



Ombudsman Quarterly Review

The quarterly update of Ombudsman news, reports, investigations and more.

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Ombudsman
Tuia kia ōrite • Fairness for all

Integrity without borders

Work towards good governance, integrity and human rights across the Asia-Pacific has been strengthened with a bilateral agreement between the New Zealand and Thailand Ombudsman Offices.

Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier and Ombudsman Thailand General Viddhavat Rajatanun signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Bangkok on 11 February, setting out how the two offices will foster international cooperation in complaint handling, good governance and the protection of human rights.

This includes working together on capacity building programmes such as workshops, training, study visits and expert exchanges to promote and enhance Ombudsmanship across the Pacific and Southeast Asia.

"In today's world, resilient and supportive relationships among integrity institutions such as ours are more important than ever" Mr Boshier said at the signing. "The more we work constructively together, the greater our effectiveness at home and on the world stage. This agreement has the potential to move Ombudsmanship in our regions to a whole other level".

The signing took place at an International Seminar commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Ombudsman Thailand's establishment. Mr Boshier also took part in a panel session on *Challenges to Ombudsmanship: impacts and solutions in a changing world*.



Back to number one

First in the world, equal with Denmark.

This year's Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index has restored New Zealand to world leader in the lowest perceived levels of public corruption. Something to celebrate and maintain.

The annual Corruption Perceptions Index ranks 180 countries and territories on a scale ranging from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (very clean). In the Index released this year, Denmark and New Zealand topped the scale, with both achieving 87/100.

More broadly, Transparency International warns that this year's Index shows most countries with little to no improvement in tackling corruption. More than two-thirds of countries score below 50, with an average score of just 43.

"Governments must urgently address the corrupting role of big money in political party financing, and the undue influence it exerts on our political systems". *Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair, Transparency International*.



From the Chief Ombudsman

Tēnā koutou

At the International Ombudsman Seminar in Thailand in February, I took part in a panel discussion about challenges to Ombudsmanship in today's changing world. In my talk I set out the three clear challenges that in my view face all integrity institutions across the globe.

First, the need for constant vigilance against the rising threat of corruption.

Second, the need to be heard amid the increasing noise of social media and the fragmentation of traditional media.

Third, the need to demonstrate our relevance and worth to all the people we serve, particularly the most vulnerable.

This last challenge is a significant one for my Office. Our motto is 'fairness for all'—and all must mean all, with no exceptions.

Yet our data shows that many of the people we want to reach have little, if any, knowledge about my Office. And awareness among youth, Māori and Pasifika is considerably lower than among older Pākehā.

Reaching these communities is a professional responsibility for my Office, and also a personal responsibility for me as Chief Ombudsman.

I've established my first external advisory board, Pūhara Mana Tangata, to guide and advise me as I engage with Te Ao Māori.

This engagement is more important than ever, as we increasingly work in areas that greatly concern and impact on Māori.

It will help ensure that we really do stand by our motto: tuia kia ōrite, fairness for all.

E noho rā

Peter Boshier

Pūhara Mana Tangata: Watchtower of the people

Pūhara Mana Tangata, Watchtower of the people, is the Chief Ombudsman's first external advisory group. Its purpose is to guide and advise on our communications and engagement with Te Ao Māori. Chaired by Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier, its members are a mix of senior and rangatahi leaders from throughout Te Ao Māori. **Below, left to right:**



Juscinta Grace, Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāi Tahu

Jacob McGregor, Ngā Rauru Kītahi, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui, Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Rangitāne o Wairau, Ngāti Kuia.

Lady Tureiti Moxon, Ngāti Pāhauwera, Ngāti Kahungunu, Kāi Tahu

Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier

Dame Naida Glavish, Ngāti Whātua

Neville Baker, Ātiawa, Ngāti Mutunga

George Konia (kaumatua) Ngāti Porou

Arihia Bennett, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Porou, Ngāpuhi

Sharing the mahi for children in care

A series of nationwide hui kicked off in January about the work underway to strengthen oversight of the Oranga Tamariki system and protect the rights of people within it.

The Ombudsman, the Children's Commissioner and the Independent Children's Monitor are visiting cities, towns, and marae from Invercargill to Kaitiā. Twelve hui have been held through January and February, with seven more scheduled for March.

"The purpose is to introduce ourselves to local iwi, providers, community groups and children's professionals, and start to build the relationships that are so important to this work", says Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier.

"We're fielding plenty of questions and challenges at these hui, with passionate and committed people determined to create real change for New Zealand's tamariki and rangatahi", Mr Boshier says. "It's clear we'll be held to account for what we achieve, and we're up to the task".

Mr Boshier says the hui are also a chance to outline just how the system of strengthened oversight will work:

- The Independent Children's Monitor will monitor the overall Oranga Tamariki system against National Care Standards
[Independent Children's Monitor](#)
- The Children's Commissioner will carry out research and advocacy
[Office of the Children's Commissioner](#)
- The Chief Ombudsman will handle complaints and investigations
[Office of the Ombudsman](#)

At the hui we're debuting our new te reo video *Ngā mahi a te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata—The work of the guardian of the mana of the people*. Check it out on Youtube.

[Ngā mahi a te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata](#).

In case you missed it ...

The Department of Corrections refused a journalist's request for written and audio correspondence about a death in custody, on the grounds that substantial collation would be required. The Ombudsman found there was no basis to refuse the request for this reason, but that the audio recordings should be withheld on the grounds of privacy.

[Case note: Request for information about death in custody](#)

A superannuitant was offered a \$3000 ex gratia payment from the Ministry of Social Development, for the financial disadvantage he'd suffered due to an administrative error. The Ombudsman found this amount was unreasonable in light of the stress and loss suffered, and recommended an additional payment of \$2000.

[Case note: Ex-gratia payment for superannuitant in receipt of overseas pension](#)

The State Services Commission refused a request for a detailed breakdown of public service chief executive pay on privacy grounds. The Ombudsman found that the total pay of public sector chief executives should be made public, on the grounds of accountability; but on privacy grounds, 'granular' detail such as a breakdown of base pay and performance-related components should be withheld.

[Case note: Request for information on public service chief executive pay and remuneration](#)



Arise, Sir Robert

Congratulations to Sir Robert Martin, New Zealand's first knight from the disability community. Sir Robert received his knighthood in the 2020 New Year's honours, for his services to the disabled community here and overseas.

Sir Robert is an elected member of the United Nations Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. New Zealanders can complain to this Committee if they believe their rights under the Disability Convention have been breached. Sir Robert talks about how to make a complaint in the video below.

[Supporting the work of the United Nations](#)



Not a game of hide and seek: the sequel

As election year gets underway, the Chief Ombudsman is revisiting a landmark report to see what progress agencies have made in official information practice.

"Five years ago, my predecessor Dame Beverley Wakem released *Not a game of hide and seek*, an in-depth investigation into central government official information practice", says Peter Boshier.

"With the election fast approaching, it's timely for me to follow up on what's changed since the report was published. I want to ensure agencies are meeting their obligations under the Official Information Act and are operating in a culture of openness".

[Read more about the follow-up investigation to Not a Game of Hide and Seek](#)

[Read our official information practice reports](#)



Office of the Ombudsman
Tari o te Kaitiaki Mana Tangata

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