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# WAKATANGATA

## APOR E-NEWS

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**News and views from integrity organisations in the Pacific and Australasia**  
**ISSUE 5: JUNE 2020**

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**Ngā mihi nui kia koutou katoa, warm greetings to you all.**  
**And welcome to this edition of *Wakatangata*.**

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When I started the last edition of Wakatangata with the old adage 'Think globally, act locally' I had no idea how apt those words might seem in the world that we now find ourselves in. Our eyes have been glued to statistics around the world as the numbers of COVID-19 cases have soared, whilst looking locally how we can and must adapt to this 'new normal'. Many of us have had to change our ways of working including moving our staff to working from home and writing new policies and sometimes completely re-writing the plan.

It has been heartening to see how well many offices have been able to adapt and how our important work keeping our governments to account is able to go on even in times of crisis.

Many of our Ombudsmen in the Pacific have had to face other crises in these times most notably Vanuatu and Tonga whose countries were hit hardest by Cyclone Harold. Our thoughts go out to those affected as they rebuild their lives. Their resilience is impressive and we can learn from it. Hamlison Bulu, the Vanuatu Ombudsman, shared this:

*"In the villages in my area (Pentecost), the villagers have organized themselves into one or two groups and move from home to home rebuilding houses destroyed by the Cyclone. Each day they rebuild a new house and move on to another the next day."*

We will all be hit hard by the impacts of COVID and climate change which makes it even more important that we stand together and help each other in the coming year. In New Zealand, my Office was designated an essential service in the early weeks of lockdown, particularly with regards to our monitoring of places of detention. I had the opportunity to air my concerns particularly around the response to COVID-19 in care homes, where we have seen the largest clusters and numbers of deaths, as well as prisoners unduly confined to their cells. I am glad to say that we have been able to resume our on-site inspections and investigations a bit with a strict regime of health and safety precautions. My Office will be publishing reports into these issues later in June.

half way round the world. We hope to find ways to travel within our region in the near future, but in the meantime we have found innovative and interesting ways to use technology to keep in touch, to learn from each other and to do our work. We have learned how to conduct webinars, we have held meetings via Zoom and other platforms, we have fast-tracked our plans to do more via e-learning, and we will be able to use some of these tools far beyond this current crisis.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to Queensland Ombudsman Phil Clarke who steps down in July when he reaches the end of his legislated tenure. Phil has been a trusted colleague during his term, and been a forthright advocate not only for Queensland, but for the region. I wish him all the best for his future adventures ...haere ra Phil.



Ngā mihi, kind regards

Peter Boshier  
Chief Ombudsman, Aotearoa/New Zealand  
Fairness for all/Te tika mo te katoa

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Spotlight on:

## Office of the Ombudsman New Zealand Inaugural Pacific Leadership Forum



*Top Left: Aisea Taumoepeau, Sa'aga Talu Teafa, Maualaivao Pepe Seiuli, Solomon Kalu, Kevin Kepore, Shenagh Gleisner, Alisi Taumoepeau  
Middle Row: Christine Kapalu, Davina Rasch Salanoa, Nooapii Tearea, Hamlison Bulu, Eleanor Tuck, Karen Carter, Melelua Lagi  
Front Row: Beta Turpin, Conchitta Paul Tatireta, Richard Pagen, Rochelle Patten, Peter Boshier*

New Zealand Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier, with the support of his International Development and Engagement (IDE) Team hosted the Inaugural Pacific Ombudsman Leadership Forum I Auckland from 25-27 February 2020. The two-and-a-half day workshop was attended by 15 Pacific delegates from the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

The theme of the two day forum was "Ombudsmen: Trusted Leaders" and covered a range of subjects providing the opportunity for the Pacific delegates to actively participate in workshops, sharing their knowledge and experiences as Ombudsmen and trusted leaders of their countries.

The forum, with a sole focus on Pacific nations, was the first time the Pacific Ombudsman and leaders have had the opportunity to come together at a forum of this nature, some meeting for the first time.

"The forum provided a sense of belonging with one vision – to do good, fairness and justice for the public we serve."

Beta Turpin, Chairman Leadership Commission, Kir bati

Over the course of the workshop, the delegates actively participated in working groups each taking turns to present an issue or challenge they were currently facing. The frank conversations generated within these groups were beneficial in understanding the jurisdiction of each other's Offices.

Through both the presentations and the working groups, the delegates were able to not only identify key areas for development and improvement in their own offices, but recognise where they can offer strategic direction and be more pro-active in supporting each other beyond an annual forum.

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**Spotlight on:**

**Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman**

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## – recent developments

The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman handles complaints about the administrative actions and decisions of Australian government agencies, including the Department of Home Affairs which is responsible for administering immigration detention. As well as handling individual complaints about immigration detention, the Office has been visiting immigration detention facilities on a regular basis for almost 15 years.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office has temporarily suspended its physical inspections of immigration detention facilities in favour of a remote monitoring inspection. We are meeting regularly with senior staff at the Department to understand its arrangements for preventing and, if necessary, managing the spread of COVID-19 in immigration detention. In particular we are aware the Department has implemented a number of strategies across the network, which are informed by the [CDNA Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Correctional and Detention Facilities in Australia](#), and are actively monitoring the Department's adherence to the Guidelines.

Since the emergence of COVID-19, many in the community have called for the numbers of people in immigration detention to be reduced to better ensure social distancing arrangements. Earlier this year, the Ombudsman [published](#) a report summarising the results of the Office's immigration detention monitoring activities between January and June 2019.

While these monitoring activities have been performed for many years, this marks the beginning of a new practice of publishing a period report on these activities. The report includes observations from the Office's inspections of immigration detention facilities, and also highlighted recommendations the Ombudsman has made to the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs in respect of individuals in immigration detention for more than two years. In particular, the Ombudsman recommended that the Minister and his department address instances of prolonged detention by finding ways to expedite its resolution of detainees' statuses and, wherever it is possible and reasonable, provide for people to live in the community while that process is completed.

Although this report was prepared before the COVID-19 crisis emerged, its findings remain entirely relevant and the Commonwealth Ombudsman will continue to make these recommendations in appropriate cases and in public reports on his detention oversight activities. The next report on our immigration detention monitoring activities between July and December 2019 is likely to be published in late June 2020

### Recent activity – Basic Fraud and Financial Crime Investigation course

In March 2020, as part of its partnership with the Ombudsman Office of Samoa (OOS) and the Samoa Audit Office (SAO), a four day basic fraud and financial crime investigation training was delivered to staff from the Ombudsman Office of Samoa, the Samoa Audit Office, the Samoa Police Force (Fraud Unit) and Samoa Corrections officers in Apia, Samoa.

The training was delivered by Ms Julie Witham President of the Brisbane Chapter of the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, and covered a range of topics including how to plan and conduct an investigation, evidence management, interviewing techniques, preparing witness statements and a mock court activity. The participants developed skills in detecting and identifying fraudulent and corrupt behaviour, analysis and problem-solving, as well as risk management strategies.



*Pictured: Ms Julie Witham (trainer – third from left front row) with staff from the Ombudsman Office of Samoa, the Samoa Audit Office, the Samoa Police Force (Fraud Unit) and Samoa Corrections officers in Apia, Samoa.*

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Spotlight on:

## Queensland Ombudsman



In this time of managing COVID-19, the Office of the Queensland Ombudsman is focused on the safety and wellbeing of staff, visitors, and clients.

In response to the pandemic, we suspended face-to-face contact with the public and all training up to 30 June 2020. As we established safe business continuity measures, public access phones were also temporarily suspended, but they have now been resumed for limited hours.

During this disruption we have continued with important complaints management and investigative work, including releasing the [Management of child safety complaints – second report](#): *An investigation into the management of child safety complaints within the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women.*



crucial to ensuring any clients' concerns with the actions and decisions of the Department in administering Queensland's child protection system can be raised and rectified appropriately. This investigation found that the current complaints management system is not an effective mechanism to rectify poor decision-making or improve business practices.

As a result of the failures in its complaints handling, the Department is almost certainly under-reporting its child safety complaints, and is potentially wasting resources through duplication of effort.

The availability of accessible, fair and efficient complaints handling is critical to the proper operation of the child safety system in Queensland. The Department's current complaints management system is not meeting that need. This report makes recommendations aimed at assisting the Department to implement best practice across all facets of complaints management.

In July, I bid farewell as the Queensland Ombudsman as I have reached the end of my legislated tenure. Over my time in this role, I have made many friends in the APOR region, particularly in Pacific ombudsman offices. I have greatly appreciated your friendship, support and guidance over my term. My thanks to all of my Ombudsman friends. I wish you well for the future.

Phil Clarke  
Queensland Ombudsman

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### Spotlight

## Victoria

### Working in a COVID Environment

Like Ombudsman offices the world over, and indeed society at large, COVID-19 has very suddenly changed our landscape. Not only have my staff had to change overnight to performing their duties from their homes, so have all the agencies we deal with. While we are very fortunate to have the technology in place to allow us all to work remotely, it has not been without challenges – not least the fatigue of too many online meetings.

With regard to the work itself, social distancing requirements have forced us to get creative. We have conducted witness interviews online, allowing us to progress investigations that may otherwise have stalled. We have also worked with the Government to amend regulations to allow us to digitally obtain statutory declarations and affidavits, as well as to serve documents electronically. Despite finding these and other workarounds, we have also had to find patience. The agencies we look at are also under pressure and we have to be sensitive to this when deciding what matters to enquire into and what to expect from them.

Adapting to the Coronavirus has also meant getting creative with our external communications. Reporting on the virus has wholly consumed the media and public's attention, causing us to think about our own messaging. So we are using social media more than ever, letting people know we can assist with some of their COVID-related concerns – though not, alas, the many complaints about travel agents not refunding flights. Regarding matters within jurisdiction, complaints have centred on agencies who have not adapted their decision making or exercised appropriate discretion to fit with the times. So far this seems to be a small portion of agencies, and most, once they have been alerted to the issue, are generally quick to resolve it.

One area of concern is the corrections environment, and we are in frequent contact with

accommodation, but not as many as we had anticipated. We are closely monitoring our complaint data to identify and deal with new issues as they arise.

I hope this snapshot has provided insight into how we are dealing with the challenges of COVID-19, and I wish you all strength as you adapt to and overcome your own.

Deborah Glass  
Victorian Ombudsman

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### Spotlight

## Te Mato Akamoeau – Cook Islands Office of the Ombudsman Annual Report Milestone

Te Mato Akamoeau Cook Islands Office of the Ombudsman has achieved numerous objectives over the last six months. One of the most noteworthy of these was the development of the Annual Report that was tabled in Cook Islands Parliament in December 2019 for the first time in over 12 years.

Spearheaded by Eleanor Tuck and Antonia Di Maio from the Office of the New Zealand Ombudsman, workshops and collaboration sessions were completed in a week to produce a descriptive and meaningful report. The report detailed functions of the office, cases that were investigated, a breakdown of the types of cases and summary of our financial position. The amount of hard work and tenacity shown by the team during this tight timeline was commendable.



*Pictured: (L) Antonia Di Maio (NZ) facilitating report writing workshop (R) Eleanor Tuck (NZ), Joyce Ingram (CI) and Jeanine Daniels (CI) attending report writing workshop.*

During development of the Annual Report, an internal Case Management System (CMS) was also developed in partnership with a local programmer. The CMS was named TAMA. TAMA is an acronym of our office name and the Cook Island Maori phrase – Te Mato Aka Moe Au which can mean ‘peacemaker’ and connoting strength and humility. TAMA has the capability to track and monitor case statuses and act as a database where cases are stored, and reports can be formulated. The introduction of TAMA and its use within the office will provide an advantage when collating this year’s Annual Report. Click [here](#) for a

The end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020 saw a number of staff movements and provided the opportunity for the Cook Islands Ombudsman's Office to regroup and make necessary decisions for the future of the office.



*Pictured: (L) Jeannine Daniel speech during her farewell (R) Ombudsman – Nooapii Tearea speech during farewell for Jeannine Daniel*

We have engaged the services of an experienced Business Analyst to assist us with developing and executing our strategic plan. Through a number of discussions and a few workshops we have started creating an environment which encourages 'blue sky thinking' whilst also remaining pragmatic and upholding our core functions of investigations. Watch this space.

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### Spotlight on

## Office of the Ombudsman, Vanuatu Amendment of the Vanuatu Ombudsman Act [CAP 252]

A recent amendment to the Ombudsman Act, which was officially gazetted on the 6th February 2020 has brought two new changes for the Vanuatu Office of the Ombudsman:

- Vanuatu Ombudsman, Hamlison Bulu, now has the power to appoint all staff in his office. Previously, the Public Services Commission made all appointments of staff. This amendment is a welcome change, and will enable greater independence for the Office. As an example of a first under the amended Act, Ombudsman Bulu extended the employment contract and also promoted Eric Csiba to the position of Legal Advisor for a period of not more than five years. Mr. Csiba continues to be instrumental in ensuring that the Ombudsman's legislation reform programme is achieved. He is currently working on changes to the Office's governing legislation to enhance the functions of the Ombudsman and to protect the independence of the Ombudsman.
- The amendment also creates two additional Deputy Ombudsmen positions. Vanuatu is a small country, and the Ombudsman often knows many government leaders. This can sometimes cause a conflict of interest in investigations into leaders. Having two Deputies will assist in dealing with cases where there is a conflict.



A team from the Office visited Santo on the 19 May 2020 after the recent passage of Tropical Cyclone Harold on the 10th of April 2020. The purpose of the trip was to visit the Ombudsman branch office in Luganville and call on a number of prominent leaders of Sanma Province. The Ombudsman visited the Luganville Municipal Council, Sanma Provincial Government Council, the Department of Corrections Probation Unit, and the Police Force. The Ombudsman also had a very constructive meeting with Chiefs in Santo. The Ombudsman informed the Chiefs that they are also a law enforcement institution at the village and community level, and that they administer and uphold customary laws, which is declared by the Constitution to be part of the laws of Vanuatu. This was new information to many Chiefs. The Ombudsman's presentation was centred on the importance of chiefs in the communities and how the government system tended to ignore their value. The Chiefs were inspired and motivated to continue to take pride in the work they do as a law enforcement agency in their respective communities.

*From left to right: Principal Investigator Charley Johnsen, Secretary General Albert Rudley, Ombudsman Hamlison Bulu, Director General Complaint Investigations Velma Karabani and Principal Corporate Service Officer Christine Kapalu.*

### Using the courts to assist Ombudsman investigations

The Office has also undertaken a number of firsts, in its effort to inquire into the conduct of leaders under the Leadership Code. First, the Office was successful in obtaining a search warrant from the courts to assist it with collecting documents for an investigation. Secondly, the Office went to the Supreme Court to seek the Court's assistance in ordering that a witness comply with assisting the Ombudsman fully. Despite the orders of the Court, the witness failed to assist the Ombudsman fully in his investigation. He continued to frustrate the investigation by not complying with the terms of the order. The Ombudsman went back to the Court, and the Court advised him to seek the Public Prosecutor's assistance in prosecuting the individual. Ombudsman Bulu is awaiting the result of this prosecution. He sees these successes in the courts as useful in ensuring that the Ombudsman's powers of investigation are clear to leaders and the public service, and that non-compliance will not simply make matters go away, as it may have done in the past.

### First Public Report of 2020 released

The Office released its first [public report](#) of the year on 19 May 2020. The report found that the process the Ministry of Education used to inform Mrs. Linda George of her retirement was poorly managed and not made in accordance with the Law. The Ombudsman would like to see an end to the current practice that violates the right of an employee to be informed of his or her retirement in good time and the payment of severance allowances before the officer leaves the service on retirement.

### Extension of Ombudsman Haus in Port Vila

On 14th of May 2020, Ombudsman Hamlison Bulu signed a contract for the completion of the Extension of the Ombudsman Haus in Vila. This construction project started late December 2019 and is expected to be complete by end of July 2020. That extension of the current Office was urgent and important to enable the Ombudsman to increase its staff capacity to improve the performance of its core function.

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**Spotlight on****Office of the Ombudsman, Solomon Islands**  
**Scaled down operations due to COVID-19**

The Governor General declared a State of Public Emergency (SoPE) in The Solomon Islands during March. At the advice of The Ministry of Public Service the Ombudsman's Office operations were scaled down adhering to the prevention measures in avoiding possible transmission of COVID-19 should it reach the Solomon Islands. The SoPE will remain in place for four months.

The scaled down operations has left the Ombudsman's Office untypically idle. With the exception of a few Heads of Units, the majority of the Office are on temporary leave, creating a huge gap in the day-to-day operations of the Office.

With the Office almost empty and limited officers to receive and deliberate on complaints from the public, the Office decided the best course of action was to put out notice informing the public that throughout this emergency period complaints could only be made via email. Consequently, the number of complaints received in the month of April reached a bare minimum, and the Office anticipates the same for the next few months.

A number of important services have been affected including:

- the discontinuation of a weekly radio talk-back-show providing updates and advocacy on various aspect of the Ombudsman's mandate to the public
- all investigation cases have been put on hold along with office related tours to the provincial government centres and the islands.
- that the Office has had to postpone some of its important events and programs like meetings, workshops, conferences and so forth in order to adhere to social distancing rules associated with COVID-19 imposed measures.

As a result of COVID, the Office's annual work plan for 2020 has been severely disrupted and we anticipate will take quite some time before normality can be restored and operations are back on track. It is still not certain how long the SoPE will last, however, the Office is anticipating picking up from where it left as soon as the SoPE is over.

In brief, the COVID-19 and its SoPE associated regulations has limited the performing of the Ombudsman's mandated duties to the public, and in many ways affected the services that the Office provide to deal with administrative grievances.

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**Spotlight on****Hong Kong SAR, China**  
**Office arrangements during the COVID-19**  
**Pandemic**

COVID-19 hit Hong Kong in late January, right after the Chinese New Year and while there has been no citywide lock down, there are restrictions on public gatherings and businesses involving a high risk of cross infection.

the virus in the community while maintaining basic services. Members of the public are encouraged to contact the Office through email, fax, hotline, voice message or online form. Additional precautionary measures were implemented to maintain hygiene at the office premises.

#### Initiation of own-motion investigations

(Details : [https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/case\\_investigations/index](https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/case_investigations/index))

The surgical masks manufactured by Correctional Services Department (commonly referred to as "CSI masks ") are mainly supplied to the Government Logistics Department for distribution to various departments in need. Amid the recent spike in public demand for surgical masks, the media and some members of the public noted that CSI masks are being sold on the market, calling into question the system and procedures regulating the production, distribution and stocktaking of CSI masks. The Ombudsman decided to launch a direct investigation into the subject.

In March 2017, an escalator of a shopping mall suddenly slid backwards at high speed causing injuries to 18 passengers. Serious lift accidents followed in April and May 2018 at other locations resulting in one death and two critical injuries. These accidents have aroused wide concern about the safety and repair/maintenance of lifts and escalators. The Ombudsman decided to launch a direct investigation into the related regulatory system.

#### Publication of own-motion investigation reports

During the period, The Ombudsman has completed and published four reports on direct investigation.

(Details :

[https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/direct\\_investigations](https://ofomb.ombudsman.hk/abc/en-us/direct_investigations) )

Lands Department's enforcement against commercial use of public pedestrian passages and public atria in private malls - the Ombudsman has made seven recommendations to enhance the efficiency of enforcement action and better information dissemination to the public.

Idle flyovers and 'Bridges to nowhere' - the Ombudsman considered that the Government should regularly review the planning and development of idle road sections or stub ends to avoid them being idle for a long time; step up its lobbying

road network; and set up an integrated information platform to facilitate public enquiry of information on the planning, progress and latest status of the proposed road works.

Education Bureau's mechanisms for approving applications for school fee revision by direct subsidy scheme/private schools and collection of other charges by private schools - the Ombudsman pointed out that its long-established practice of approving charges such as debentures, construction fees and nomination right fees by private schools is incompatible with the legal requirement. The Ombudsman has urged the Bureau to improve the approval mechanism.

Mechanisms for verifying travel records of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance/Social Security Allowance applicants and recipients - to qualify for assistance or an allowance, applicants must satisfy the prescribed eligibility criteria, including residence requirements. The Ombudsman found that the established mechanism is unable to check the accurate travel records if applicants used different travel documents to exit and/or enter the territory. The Ombudsman recommended the Social Welfare Department to complete all the enhancements to the data matching system as soon as possible.

#### The Ombudsman's Awards

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The Office hosted a presentation ceremony of The Ombudsman's Awards on 8 November 2019. The aim of the awards are to acknowledge professionalism in handling complaints and to foster a positive culture of service in the public sector. The Grand Award this year went to the Immigration Department, while the Post Office and the Social Welfare Department were the runners-up. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) was presented the Award on Mediation. Fifty-four public officers were presented the Individual Awards to recognise their valuable contributions in complaint handling and customer service.

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Spotlight on

**New South Wales Ombudsman Office**  
**Survive, revive, thrive**



... since discovering earlier that an employee or another tenant of our building had tested positive for COVID-19.

We were able to allow staff restricted access to our offices from 20 April, with strict control measures in place, including limits on the total number of staff on site.

We managed to get through that initial period while maintaining essential services, although timeliness has suffered in some areas of our operation.

Our priority has been to ensure we can still meet the needs of communities and individuals disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 crisis including those in correctional facilities.

Remote operations have been challenging due to the constraints of our IT network capacity: a priority has been upgrading our network and the implementation of Microsoft 365 to enable staff productivity and collaboration.

We are in Phase 2 of a three-phase 'Survive, Revive, Thrive' approach to building our organisation's resilience, with the goal being to be in Phase 3 ('Thrive') by 1 July 2020.

Our staff's response to the crisis has been outstanding, and we are continuing to fulfil our mandate as an Ombudsman's office while still looking out for each other's health and well-being.

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### Spotlight on

## Office of the Ombudsman, NZ Upholding OPCAT in a Level 4 Covid-19 Lockdown

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Like many countries, New Zealand went into lockdown in March 2020 with non-essential businesses and facilities closing their doors, with those essential services remaining open subject to strict guidelines and protocols. The Chief Ombudsman's OPCAT teams were recognised as an essential service by the Government enabling them to carry out inspections in places of detention.

The Chief Ombudsman re-set his pre-planned OPCAT programme in light of COVID-19 and, recognising the importance of this function at this uncertain time, decided to undertake a mixture of remote monitoring. Primarily through information gathering and targeted on-site inspections these inspections were of shorter duration than a 'normal' inspection, and attended by fewer inspectors.

In re-setting the programme, the Office communicated our health and safety policy and procedures for visiting places of detention to the Ministry of Health and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and went to great lengths to ensure all inspectors adhered to the strict guidelines, and were wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Early on in the lockdown, we developed a Statement of Principles to guide facilities and their staff in managing this crisis, while meeting New Zealand's international human rights obligations. The Chief Ombudsman's Statement of Principles is located at:

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/opcat-inspections-during-covid-19-pandemic-update-and-statement-principles-poster>

These principles are based on advice from the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25756&LangID=E>

The Office also developed a specific set of criteria to apply when undertaking these inspections. You can find these on our website at:

<https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/criteria-opcat-covid-19-inspections>

Reports on our inspections will be published in June, and will cover mental health facilities, prisons and aged-care facilities.

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### Spotlight on

## Office of the Ombudsman, NZ Interview with an investigator – Larney McLean (IRT3)

### 1. Kia ora Larney! Would you like to start by telling us a bit about yourself?

Kia ora, my name is Larney McLean and I am originally from Pukekohe, New Zealand. My iwi are Ngāti Porou (East Cape) and Tainui (Waikato). I left school at 15 as soon as I got school certificate in English and Maths, with the intention of working towards a butchery apprenticeship in South Auckland. This job that exposed me to a diverse range of cultures particularly from the Pacific. After doing this for a number of years, I left New Zealand to travel overseas and upon my return thought I needed a change in direction and decided to go work with the Department of Corrections as a prison officer.

### 2. What is your role in the Office of the Ombudsman?

I am an investigator in our Auckland-based office. My team is one of three teams responsible for investigating complaints, normally the complaints unsuitable for early resolution. We look for resolutions, and assist the Ombudsman in forming an opinion on a complaint and any recommendations

### 3. Could you tell me a bit about your journey to the Ombudsman and what skills you have brought with you?

During my time working as corrections officer, I came into contact with Ombudsman staff that were conducting prison inspections, and realised this was an area of work I was interested in heading towards. So in 2015 I enrolled in a Law Degree at the University of Waikato, while also continuing to work full time as a corrections officer. I graduated three years later with Honours, and on my graduation day I got a call from the Ombudsman's Office to say that I had been successful in my application for an investigators role. In terms of skills I have brought to my role as an investigator, my time as a prison officer really instilled me with the importance of treating others fairly and with the same respect that you would want to be treated with. Going back further, my time working at a butchery in South Auckland gave me real exposure to Pacific cultures and taught me to relate and connect with a range of people.

### 4. What does your typical day in the office look like? And how has this changed with COVID-19?

A typical day would see me spend around half my time corresponding with complainants and agencies, be that over the phone or in writing. My work varies a lot from complaints about local government to complaints around requests for official information. COVID-19 has seen my workload remain much the same but just a drop in the amount of phone communication. Trouble with my internet connection at home has also made things a bit harder!

get to interact with, whether that be in my office, with other agencies, or the complainants themselves. The variety of the work is something I also enjoy but can also pose a challenge. Other challenges can include the amount of background reading and research required in order to assist the Chief Ombudsman with forming a fair opinion for cases.

**6. What is the best piece of advice you could give to a fellow investigator?**

I would say don't be shy in asking questions of your colleagues, complainants or the agencies you are dealing with. If you are new as an investigator I understand that you may feel fearful about doing this, but being as open and approachable as you can is a great thing, especially for your confidence. Also, if something doesn't feel or seem right, don't be afraid to follow up on that feeling.

**7. What is your favourite place you have visited in the Pacific or Asia? Or where you would like to travel most in the Pacific or Asia?**

I haven't actually travelled through the Pacific or Asia but I would really like to go to the Cook Islands. It would be fascinating to visit as it is a place with deep connections to some of the waka (canoe) that journeyed to Aotearoa (New Zealand) during the great Polynesian migration.

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### Upcoming event

#### Annual APOR conference

At this stage, we are intending to hold the annual APOR conference this year, most likely in November. Things may change as we get into the 'new normal', but pencil it in. You'll be sent details as soon as they are available.

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### We welcome your feedback and contributions...

[Submit feedback](#)

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

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