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ISSUE 17 updated: June 2026

**News and views from integrity organisations in the
Australasia and Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR)**



Welcome to this edition of Waka Tangata

Message from APOR Regional President

Kia ora, Talofa lava, Halo, Hello, Kia orana, Alo keta,

Greetings to the esteemed members of APOR.

Welcome to the 17th Edition of the Waka Tangata, the Australasian Pacific Ombudsman Region newsletter.

The first six months of 2026 have been busy for many offices in our region, and I hope you enjoy reading about the work everyone's been involved in. In addition to important updates from our colleagues, this issue covers interesting topics such as the:

- Commonwealth Ombudsman celebrating their first anniversary as a National Student Ombudsman,
- Control Yuan's role in preventing lung cancer in women, and
- the free online training available from the Queensland Ombudsman.

More recently, we have cause to celebrate, with former APOR Director and former Chief Ombudsman for New Zealand, Peter Boshier, being made a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to the State and Judiciary. This is a great achievement and a testament to the impact of Ombudsmanship.

The International Ombudsman Institution (IOI) has also acknowledged Peter's contribution on the international front. His unwavering support and commitment helped shape the strategic direction of the IOI and its structure. Peter has been awarded IOI Honorary Life Membership in recognition of this work.

Kia Manuia e te katoatoa.

Warmest regards

Niki Rattle

APOR President
Cook Islands Ombudsman

Samoa Office of the Ombudsman/National Human Rights Institution (NHRI)

Friendly schools programme strengthens human rights awareness in Savai'i

Building awareness of human rights among young people is an important part of preventing future rights violations and promoting responsible citizenship. As Samoa's National Human Rights Institution, the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman continues this work through its annual *Friendly Schools Programme*.

This year, the programme ran from 9 to 12 June 2026 and engaged Year 9 students from selected colleges across Savai'i. The activities started at Vaiola College and Tuasivi College, where students participated in interactive learning sessions that focused on four key human rights themes: the right to education, health, security, and online safety.



Phaedra Lameko, Senior Human Rights Officer, guides Year 9 students at Vaiola College in Savai'i through an interactive session on Human Rights in Digital Spaces (Aiā Tatau Fa'atekonolosi) as part of the Samoa Office of the Ombudsman's Friendly Schools Programme

A key feature of the programme is the *Human Rights Passport*. This provides students with a simplified version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and asks practical questions to strengthen their understanding of fundamental rights and responsibilities.

The Friendly Schools Programme supports the Office's mandate under Section 33 of the Ombudsman (Komesina o Sulufaiga) Act to promote public awareness and education on human rights. Through engaging in activities appropriate to their age, students learn how human rights apply in their daily lives and are encouraged to contribute to safe, respectful and inclusive school communities.

This initiative demonstrates the value of early human rights education in strengthening awareness, accountability and respect for the rights of others. The programme continues throughout Savai'i, with additional schools scheduled to participate.

For more information on the Friendly Schools Programme, visit the Office of the Ombudsman Samoa [Facebook](#) page and [Office of the Ombudsman | National Human](#)

Ombudsman New Zealand

Knighthood for former Chief Ombudsman

In the King's birthday honours, former Chief Ombudsman for New Zealand, Peter Boshier, was appointed a Knight Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to the State and the judiciary. This is a well-deserved honour; one that we believe also reflects the mana of our Office.



Former Ombudsman Peter Boshier

Sir Peter is among a distinguished line of New Zealanders who have served as Ombudsman including five other Knights, and one Dame. In 1962, New Zealand's first Ombudsman Sir Guy Powles was appointed. Other Ombudsmen with the title included Sir George Laking, Sir John Robertson, Sir Brian Elwood, Sir Anand Satyanand and Dame Beverley Wakem. In addition, John Belgrave held the knighthood honour-equivalent of 'Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit' (DCNZM) for his public services as Chief Ombudsman.

As Sir Guy Powles said, the Ombudsman is "put there for the protection of the individual, and if you protect the individual, you protect society."

Oversight partners call for child protection system improvement

New Zealand's three oversight partners held their [first joint media conference](#) on 18 February to highlight [the findings](#) from the Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor's (the Monitor) most recent review of progress into strengthening the child protection system.

The Ombudsman, the Monitor, and Mana Mokopuna | Children's Commissioner, together highlighted the importance of health, education, welfare, and justice agencies working together and alongside community organisations to ensure children are better protected.

The Monitor's review found that many children are still not being seen by relevant agencies in time, and that systemic issues continue.

Commonwealth Ombudsman, Australia

The Commonwealth Ombudsman continued its core work in helping people and improving government.

We published the investigation report, [Following the law is not optional](#) in January. This report examined the decision of two agencies to not comply with the law for over six years. The Ombudsman made six recommendations on timely remediation of issues, communicating with the public and addressing issues of legislative non-compliance.

In February, our Office celebrated the first anniversary of our role as National Student Ombudsman (NSO), having resolved more than 70% of complaints received from over 4,600 higher education students across Australia. The NSO released its first report in March: [Can I talk about this? The use of confidentiality requirements in university complaint-handling](#), which has seven recommendations for improvement.

As part of the Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism's (NPM) monitoring role under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), we published: [OPCAT in Action - Onshore Immigration Detention](#). This report highlights significant risks arising from a poorly managed change of service provider running detention centres. It includes four recommendations for improvements.

In his capacity as the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Ombudsman, the Ombudsman released a report about complaints from public housing tenants, [Falling through the gaps - How Housing ACT manages tenant requests for repairs to their homes](#). The Ombudsman made eight recommendations to ensure services are provided in a citizen-centric way.

In addition to this, we continued our valued partnership with the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia (ORI), working together on disability awareness, complaints mediation and a workshop in Jakarta on Australia's Compensation for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration (CDDA) scheme.



Jakarta workshop on Australia's Compensation for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration scheme

New South Wales (NSW) Ombudsman, Australia

Complaint Handling Community of Practice

On 29 April, the [Complaint Handling Community of Practice](#) held their first online event of 2026 on the topic, *What the sludge-a-thon taught us about how to improve processes for customers and staff*.

Two hundred and fourteen participants tuned into the event across NSW and Australia, which included a presentation from the Behavioural Insights Unit (BIU) at the Department of Customer Service, a panel discussion from the agencies involved in the sludge-a-thon, (TAFE NSW & NSW Trustee and Guardian), followed by breakout discussion groups and a Q&A.

In Focus – Managing backlogs

In February, we published our first *In Focus* paper for the year, [Managing backlogs](#). The paper draws from recent investigations and case studies, outlining practical approaches to preventing and managing backlogs, including early identification, effective monitoring and transparent communication.

In Focus is a practical resource for NSW government departments, agencies, local councils and community service providers to strengthen oversight, improve decision-making and support timely, lawful and fair administration.



Regional outreach

As part of continued efforts to connect with regional communities, the NSW Ombudsman toured the Central Tablelands in late February.



NSW Ombudsman staff engage with regional communities in the Central Tablelands

Our staff hosted drop-in information stands at local libraries, community centres and schools across the area, while other staff members also joined First Nations community members at the Bathurst Local Aboriginal Land Council.

The tour concluded with NSW Ombudsman, Paul Miller, participating in a panel discussion at a Community Forum in Bathurst, alongside the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and other NSW oversight agency representatives.

Fifth annual NSW Integrity agencies staff symposium

Last November, we hosted the fifth annual NSW Integrity agencies staff symposium.



For five years, this event has served as a forum for staff from NSW Integrity agencies to learn more about each other and develop professional relationships.

Staff from eight agencies participated in the event, which comprised eight presentations about the methods, goals and challenges associated with working in the sector.

Recent publications and reports

- [Investigation into enforcement of fire safety obligations at a residential building in Lane Cove](#)
- [Investigation into icare's processing of actual wage declarations and hindsight adjustments to workers compensation premiums](#)
- [Investigation into the compliance audit program for COVID grants](#)
- [NSW Public sector complaint handling in 2025 – self-assessment and survey results](#)

- [The progress of NSW inmate discipline system reform report](#)
- [“No Capacity to Allocate” – The Department of Communities and Justice’s practice of closing ROSH \(Risk of Significant Harm\) reports](#)
- [Casebook January 2026: Investigations and complaint-handling case studies](#)
- [NSW Ombudsman inquiry finds Intensive Therapeutic Care program is not achieving its key objectives](#)
- [Public Interest Disclosures \(PID\) Act 2022: Agency self-assessment audit report 2025](#)
- [Oversight of the Public Interest Disclosures Act 2022 Annual Report 2024–25](#)
- [Reviewable Child Deaths in NSW 2022 and 2023 Biennial Report to Parliament](#)

Queensland Ombudsman, Australia

Mastering the Essentials – free online training

Do you make administrative decisions for government services?

Have you ever seen wrongdoing in government and not known what to do with it?



The [Queensland Ombudsman’s free online training](#) will help you:

- gain confidence in your ability to use a framework to make fair, defensible and consistent decisions in public administration (**Good Decisions – Essentials**)
- grow your skills to know what a public interest disclosure (PID) is, how to make one, and understand what protections and responsibilities apply. Making a PID is sometimes called ‘whistleblowing’ (**Public Interest Disclosures – Essentials**).

While focussed on the legislative environment in Queensland, Ombudsman officers in other jurisdictions would benefit from doing this training to:

- build trust with fair, consistent decision-making
- reduce the risk of external review
- comply with best-practice standards

- embed understanding of the impact of a 'speak-up' culture.

It is particularly useful if you are:

- new to government
- early in your government career
- experienced, but needing a refresher.

Tax Ombudsman, Australia

Our *Complaints* Team continues to see increased demand, with a year-on-year increase of 127%. This is likely to be a mix of our work on increasing awareness of our services and the ongoing drive in the Australian Tax Office (ATO) on collecting outstanding debt. We published our first [quarterly insights report on complaints data](#) - to increase transparency and to better use our complaints data to inform systemic improvements.

We recently completed two reviews and have another three reviews in progress:

- A review on how the tax office manages interest on tax debts. In particular, we highlight where compounding interest is making it hard or impossible for taxpayers trying to repay their debts to be able to do so; and the importance of taxpayers' options for a review of the ATO's decisions to refuse to remove interest from an account due to hardship or other reasons. [Review: ATO's management of remission of the general interest charge - Tax Ombudsman](#)
- A review of a long and complex historical tax matter, in which a taxpayer made serious allegations of maladministration about the tax office. Due to the confidential nature of the investigation, we only published a short statement on the review's outcome. [An own motion review into the ATO's management of a complex and long-running case - Tax Ombudsman](#)
- The above review did raise some questions about systemic risks of bias or prejudicial conduct within the tax office. We have therefore commenced a review into how the tax office controls such risks, particularly in the areas of compliance and enforcement where prejudicial decisions can cause considerable harm. This report will publish in July.
- We have a review underway on the tax office's online services for tax agents, which is due for completion by July. This is a follow up from our review of the ATO's phone services for tax agents last year, in which we were critical of the ATO's quality of service but also highlighted that improved online services would reduce phone traffic from agents.
- Our next review is on how the tax office engages with Australia's First Nations taxpayers. This will be the most significant review for us this year. We are undertaking this review in partnership with Aboriginal owned organisation, Jindawayni, who are supporting our community consultation including 21 community yarning sessions across Australia.

Additionally, we're building our sphere of influence by increasing the range of policy issues related to tax administration that we engage with and enhancing how we hold the ATO to account for the recommendations they agree to implement.

Finally, we have refreshed our procedures on unacceptable complainant conduct. Knowing that this is an issue facing all Ombudsmen, we would be happy to share these with others.

Victorian Ombudsman

Marlo Baragwanath, Victorian Ombudsman

Investigation Reports

- On 12 November 2025, we tabled our investigation report *'That's assault mate': Investigation into alleged misconduct in a private prison and how it was handled*. This looked at allegations that staff at the privately run Ravenhall Correctional Centre used unreasonable force against a man being held on remand, restricted his access to medical help and encouraged others in the prison to further harm him.
- On 19 November 2025, we tabled our investigation report, *When the water rises: Flood risk at two housing estates*. This was in response to a referral from the Victorian Parliament, which examined flood risk planning at two residential estates on the Maribyrnong River – Rivervue Retirement Village and Kensington Banks.
- On 3 December 2025, we tabled our investigation report, *'We just want to finish our home': Management of domestic building insurance claims by VMIA*. This was due to a referral from the Victorian Parliament, which examined the management of domestic building insurance claims by the Victorian Managed Insurance Authority (VMIA) in the wake of the Porter Davis Homes collapse.
- On 18 March 2026, we tabled our investigation report, *Outsourcing small claims handling – How councils manage fairness and responsibility*. This looked into local councils' use of small claims handlers to manage claims for injury or property damage that fall below the excess in their insurance policy.

Publications

- On 18 February 2026 we published a joint paper with the Victorian Auditor General Office and the Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission *Advancing budget transparency for Victoria's core integrity agencies*. This highlighted the need for clearer, more transparent funding processes to support the independence and effectiveness of Victoria's integrity system.
 - On 27 February 2026, we published our *Approach to Prevention*, which articulates how prevention is a core part of the Victorian Ombudsman's work. It supports our vision that *Victoria is fair* and how the organisation seeks to prevent harm and reduce the risk of maladministration and improper conduct by addressing problems early and at their source.
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Control Yuan of Taiwan

The Control Yuan (CY) is urging the government to conduct effective preventive measures to reduce the risk of women with no smoking history developing lung cancer.

Over the past 20 years, lung cancer has been the leading cause of cancer death in Taiwan. According to international studies, 70% of lung cancer deaths can be attributed to 'smoking'. Therefore, the core mechanism for lung cancer prevention in Taiwan has focused on tobacco control, and the *Tobacco Hazard Prevention Act* has been in effect since 1997. But despite the smoking population in Taiwan reducing in recent years, lung cancer cases continue to increase annually, with the increase among women significantly higher than that of men. More than 90% of these cases have no history of smoking, which suggests that risk factors for lung cancer amongst non-smokers needs to become a key focus of Taiwan's lung cancer prevention.

Lung cancer-related research subsidised by the Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), does not include causes of lung cancer in non-smoking women, nor have the MOHW established relevant prevention strategies. Referring to the purpose of *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, health policies should be based on reliable data classified by gender, and preventive and therapeutic measures should be formulated accordingly. The CY issued an investigation report requesting the MOHW and relevant agencies propose countermeasures to clarify risk factors for lung cancer caused by different genders, develop preventive measures beyond tobacco control, strengthen health education and improve screening effectiveness.

The MOHW has made improvements by including individuals who have not yet been considered for lung cancer screening (non-smokers without a family history) in its 2026 research plan, with the aim of identifying high-risk individuals and expanding lung cancer screening rates. Additionally, the National Science and Technology Council will also strengthen research on causes and prevention of lung cancer in non-smoking women and will provide the results to the MOHW as references for policy implementation.

Office of the Ombudsman, Hong Kong, China

Complaints investigation and resolution

In 2025/26, our Office pursued and concluded 1,591 complaints, of which 1,145 were resolved through mediation. We made 573 recommendations and 912 observations during direct investigation operations and full investigations. Our efforts were acknowledged, and we received positive responses from government departments and public organisations. One notable achievement was the establishment of a high-level working group led by the Chief Secretary for Administration to conduct in-depth reviews of our recommendations related to the regulation of occupational safety and health in the construction industry.

‘From Grievance to Governance’ webinar

On 24 June 2026, the Hong Kong International Ombudsman Academy, established under our Office, will hold a webinar under the theme *From Grievance to Governance: Ombudsmanship as Pillars of the Global Community*. This webinar will bring together fellow Ombudsmen and Ombudsman staff from across the world, giving them an opportunity to share their expertise and experiences.

Celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA)

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the Asian Ombudsman Association (AOA). To celebrate this important milestone, our Office has the honour of hosting the AOA 30th Anniversary commemorative events. This includes an International Seminar, the 27th AOA's Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors, and a colourful art and cultural programme, which will take place from 30 November to 2 December 2026 in Hong Kong. The main event is the commemorative International Seminar, which will be held on the morning of 1 December 2026 under the theme *30 Years of AOA's Leadership – Strengthening Accountability, Partnership and Good Governance*. In recognition of the AOA's 30 year achievement, the Seminar will bring together an international cohort of Ombudsmen, from Asia and worldwide, as well as international professionals and academia, allowing them to share their insights and experiences. In addition to this, our office is working to produce a special commemorative booklet that captures this important milestone.



Booklet commemorating the 30th anniversary of the AOA

Please send feedback and contributions to the *Waka Tangata* editorial team, based
in the New Zealand Ombudsman's office

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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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