised the investigation report template used by the LCC.

Due to fortunate timing, Gregory was also able to assist with the LCC's corporate structure and planning for 2013-15 coordinated by a RAMSI-funded corporate planning consultant. He also met with a delegation visiting the LCC from the Australian Public Service Commission.

At the POA members meeting in November 2012, Chairman Kouhota advised that he will be pushing for the legislative reforms to be passed through Parliament in 2013.

IT UPGRADES FOR SOLOMON ISLANDS OMBUDSMAN

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands (OOSI) is upgrading its IT systems and processes, including connecting to the Solomon Islands Government ICT network and implementing SharePoint software to securely store and access office documents.

The impetus for updating the OOSI's IT infrastructure came from recommendations in a report prepared by John Harper (then Director of ICT at the Commonwealth Ombudsman) following an Organisational Assessment conducted in May 2012. The report recommended updating the IT systems and practices to help improve efficiency in the office.



Ombudsman Joe Poraiwai speaking at the POA Members meeting, November 2012

The OOSI has adopted a staged approach to gradually upgrading its ICT systems, with technical support from John and Lifeng Duan, Senior Web and Sharepoint designer, and funded by RAMSI-AusAID.

In June 2012, a complaints spreadsheet was developed and implemented into the office. It has now been populated with 2012 case data by OOSI staff and is capturing some important information which can now be used by the OOSI for case management and reporting.

In November 2012 the OOSI was connected to the central government ICT network. The work on the connection was carried out by OOSI ICT staff with the support of John and Lifeng. At the same time, the OOSI implemented a SharePoint site and framework of access controls to manage the OOSI's files.

Connecting to the central ICT network will have a number of long term benefits for the OOSI. It will enable the office to draw on the resources and expertise of the whole of government ICT unit, and benefit from planned upgrades to the network.

A Memorandum of Agreement was signed by OOSI and the Commonwealth Ombudsman in November. It reaffirms a commitment by both organisations to continue working together into the future.

A CORPORATE FOCUS FOR SAMOAN OMBUDSMAN

THE OFFICE of the Ombudsman of Samoa hosted a delegation from the Commonwealth Ombudsman over 2-14 December 2012. The focus of the visit was twofold:

- to provide corporate training and support to the office
- to review the outcomes of the long term placement of Michael Woodhead, a Commonwealth Ombudsman Investigations Officer.

The visit was a timely opportunity for the Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma and his staff to focus on corporate affairs. The office's functions are expected to expand to include a National Human Rights Institute and Police Investigations Unit. The Ombudsman is planning to recruit new staff and conduct training to build the capacity of his office to carry out all of its functions.

Tracey Frey, Senior Assistant Ombudsman and Chief Operating Officer for the Commonwealth Ombudsman, with Michael and POA Secretariat officer Sina Hutton, delivered a series of workshops on Performance Development, Corporate Planning and Risk Management.

Over the course of the week, the office developed a Performance Development Scheme and put in place a suite of Performance Agreements for all staff. The agreements clarified key roles and responsibilities and set out learning and development opportunities. Risk management was also a focus of the visit, and a draft risk management plan was developed.



Ieti Seiuli and Seiao Saena talk Performance Agreements with Tracey Frey, December 2012

The Ombudsman's office has seen a significant increase in approaches, recording a 5-6 fold increase in complaints since rolling out its Public Outreach Strategy and television advertisement. Templates and record keeping procedures developed by the office have significantly improved efficiency and case management.

The Ombudsman's reports are receiving attention in the Samoan media, and a recently released report on a serious case of police abuse power was the subject of significant public commentary. The Ombudsman's audit role of the Police Professional Standards Unit has also been well received, highlighting some areas for significant improvement.

In addition to this important work, the Ombudsman and his staff, with the assistance of Australian Youth Ambassador for Development Ashley Bowe, are busy with legislative reforms and preparing the office to take on its new functions.



Taken from the Samoan Observer, 16 January 2013

The POA was saddened to hear of the widespread devastation caused by Cyclone Evan, including to the Ombudsman's office and homes of his staff. Heartfelt sympathies are conveyed to the Ombudsman, his staff and the Samoan people as they go about the task of recovering and rebuilding.

EXPLORING PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP IN NIUE

Former PNG Chief Ombudsman Ila Geno and POA Secretariat officer Carolyn Langley facilitated a Leadership Workshop in Niue over several days, following a call for assistance to the POA from the Commonwealth Pacific Governance Facility, Commonwealth Secretariat.

The workshop, which was held in Niue over several days, brought together Members of the Niue Legislative Assembly, senior officials and key members of the Niue community. The workshop's aim was to identify and draft good leadership values and ethical standards for Niue leaders, including mechanisms for their adoption and enforcement.

The workshop examined the nine good leadership principles endorsed by the Pacific Island Forum Leaders in the Niue context. The discussions drew on Mr Geno's extensive experience with the Leadership Code in PNG and the POA's experience with the Complaint Handling Ombudsman Backed System (CHOBS) trial.

The workshops were extremely productive and produced a set of Leadership Principles which have now been tabled in Parliament for endorsement, with a plan to guide their implementation.



The workshop group in Niue, with Mr Geno centre front (in white shirt)

OCPNG AND CO TWINNING

The Ombudsman Commission of PNG (OCPNG) and Commonwealth Ombudsman have reaffirmed their commitment to an ongoing twinning program. Subject to funding approval from AusAID, the two organisations plan a busy year of activities in 2013.

The OCPNG's leadership, led by Acting Chief Ombudsman Phoebe Sangetari, met with the Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman George Masri and staff from both offices in Port Moresby on 9 December to review the outcomes of the 2012 program and plan for the year ahead.

Despite a difficult year, both offices affirmed the value of the longstanding and strong relationship that they shared and the importance of maintaining the twinning program into the future.

Returned placement officers, Vagi Boga, Samuel Moang, Simon Kwalimu and Bill Kapen shared their considered reports with the meeting, and highlighted key areas of success and opportunities for improvement.

Among the recommendations, the two organisations have agreed to work more closely to refine terms of reference for placements and improve the process for inducting placement officers and supporting their needs during placement and on their return into the office.

2013 will provide more opportunities for training and placements to benefit the OCPNG's Leadership Division. The program also aims to build on the success of outcomes from 2012, particularly in relation to the toll free number program. The OCPNG is also looking at initiating legislative reforms, and this will be another key area of focus for the twinning program.



At work (L-R Dickson Morehari, Director Matthew Damaru, Director Jo Molita and Carolyn Langley)

NEW OMBUDSMAN APPOINTMENTS

POA congratulates Tearoa John Tini on his appointment as Ombudsman of the Cook Islands and Kalkot Mataskeleke on his appointment as Ombudsman of the Republic of Vanuatu. A warm welcome is extended to you both on behalf of the POA and the wider international community of Ombudsmen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

April seminar and workshops in Bangkok

The International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) will host an international seminar and training workshop in Bangkok, Thailand over 3-6 April 2013. The workshop will consist of eight sessions on complaint assessment, effective investigation, acting on findings, effective communication and report. Registration closes on 28 February 2013, if you wish to attend and would like POA support please submit a proposal to the POA Secretariat by no later than 21 February 2013.

CONTACT US

The POA Secretariat would like to wish all a happy and prosperous 2013!

Articles and submissions are welcome. To submit items for publication, or any other communication, please write to us at:

*Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Secretariat
Commonwealth Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
Canberra ACT 2601
AUSTRALIA*
or
Email: pacific@ombudsman.gov.au

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