

Pacific Ombudsman Alliance ~ Network News

Fostering government integrity and good administration in the Pacific

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VANUATU OMBUDSMAN HOSTS POA PLACEMENT

The Office of the Ombudsman of Vanuatu hosted Brendan Delahunty, a senior investigator with the New South Wales Ombudsman's office, on a short term placement in June and July.



Ombudsman Kalkot Mataskelekele with POA placement officer, Brendan Delahunty

Ombudsman Kalkot Mataskelekele requested the placement to examine in greater detail some of the issues identified during the organisational assessment conducted by the POA in March 2012, including:

- legislative reform
- agency relations
- case management
- corporate functions, and
- outreach.

Brendan had previously carried out a long-term legal placement in the Vanuatu Ombudsman's office, also funded by POA, in 2009.

During his time in Vanuatu, Brendan worked with the staff to progress a number of corporate projects. The Ombudsman's office is upgrading its IT equipment and, during Brendan's placement, moved to the whole-of-government ICT network. The

Ombudsman's office is also looking at options to upgrade its case tracking system. Brendan was also able to provide advice to the office on proposed legislative amendments.

In addition to IT developments, the Ombudsman's office has started planning to relocate its Port Vila office to new premises in the coming six months. In addition, the office is looking to recruit a host of new staff, including a Principal Legal Officer, Principal Administrations Officer and a number of investigators.

THE OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION WELCOMES THE COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN TO PNG

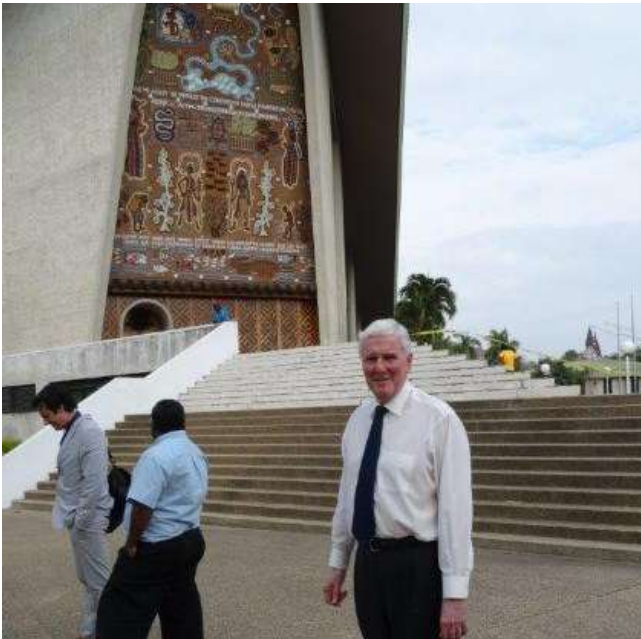
The Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave, was hosted on a visit to the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea on 9 September. Chief Ombudsman Rigo Lua OBE described his strategic vision to strengthen the position of the Ombudsman Commission to address maladministration and corruption and improve the lives of the people of PNG.



Ombudsman Neave with Dickson Morehari and Chief Ombudsman Lua

Ombudsman Neave and Chief Ombudsman Lua acknowledged the importance of international

partnerships such as theirs for integrity agencies working in contested environments. Both Ombudsmen reaffirmed their commitment to an ongoing relationship of mutual support and understanding.



Ombudsman Neave at Parliament House, Port Moresby

NEW ZEALAND OMBUDSMAN CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF FOI

In July, the New Zealand *Official Information Act 1982* turned 30 years old, having come into force in 1983. The *Official Information Act 1982* allows the public to seek access to information held by government. The Ombudsmen have the role of independently reviewing decisions made by government on access requests.

POA BOARD MEETING

The POA Board met via teleconference on 4 September. The Board heard reports on finalised POA activities and proposals for new activities for 2013. Some of the key outcomes of the meeting included:

- An acknowledgement of the importance of the POA for peer-to-peer support, as shown in the past 12 months through a range of induction activities for new Ombudsmen.

- The need for greater collaboration between the POA and other partners in the region in order to maximise the impact of support to its members, particularly where funding is limited.
- The importance of POA ensuring that its members are supported appropriately and over the long term to ensure that impacts are sustainable.

SENIOR INVESTIGATORS FROM THE PNG OMBUDSMAN COMMISSION START PLACEMENTS IN CANBERRA

The Commonwealth Ombudsman's office is currently hosting two placement officers from the Ombudsman Commission of Papua New Guinea. Patrick Niebo and Gerega Asisi, both senior investigators with the Commission, will work in the Commonwealth Ombudsman's Operations Branch for two months.



Mr Molita, Mr Asisi, Chief Ombudsman Lua, and Mr Niebo with Commonwealth Ombudsman officer Simon Bonney

AUSTRALIAN VISIT BY MR RIGO LUA, THE CHIEF OMBUDSMAN OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In October the Commonwealth Ombudsman hosted a one week visit to Australia for Mr Rigo Lua, the Chief Ombudsman of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Mr Lua was accompanied by Mr Joseph Molita, Director of Investigations.

The OCPNG, which is responsible for investigating alleged breaches of the Leadership Code, is exploring possible methods of achieving successful prosecution

of leaders for breaches of the Code, including by prosecuting in its own right.



Mr Molita, Mr Neave, Mr Lua and Mr George Brouwer, Victorian Ombudsman, in Melbourne

The Commonwealth Ombudsman arranged a week of meetings for Mr Lua with relevant agencies, organisations and individuals. Mr Lua met with the Commonwealth, New South Wales (NSW) and Victorian Ombudsmen, the Public Service Commissioner, senior officers from the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman, the Australia Federal Police, the (NSW) Independent Commission Against Corruption, and the (NSW) Police Integrity Commission.



The delegation with New South Wales Ombudsman, Mr Bruce Barbour, and members of his staff

The Commonwealth Ombudsman and the Transnational Research Institute into Corruption also co-hosted a roundtable for Mr Lua at the Australian National University. Mr Lua gave an outline of his role and some of the main challenges facing his office; after which the participants (academics, post-graduate students and other interested parties) had a broad-ranging and interesting discussion.

Following Mr Lua's visit, the Commonwealth Ombudsman and the OCPNG are currently collaborating on a Twinning Activity Plan for 2014, with a focus on operational security, investigatory practices and procedures, and prosecution.

COMMONWEALTH OMBUDSMAN GETS WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

In mid-July, federal legislation was passed in Australia to create a public interest disclosure scheme. The scheme promotes internal reporting of suspected wrongdoing in public sector agencies by providing a framework and robust protections for public officials who make qualifying disclosures under the scheme.

Under the new laws, which will come into operation in January 2014, the Commonwealth Ombudsman will have wide-ranging responsibilities to:

- assist agencies and public officials in relation to the operation of the scheme by providing advice, education, training and guidance
- raise awareness of the scheme across the Australian public sector and the community more generally
- set standards relating to the operation of the scheme, for example, standards on receiving, investigating and reporting public interest disclosures
- oversee the operation of the scheme through our complaint taking, investigation and auditing functions
- conduct investigations into public interest disclosures where the Ombudsman believes it is appropriate
- report annually to parliament on the operation of scheme.

SAMOAN OMBUDSMAN LEADS COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO PRISON

Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma will chair a Commission of Inquiry investigating allegations of mismanagement and abuse of power in Tafaigata prison. A further report is [here](#).

UPCOMING EVENTS

The POA will hold its annual members meeting in Adelaide, Australia, on 4 April 2014 to coincide with the Australasia and Pacific Ombudsman Region meeting. Further information will be circulated to members in the coming weeks.

POA WEBSITE

For more information about the POA, its activities and helpful publications and resources check out the website 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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Previous issues of *Pacific Ombudsman Alliance Network News* are stored electronically and are available at www.pacificombudsman.org.

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