



Office of the Ombudsman
ANNUAL REPORT

January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

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1. OVERVIEW

Ombudsman's Overview



This report covers the period of 1st January 2016 to 30th June 2017 (2016/2017). That is a period of 18 months rather than the normal 12 months to be aligned with the financial year reporting. I am pleased to introduce the Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman for 2016/2017. This report is made in accordance with section 25 of the *Ombudsman Act 2001*, as amended.

The Annual Report provides an overview of our work throughout the relevant period. It targets the achievement of the Office mission to ensure that the people of the Kingdom of Tonga are served by a fair and efficient Government. The key goals include raising public awareness about the core functions of this Office and the provision of professional complaint service to the people of Tonga.

The Office of the Ombudsman acknowledges the support from the Speaker and the Legislative Assembly and the Government of Tonga. We recognize that the successful implementation of our function requires the support from all stakeholders within Government and the public.

My priority as Ombudsman will always be to provide a high quality and accessible complaint handling service for the people of Tonga. 2016/2017 has seen the Office of the Ombudsman continuing to work successfully towards those aims, as indicated in this report. In that regard, I am grateful to the CEO, Mrs Linda Folaumoetu'i, and all the staff for the hard work and unfailing efforts to carry out their duties.


'Aisea H. Taumoepeau, SC
Ombudsman



YEAR AT GLANCE Jan, 2016 to June, 2017



202

Total Cases Received

From Jan 2016 – June 2017

94

Total Pending Cases



108



Total Cases Closed

205

Total Phone Calls



Total Complaints by Gender

	2015	2016	2017
 MALE	26%	80%	71%
 FEMALE	74%	20%	29%

67

Total Drop Ins



2. OUR OFFICE

2.1 OMBUDSMAN Purpose

The Ombudsman is an independent officer appointed by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly under the Ombudsman Act 2001 (formerly known as the Commissioner for the Public Relations Act, 2001).

The Office of the Ombudsman main aim is to assist government departments and public enterprises remedy deficiencies and improve service delivery. Traditionally, the main mechanism is by investigating and reviewing government administrative decisions in response to complaints received by the Office from the public. The Ombudsman also has the power to look into a matter without having received a complaint, in cases where he considers a particular issue is in the public interest or is a problem that is systemic. In addition, the Prime Minister may with the consent of the Ombudsman refer any matter for investigation and report. The goal is that these interventions will address the grievances and improve administrative systems and processes overall.

2.2 Jurisdiction

The Ombudsman's jurisdiction covers government departments and its agencies which includes statutory boards and public enterprises.

The Office of the Ombudsman also has responsibilities in relation to protecting human rights in relation to those held in custody. This relates firstly to those under police custody, who have been sentenced to be imprisoned, those who have been ordered to be in custody awaiting sentencing or those held in custody for the purposes of completing police investigations. The second group relates to those who have been ordered to be detained at the Psychiatric Ward, at the hospitals. Where any person who is detained wishes to lodge a complaint against the administrative decisions made by the police or health authorities they are permitted to lodge a written complaint and such a complaint will be delivered unopened to the Ombudsman.



2.4 Legislations Governing the Ombudsman Office

Our office was established by an Act of Parliament, the *Ombudsman Act 2001*. The main laws governing the Ombudsman Office are (i) the *Ombudsman Act 2001* and (ii) the *Anti-Corruption Commissioner Act 2007*. Other relevant laws include the *Government Act*, *Public Service Act 2002* and all legislation conducive to the provisions of services to the people of the Kingdom of Tonga.

2.5 Highlights of this reporting period

- On 1st of April 2016, after years of the staff working from two locations (Mosimani building and Lavinia Road), the office moved to the top floor of the new Retirement Fund Board building on Mateialona Road.
- The existence of the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) ended on 30th June 2016, but Australia Commonwealth Ombudsman provides assistance through funding and training
- On 2nd of December 2016, the amendments to the Ombudsman Act 2001 came in to force after receiving Royal Assent. This was a huge milestone for the Office, as the following matters are now in place.
 - The title “Commissioner for Public Relations” was changed to the “Ombudsman”
 - Ombudsman Office staff are no longer under the Public Service Commission, but are employed under the Ombudsman
 - Appointment of the Ombudsman is no longer appointed by Cabinet but now by the Speaker with the consent of the Legislative Assembly
- On December 2016, Office of the Ombudsman Handbook on Administrative Investigations was implemented
- On 15th of March 2017, the Ombudsman hosted an event to launch the new name and logo of the office.
- On 15 March 2017, the new office website was officially activated – www.ombudsman.to
- On 27th of May 2017, the Ombudsman hosted an inaugural outreach program “Fanguna ‘a e Omipatimeni” which as a breakfast at Vikilani House. The Honorable Prime Minister, Samuela Akilisi Pohiva, was the Guest of Honor & Keynote Speaker.
- On May 2017, the Ombudsman Staff Policy Manual was implemented.



3. OUR WORK

3.1 Investigations

It has been a busy 18 months. The number of complaints increased the number of outreach activities increased and thankfully, the number of Investigation staff also increased.

We would like to acknowledge the support of the Ministries and Public Enterprises, without whom, we would not be able to provide resolution to those who seek our help.

Set out below are brief explanations of the work done in 2016 and 2017.

A. Overall performance

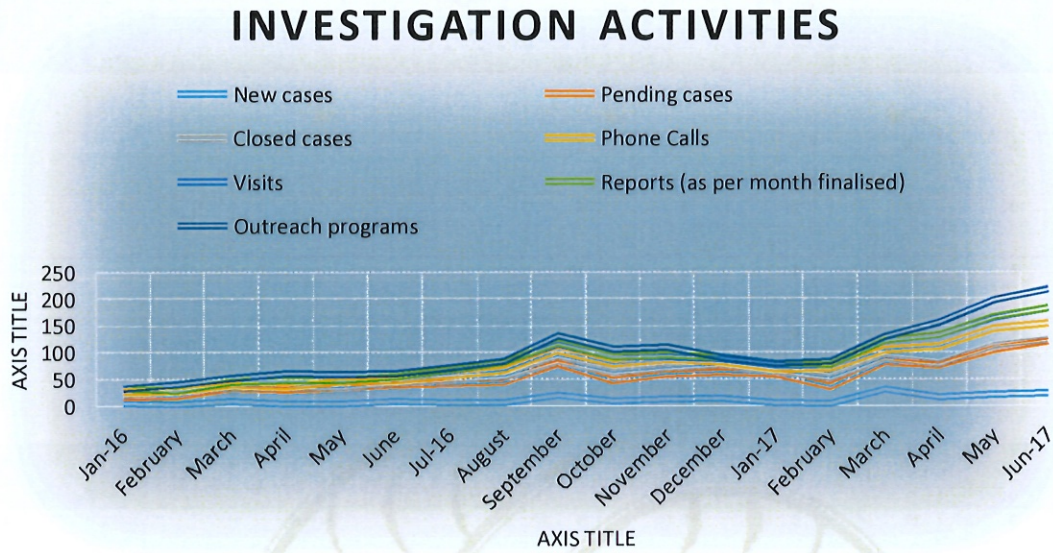


Figure 3.1 Statistics 1 January 2016 – 30 June 2017 (18 months)

Month	New cases	Pending cases	Closed cases	Phone Calls	Visits	Reports (as per month finalized)	Recommendations Implemented(per case)	Outreach programs
January 2016	5	12	3	6	6			0
February	3	15	9	0	2			11
March	9	24	2	4	6			7
April	4	26	4	2	13			11
May	4	30	0	12	2			11
June	9	30	5	3	7			6
TOTAL Jan to June	34		23	27	36	0		46
July 2016	6	35	9	7	9	1	6	4
August	7	37	12	10	15			2
September	19	60	6	18	12	2	2, 12	14
October	9	38	16	15	14			14
November	12	47	12	15	7	2	5, 3	14
December	13	50	13	5	6	3	5, 4, 4	0
January 2017	5	54	6	3	7	4	3, 4, 6, 4	0
February	4	32	16	17	8			5
March	33	51	8	15	18			7
April	16	59	3	32	22			24
May	21	83	9	31	21	1	3	32
June	23	97	3	30	29			35
12 months July to June	168		113	198	168	13		151
18 months	202		136	205	204	13		197

The numbers show a steady increase in the number of complaints over the 18-month period which correlate with the increased number of other activities, especially outreach. The table below shows the trends for the investigative activities.

Figure 3.2 Investigation Activities



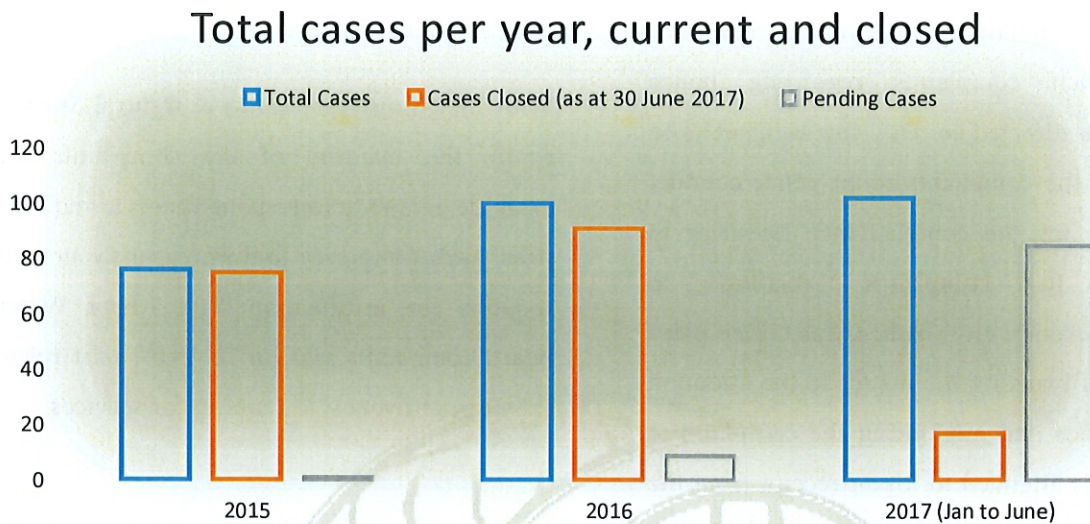
B. Case Management Data

(i) Comparison of total cases and closed cases for 2015, 2016 and 2017 (1 January 2016 to 30 June 2017)

Figure 3.3 Case Management Data

Year	Total Cases	Cases Closed (as at 30 June 2017)	Pending Cases
2015	76	75	1
2016	100	91	9
2017 (Jan-June)	102	17	85

Figure 3.4 Total Cases per Year, Current and Closed



The above table shows that of the 76 cases received in 2015 only 1 remains open. In 2016 of the 100 cases we received, 9 remain current and in the cases received from 1 January to 30 June 2017, 17 of the 102 received have been closed. Every effort is made to action complaints in a timely manner no matter the substance of the complaint.

(ii) Ministries/Departments/Agencies (MDA) most complained about 2015, 2016, and 2017

As the following charts will show, the most complained about MDA in 2015 was the Ministry of Police, 2016 was the Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources and in 2017 (6 months) was the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The top 5 for each year has consistently featured the Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources and the Ministry of Police. Both these Ministries have recognized this trend and now share a close working relationship with the Ombudsman Office. This included the nomination of a point of contact within each Ministry and regular fortnightly meetings with

the Investigation Team to manage the complaints. The Public Enterprise most complained about is the Tonga Water Board featuring in the top 5 for all 3 years. Again, with the Tonga Water Board a senior officer has been allocated to be the liaison for the Ombudsman cases. The Office appreciates these measures and the priority MDA's give to dealing with complaints made to this Office.

The nature of the complaints about the Ministry of Police is mostly to do with unresponsiveness to complaints regarding criminal activity and dissatisfaction with their investigative work. It is important to note that the Office does not have any jurisdiction over criminal matters. If

any complaint has a possible criminal element, we refer the matter immediately to the Police. The Police also have the Performance Standards Unit which complaints regarding police conduct is directed to. Our involvement is to follow up the complaints about police conduct and liaise for the complainants. However in relation to complaints relating to unresponsiveness from Police, this Office plays the role of bringing the matter to the attention of the Police and monitoring the complaint to ensure it is attended to. Upon receipt from the Police of such information, we relay such

information to the complainant and the complaint is closed thus leaving the matter to be attended to by the Police.

With the Ministry of Lands & Natural Survey, again, the majority of the complaints for example, relates to unresponsiveness to requests (fees paid) for survey and unresponsiveness to requests for information. The Tonga Water Board complaints also for the most part relate to unresponsiveness to requests for services.

Figure 3.5 Most Complained and MDA's 2015

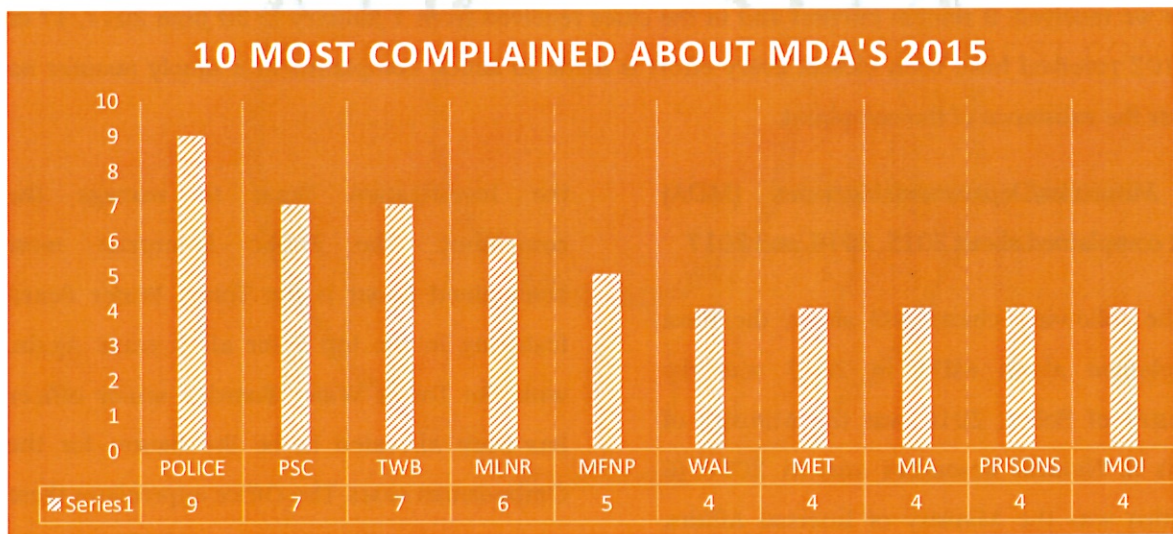


Figure 3.6 Most Complained and MDA's 2016

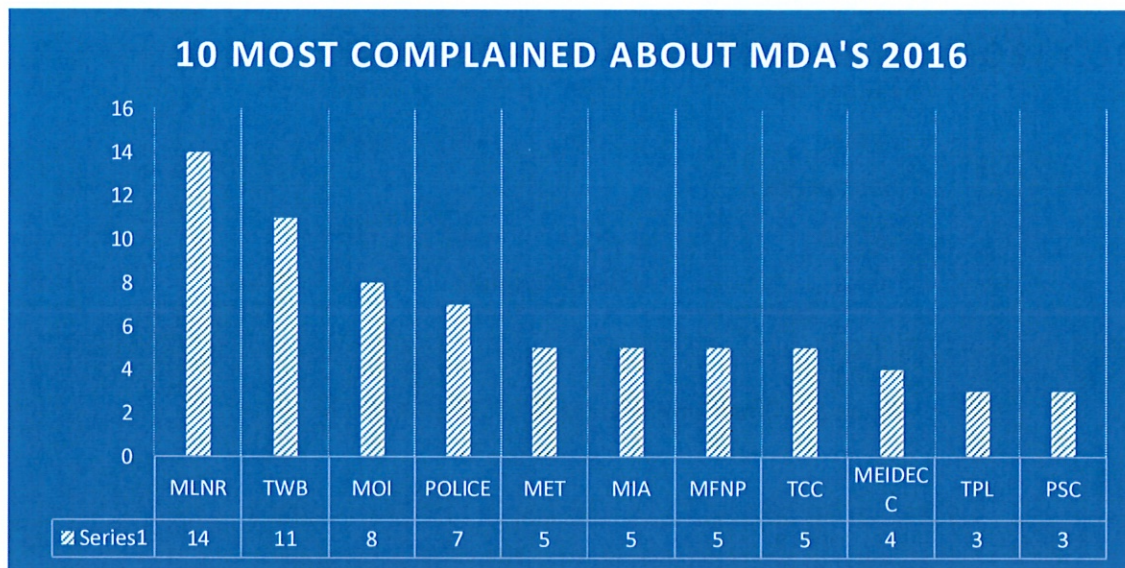
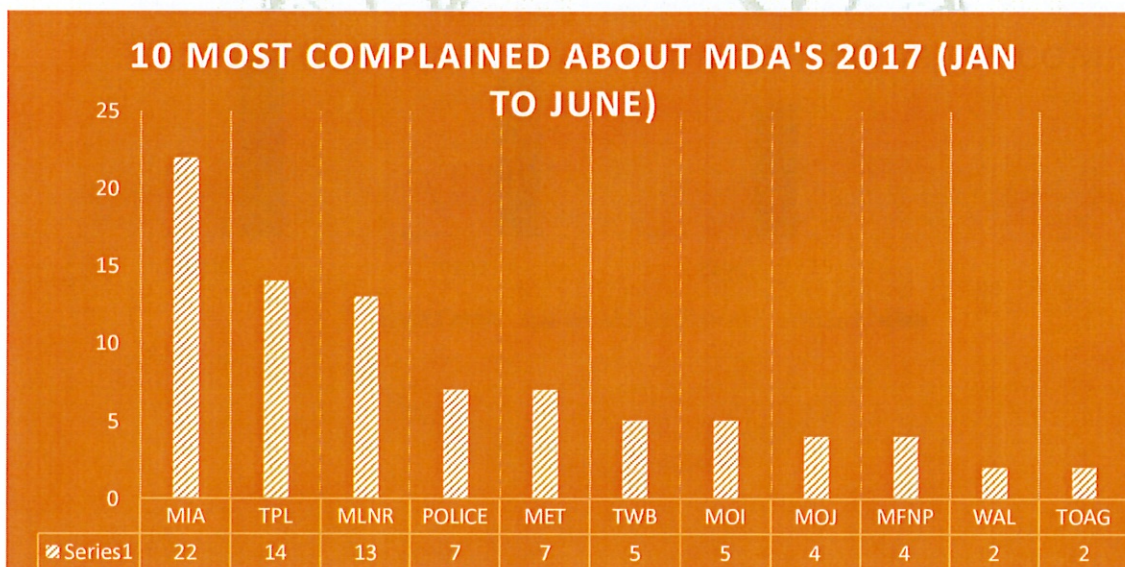


Figure 3.7 Most Complained and MDA's 2017



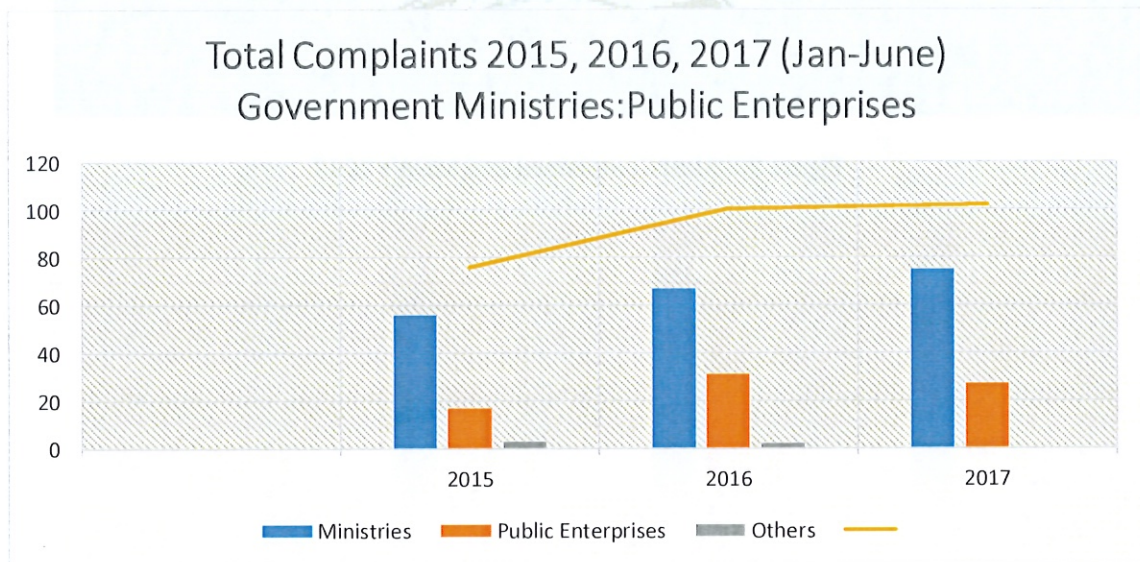
(iii) Ratio of complaints against Ministries vs Public Enterprises

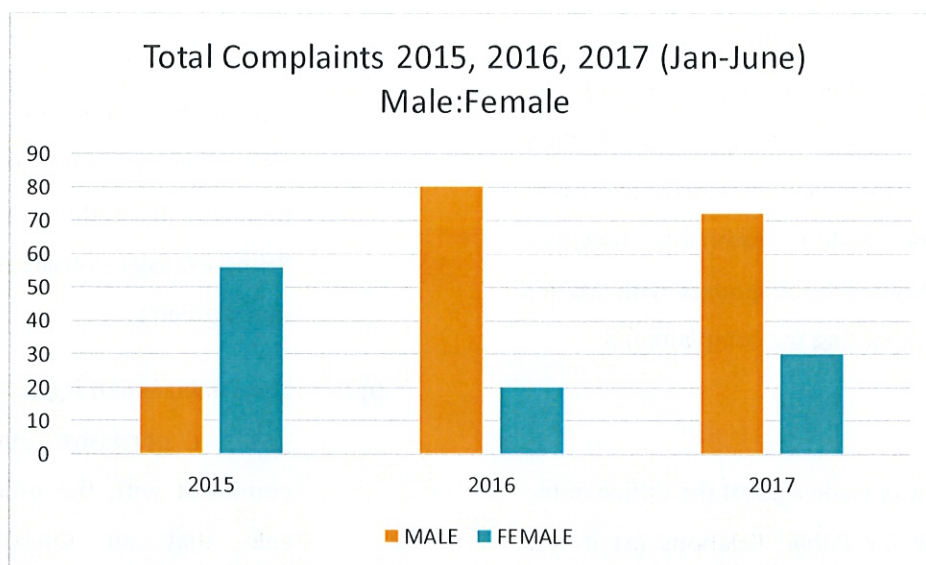
In comparing the number of Government and Public Enterprises complaints, Government Ministries remain the larger share of the public complaints. It must be noted that it is not just the public who complain about Government but also the Government employees themselves. Case in point, in 2017, 19 employees of a single Ministry lodged their complaint against decisions made by their Chief Executive Officer.

Figure 3.8 Ministries, Public Enterprises & Others

	2015	2016	2017
Ministries	74%	67%	74%
Public Enterprises	22%	31%	26%
Others	4%	2%	0%
	100%	100%	100%

Figure 3.9 Total Complaints at 2015, 2016 & 2017



(iv) Ratio of male to female complainants**Figure 3.10 Total Complaints at 2015, 2016 & 2017 (Jan-June) – Male & Female**

The numbers show that although there were more female complainants in 2015, for 2016 and the first six months of 2017 the numbers have been predominantly male. This trend is also reflected in some of the outreach activities and notably the radio talk back shows where the majority of callers are male.

Figure 3.11 Male & Female Complainants

	MALE	FEMALE
2015	26%	74%
2016	80%	20%
2017	71%	29%

(v) Time taken to complete investigations**Figure 3.12 Time Take to complete investigation**

Year	Shortest time	Longest time
2015	10 days	24 months
2016	5 days	11 months
2017 (Jan to June)	10 days	5.5 months

Timeliness is the cornerstone of Ombudsman work to ensure investigations and outcomes are relevant. There are cases which take longer to complete because of the nature of the complaint, the number of complainants and the multiple issues involved. The Investigation Team have performance standards to ensure work is done within reasonable timelines including following up responses with MDA's and regularly updating the complainants.

Litigation

A civil claim was made against the Office of the Commissioner for Public Relations (as it was known then), in the Supreme Court, Civil Case No. 54 of 2016. The matter was heard on the 10–11 November 2016 and judgment was made on the 21st November 2016. This was a claim by a CEO of one of the Public Enterprises against the investigation process that the Commissioner had carried out in investigating a complaint which had been referred to the Office by the Prime Minister against the CEO. The claim was for the investigation process carried out by the Ombudsman to be stayed until a defamation action brought by the plaintiff is completed.

At the end of the trial, the Chief Justice dismissed the claim based on the following reasons –

- a) That the Prime Minister is able to refer to the Commission any matter other than a matter concerning a judicial proceeding which the Prime Minister considers should be investigated,;
- b) The Ombudsman legislation is to be given a purposive interpretation consistent with the unique public role that an Ombudsman is intended to fill;
- c) The Commissioner has very wide discretion over the conduct of his investigations.

The claimant lodged an appeal to the Court of Appeal on the Chief Justice's decision but on the morning of the appeal the claimant withdrew his appeal. The Supreme Court judgment reinforces the investigative powers the Ombudsman has pursuant to the *Ombudsman Act*.



C. Complaint Reports

2016 (names and places have been changed to protect confidentiality)

(i) Complaint A

Mele was a daily paid employee at Ministry A. She was dismissed for a disciplinary matter with the approval of the Minister. She lodged a complaint with us on the basis that she was unfairly dismissed. The investigation focused on the method she was dismissed which was not in compliance with the Public Service Policies and Instructions. It was also discovered that there was mass abuse by Government Ministries of the daily paid appointment authority by Chief Executive Officers in that it should be limited to unskilled work and for a term not exceeding 7 months in a financial year. The case was far reaching and the Public Service Commission then took measures to enforce their Policies and Instructions regarding daily paid workers. Mele received a monetary amount from Ministry A for her unfair dismissal as the balance of her contract.

(i) Complaint B

Fifita was employed in Ministry B. She was transferred to work at a higher position and was given the title of “Acting”. However, during her X years at this position, she did not receive any acting allowance despite her requests for financial recognition and compensation for her added duties. Because of her complaint and investigation, Ministry B recognized that there were at least 200 employees who had been or were currently in the same position as Fifita. Ministry B undertook a Ministry wide remedial action.

UNFAIR
DISMISSAL



BENEFITS



(iii) Complaint C

Ministry A introduced a new policy relating to administration of public enterprises. As a result certain members of the public enterprise Board were not satisfied with the decision made by Ministry A

Ms. Ana complained about the policy that Ministry A was intending to advertise the position of the Board members whilst the duration of her membership had not expired. Further there was no consultation between the public enterprise and the Ministry of this change. The investigation focused on whether the notice for the Board members to voluntarily resign and compensation offered by the Ministry was fair and/or reasonable. There were members who voluntarily resigned and others who did not.

Our investigation determined that the request for the voluntary resignation of Board members within a fixed deadline was contrary to the spirit of the terms of the appointments, unreasonable and unlawful. It was further found that there was lack of consultation with the Board members before Cabinet made its decision to proceed with reforms and this was accepted by the Ministry.

This investigation resulted in recommendations that unless individual members of the Board agreed otherwise, Ms A be paid the balance of her basic salary for the remaining period of

their current respective terms and receive other accrued benefits from the Board. Further Ms. A to vacate her role on the Board effective from date of settlement. Ministry A did not agree with or implement recommendations proposed therefore, Ms. A took the matter to Court. .

The Court on the 29th of March 2016 ordered that the Minister's decision relating to the removal of Ms. A and others from the Board of the enterprise be quashed. The Court endorsed the findings made by Commissioner for Public Relations (Ombudsman).



(iv) Complaint D

Sixty six staff of a Public Enterprise signed a letter of complaint about their Chief Executive Officer. The matter came to the attention of the Prime Minister and he exercised his power under the *Ombudsman Act* to refer the matter to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman reviewed the complaint as required by the Act and agreed to launch an investigation. This was necessary because referrals from the Prime Minister requires the consent of the Ombudsman. The case involved allegations of misconduct both in behaviour and management. The case was concluded in July 2017 but as the bulk of the work was done in the period covered by this Report it is reported here. The case involved interviewing over 70 individuals including private citizens which required the approval of the Attorney General. The complaint also faced unprecedented challenges including a civil case filed against the Ombudsman in the Supreme Court. The claim essentially questioned the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman to investigate the complaint and his procedures and the results have been referred above under Litigation part.

(v) Complaint E

Taufa surrendered his 1a 2r allotment at ‘Uiha. In his letter of surrender to the Ministry he specifically set out his wishes that 1a be given to his cousin Mosese and the 2r be given to another cousin ‘Elone. Cabinet approved the surrender and there was a paper trail within the Ministry directing the registration of the allotments in accordance with the Cabinet decisions. Unfortunately, when the registration took place, the total allotment of 1a2r was registered under ‘Elone and none registered to Mosese. Mosese tried many times to have this addressed by the Ministry without success and on finding about the Ombudsman, lodged his complaint. The matter was referred to the Ministry and their response was promptly received admitting the mistake and that the Ministry would take action to cancel the registration under ‘Elone and register the allotments in accordance with the Cabinet decisions. The registration was cancelled and re-registered accordingly.



(vi) Complaint F

John's house is one of 4 rental houses on a parcel of land which is owned by one landowner. John was not happy with a utility bill he received from Public Enterprise A which he claimed was out of the ordinary in that the bill was high. Upon discussions with Public Enterprise A, John was given the option of paying a 30% discount of the principal amount of the bill. John refused this option but wanted a full explanation of why the bill was so high. Public Enterprise A claimed that John's meter was faulty and without John's knowledge replaced the meter. John thus lodged a complaint with the Ombudsman.

Upon investigation the Ombudsman recommended that in relation to property that holds numerous houses an orderly system must be established by Public Enterprise A through its policy to ensure that the correct house is served with the correct corresponding account number and bill. It was also established in this investigation that the Public Enterprise A has the legal authority to discount a bill if he sees fit. It was established that Public Enterprise A has the duty to comply with certain requirements of the Act in relation to testing meters. This includes the requirement that customer must be present at the meter testing process and all results obtained from such a test must be communicated to the Public Enterprise A.

(vii) Complaint G

Pita and colleagues of Ministry C were not happy with decisions carried out by Mr. 'Isi relating to funds approved by Cabinet to carry out work relating to the national interests of island group A. The actions and decisions by Mr. 'Isi was to utilize the funds quickly so that the desired work was completed quickly for the public's sake however this created havoc within Ministry C and other relevant Ministries. The engagement and payment of private contractors to carry out work for Ministry C were carried out in a manner that was contrary to regulations and laws governing such work. Mr. 'Isi exercised wide discretion in making operational decisions rather than letting Ministry C carry out the work pursuant to the law and good practices. The decisions made by Mr. 'Isi was according to him discretionary but were exercised unreasonably and unlawfully when they breached the law and Government policies. Consequentially this made a lot of his employees dissatisfied with such decisions. A report was written and recommendation made that Mr. 'Isi had totally disregarded the laws and this conduct amounts to gross negligence in the performance of his duties.



2017 (names have been changed to protect confidentiality)

(i) Complaint A

Fourteen staff of a Public Enterprise lodged a complaint regarding their supervisor who they said was violent and abusive. They chose to lodge their complaint directly with the Ombudsman rather than going through their Staff Policy processes because they feared for their wellbeing. The case was dealt with in the utmost sensitivity because of the circumstances and an initial meeting was set up with the Chief Executive Officer who was very responsive and took immediate action to address the concerns. The supervisor was investigated by the PE and the allegations were justified. He was appropriately disciplined by the PE.

(ii) Complaint B

Sofia was a long-time employee of Ministry B. She had worked in the private sector and brought years of experience to the Ministry when she was appointed in the 1990's. The issue related to her starting salary should have taken into account her years of experience as per Public Service policy. This was not done and she had been trying for years for Ministry B to acknowledge her years of service and remedy her starting salary. The Minister approved her new starting salary and subsequent arrears in 2010 but nothing was done to affect this decision. Sofia kept trying and complained to

the Ombudsman in 2015. It took another 18 months for Ministry B to agree and for the necessary decisions to be made. Sofia received over \$15,000 in arrears in June 2017.

(iii) Complaint C

Taniela is a civil servant. He had a loan with one of the commercial banks. The arrangement with Ministry D was that his salary would be paid out to the bank. On receipt of Taniela's salary, the bank would deduct his loan repayment and credit the rest to his savings account. The complaint issue arose when the bank's banking license was revoked and Ministry D took it upon themselves in agreement with the bank to withhold the loan repayment amount and remit it to the bank leaving the balance at Ministry D for Taniela to withdraw in cash each pay day. Taniela objected to this saying that he had not authorised Ministry D to withhold his salary for the bank and he should receive his full salary. The matter of repaying his loan to the bank was between him and the bank only. The investigation agreed with the complainant's view and was also confirmed by the Attorney General's Office to whom the matter was referred to by Ministry D.

(iv) Complaint D

Francis was awarded a scholarship to do a BA in Fiji. The sponsor was Ministry A. The study was successfully completed and Francis



returned and started work at Ministry A in January 2014. When Francis began work, Ministry A did not have a post for a graduate available despite the fact that the Ministry had known Francis was on their scholarship and would be returning that year. The only vacant post was a level 9A post and Francis was appointed to this post with the understanding that he would be appointed to a post appropriate to his qualification as soon as possible. Despite the post he was appointed to, Francis was given responsibilities at the graduate level and indeed performed at this level but remunerated at a lower level. This continued for over a year during which Francis would remind the management of the Ministry about his dissatisfaction and was told work was being done. Francis lodged a complaint and the Ministry admitted and confirmed the situation Francis was in but said that it was the option the PSC had given them. The response from the PSC was that the Ministry had been given options but chose the option to appoint Francis to the lower post. A report was written and recommendations for the Ministry to appoint Francis to the appropriate post and salary and to compensate him for the salary differences from the date he first started working.

D. Feedback

The services we provide are free of charge; however, we are always grateful when we receive positive feedback from the people we

serve. Set out below are excerpts from some of the letters we received –

July 2016 from Paula Tupou

“...my complaint was regarding TCC management lack of response to my complaint...they responded 2 weeks ago and have taken steps to resolving the issue...I am sure the fact that having your Commission involved finally persuaded TCC management to act...”

September 2016 from ‘Osika Guttenbeil

“...Tonga Water Board has completed the work to my satisfaction and according to the conditions raised in my complaint. I am very grateful for the assistance you have provided...”

Septitema 2016 meia ‘Ilisapesi Sulia Likiliki

“...I am informed the Ministry of Education has agreed to compensate me for the work I provided in acting on the higher post, which I complained about... I thank you for the good work, and commitment provided by your office giving voice to the voiceless and power to the weak, thus benefit all teachers who were on similar OIC and acting. Thank you for the care and true love, mediating on our behalves in these matter sand difficult situations...”



Novema 2016 meia Olafehi Fainu

“Kindly note that I have received the salary that was withheld from me, and of which I was complained about... I thank you sincerely and from the depth of my heart for the good work you have provided. I am happy, at peace and free... ”

Maasi 2017 meia Tu’ifua Miko Tapa’atoutai

“This letter is to sincerely thank you for the assistance provided leading to the registration of my town allotment in Tofoa. Had it not for your assistance, I would have still been waiting.”

March 2017 from Milika Taufa

“Thank you for all the hard work that you and your good office is currently doing for the Government of Tonga...thank you for all that your team have done on my behalf regarding my case...thank you for walking the extra mile to provide the assistance that you provided

E. Challenging Issues

(i) MLNR delays and Nobles changing their minds

The Ministry of Lands & Natural Resources is one of the more complained about Ministries and understandable given their jurisdiction. A lot of the complaints are to do with delays, delays in processing land applications, delays in surveys, delays leases and such like. The standard answers we are given is that there is a shortage of resources, that most of the records have not been computerized, that the maps haven’t been updated and yet, some of the complaints relate to people knowing that there are those who enjoy fast service compared to others. Another interesting issue has arisen regarding the consent of Nobles to land applications (town or tax allotments). There

have been a number of cases where the Noble has withdrawn his consent. In such cases, we have no jurisdiction over the Nobles and advise complainants that it is a private matter. Unfortunately the delays mentioned earlier has an impact on these cases in that had the Ministry acted upon the original consent in a timely manner, the land would have been registered.

(ii) Undocumented policies/record keeping

We have noted that a substantial number of complaints relate to unwritten policies and/or written policies that are not followed by the MDA’s. This relates to processes within



Ministries that have been in practice for years but there is no documentation and in some cases, no authorisation by law. There are also cases where there is a written policy, but it is not followed or even the Government staff have differing understanding of such policy resulting in the public receiving conflicting advice.

(iii) Unresponsiveness to complaints

This has been an issue and with some Ministries more than others. The referral letters we send

F. The Year in Outreach

Figure 3.13 (i) 2016 – Tongatapu Villages

2016 OMB OUTREACH TO VILLAGES TONGATAPU			
VILLAGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
FO'UI,HA'AVAKATOLO,KOLOVAI	1	13	14
KANOKUPOLU,'AHAU,HA'ATAFU	30	6	36
HA'UTU,FAHEFA,KALA'AU	13	2	15
TE'EKIU	3	6	9
VAINI, LONGOTEME, FOLAHA	3	2	5
VEITONGO, LOTOHA'APAI, HA'ATEIHO	8	15	23
FU'AMOTU, NAKOLO	1	10	11
HAVELULIKU, FATUMU	3	5	8
HA'ASINI, HAMULA, LAVENGATONGA	0	0	0
LAPAHA, TALASIU, HOI	0	0	0
NUKULEKA	0	0	0
MAKA'UNGA, TALAFO'OU	6	3	9
PUKE, HOFOA (HOFOA FALE KOMITI VAI)	0	0	0
KOLOFO'OU AND FASI (FASI SUTT)	0	0	0
MA'UFANGA, HOUMAKELIKAU, POPUA (APIFO'OU HALL)	0	0	0
NUKUNUKU, FATAI, MATAFONUVA, LAKEPA (NUKUNUKU SUTT)	0	0	0
TOFOA	0	0	0
HALA'OVAVE, SOPU (HALA'OVAVE SUTT)	0	0	0
LONGOLONGO (SUTT)			
TOTAL	68	62	130

detailing the complaints always has a due date for the information. This is so we can respond back to the complainants in a timely manner. Yet, we understand the responsibilities and are flexible within reason when extensions are requested but they don't seem to ask. This issue also relates to complainants telling us about the numerous times they seek help from the relevant Ministries and are not served to their satisfaction.





(ii) 2016 – Ministries and Public Enterprises

Extensive visits were made to the Ministries and Public Enterprises in 2016 as per the table below.

Figure 3.14

MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
TWB	10	6	16
WAL	2	4	6
TONGA POST	1	1	2
PAT	8	14	22
WAL TAPUHIA	0	7	7
MOP	2	2	4
MEIDEC	1	8	9
PRISON	8	53	61
TDB	5	5	10
MAFF	5	13	18
TONGA FORREST	3	6	9
TONGA FORREST (2ND VISIT)	2	14	16
TAL	4	4	8
AUDIT DEPARTMENT	19	15	34
STATISTICS DEPT.	11	1	12
TALAMAHU	3	1	4
MOFOREIGN AFFAIRS	8	5	13
NRBT	11	6	17
MOJ	9	9	18
AGO	15	3	18



TONGA CABLE	0	5	5
FISA	1	2	3
NRBF	8	9	17
RFB	3	3	6
TPL	0	1	1
TONGA FIRE	5	48	53
TOTAL	144	245	389

Figure 3. 15(iii) 2016 – ‘Eua

2016 OMB OUTREACH TO OUTER ISLANDS			
VILLAGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
EUA/NIUA (MATA'AHU)	0	8	8
EUA MOTUA	0	8	8
MINISTRIES IN EUA	37	33	70
TOTAL	37	49	86

Figure 3. 16 Houma



Figure 3.17 2016 – Niuatoputapu

OMB-TOWN OFFICE AND DISTRICT OFFICES-OUTREACH NIUATOPUTAPU			
VILLAGE	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
HIHIFO	0	0	63
VAIPOA	13	15	28
MET	0	0	42
MEIDECC,MLNSR	0	0	0
MEIDECC,MOI,TDB,MLC,GOVREP,POLICE,	0	0	0
MSNDRC	0	0	0
MAFF	0	0	0
TAL	0	0	0
FALELALANGA I FALEHAU	0	0	0
TOTAL	13	15	133

Figure 3. 18 Ongo Niua



Figure 3.19 (iv) 2016 – Ha'apai

2016 OMB OUTREACH TO MINISTRIES HA'APAI			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
HA'APAI MINISTRIES	10	26	36
HA'APAI DISTRICT AND TOWN OFFICES	15	0	15
TOTAL	26	25	51

Figure 3.20 (v) 2016 – Vava'u

2016 OMB OUTREACH TO MINISTRIES VAVA'U			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
MOH	23	9	32
DISTRICT AND TOWN OFFICE	2	45	47
MOE	64	44	108
TOTAL	89	98	187

Figure 3.21 (vi) 2017 – Ministries and Public Enterprises

2017 OMB -MDA OUTREACH TONGATAPU			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
TWB			10
MLSNR			12
WAL			9
MET			9
RFB			14
TAPUHIA(WAL)		28	28
MLNSR 2ND VISIT			10
TWB	5	5	10
MET(EXAMINATION UNIT)			5
TIHE(MET)			18
TMPI(MET)	4	16	20
COMMUNTY(MET)	6	1	7
TAMA	1	2	3
MOI	11	6	17
TOTAL	27	58	172

Figure 3.22 MET Head



Figure 3.23 Tapuhia



Figure 3.24 (vii) 2017 – 'Eua

2017 OMB MDA OUTREACH 'EUA			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
POLICE	1	4	5
TDB	1	1	2
TCC	2		2
TPL		1	1
TWB	1	2	3
EUA HIGH SCHOOL	12	2	14
MAFF	4	7	11
PRISONS		2	2
MOJ,MIA,MORC,MCCTIL	3	4	7
MOH	14	4	18
TOTAL	38	27	65

Figure 3.25

2017 OMB VILLAGE OUTREACH 'EUA				
VILLAGE	FEMALE	MALE	CHILDREN	TOTAL
OHONUA	4	8	2	14
FUTU	6	8	0	14
HOUMA	10	7	0	17
TOTAL	20	23	2	45



Figure 3.26 Futu



Figure 3.27 Niu'eiki Hospital

Figure 3.28 (viii) Ha'apai

OMB-MDA- OUTREACH HA'APAI			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
GOVERNORS OFFICE,MEIDEC AND MOJ	5	9	14
TWB	2	6	8
MET	4	3	7
PRISONS		6	
TAL	1	1	2
METEOROLOGY	1	1	2
MAFF,MOI AND FIRE	2	24	26
POLICE	1	9	10
MOH	19	7	26
TDB	2	6	8
TCC	5	5	10
TPL	3	10	13
TOTAL	45	87	126

Figure 3.29 Villages Outreaches

VILLAGES	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
HA'ATEIHO SI'I	10	1	11
TONGOLELEKA	10	1	11
KOULO/HOLOPEKA	8	2	10
PANGAI/HA'ATO'U	2	4	6
FANGALE'OUNGA	11	2	13
FOTUA	11	4	15
LOTOFOA	13	8	21
FALELOA/HA'AFAKAHENGA	6	7	13
TOTAL	71	29	100



Figure 3.30 Tongoleleka



Figure 3.31 MAFF, MOI, Fire Services

(ix) 2017 – Vava'u

Figure 3. 32 OMB MDA Outreach Vava'u

OMB-MDA-OUTREACH VAVA'U			
MDA	FEMALE	MALE	TOTAL
GOVERNORS OFFICE AND MFNPF	7	2	9
CUSTOMS	6	9	15
REVENUE AND RFB	6	2	8
MEIDECC,MLNSR	2	8	10
TCC,MOFNP	2	7	9
MAFF, TOURISM,LABOUR	4	8	12
IT, STATISTICS,TDB	2	3	5
MOI	5	7	12
POLICE,FIRE	0	8	8
TWB	5	2	7
MOH	12	5	17
TPL	6	10	16
MOJ,MIA,MORC,MCCTIL	2	2	4
FISA/MARINE AND BOARDS	3	5	8
MET	54	22	76
TOTAL	116	100	216

Figure 3.33 OMB District Outreach Vava'u

OMB-DISTRICT-OUTREACH VAVA'U				
DISTRICT	FEMALE	MALE	CHILDREN	TOTAL
PANGAIMOTU	15	9	0	24
LEIMATU'A	4	8	0	12
TEFISI	1	1	1	3
HA'ALAUFULI	3	11	0	14
NEIAFU	1	12	0	13
TOTAL	24	41	1	66

Figure 3.34 Vava'u Outreach



(x) New Outreach initiatives

(a) Out and About in Nuku'alofa Outreach

Initiated by the Ombudsman, it was agreed that we needed to be seen in the busier areas in Nuku'alofa and be accessible to people. To this end we set up twice weekly 1 hourly sessions at various areas in Nuku'alofa. A favourite spot was at the lalo Kasia at Talamahu Market where we were never sure if we would have Sia Ope's blessing that day or not. We were also seen at Vaiola Hospital, Digi Square, the fish and flea markets and the main bus stops. In

total as at the end of June we had done over 20 Nuku'alofa outreaches.



Vaiola Hospital



Talamahu Market

(b) Outreach to the Legislative Assembly

In an effort to foster closer working relations with the Legislative Assembly and given that we were proposing to come under the Speaker of the House, an outreach event was held at the Legislative Assembly in October 2016. Primarily the function was to create awareness of the proposed amendments to the Commissioner of Public Relations Act 2001 but it was also an effective networking opportunity.



Chair of the Parliament, Minister for Health & Ombudsman's CEO



Members of the Parliament

2016. The change included the rebranding of the office, now no longer to be known as the Office of the Commissioner for Public Relations under the authority of the Prime Minister but now known as the Office of the Ombudsman under the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The office agreed to hold a function to mark this change. The launch of the new office name was held at the Tanoa International Dateline Hotel in March 2017 with Hon. Lord Tu'ivakano as the guest of honour. The Hon. Deputy Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni and many other guests shared the occasion with us.



Relaunching of the Office



Relaunching Event Guests

(c) Rebranding Launch – change from Commissioner for Public Relations to Ombudsman

The amendments to the Commissioner for Public Relations Act 2001 was passed by the Legislative Assembly in the 2016 parliamentary session and was gazetted on 2nd December

(d) Ombudsman Fanguna Breakfast Outreach

In keeping with the concerted effort to reach targeted groups in our outreach, we started a “Fanguna” program in May 2017 where we

held a breakfast and invited a key note speaker. The Hon. Prime Minister, Samiuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva was the speaker and we invited people from the public and private sector. The function was held at the La Quinda Restaurant (Vikilani House) and was well received and attended. We aim to continue having more “Fanguna” functions.



Figure 3.35

RADIO TALK BACK IN TONGATAFU

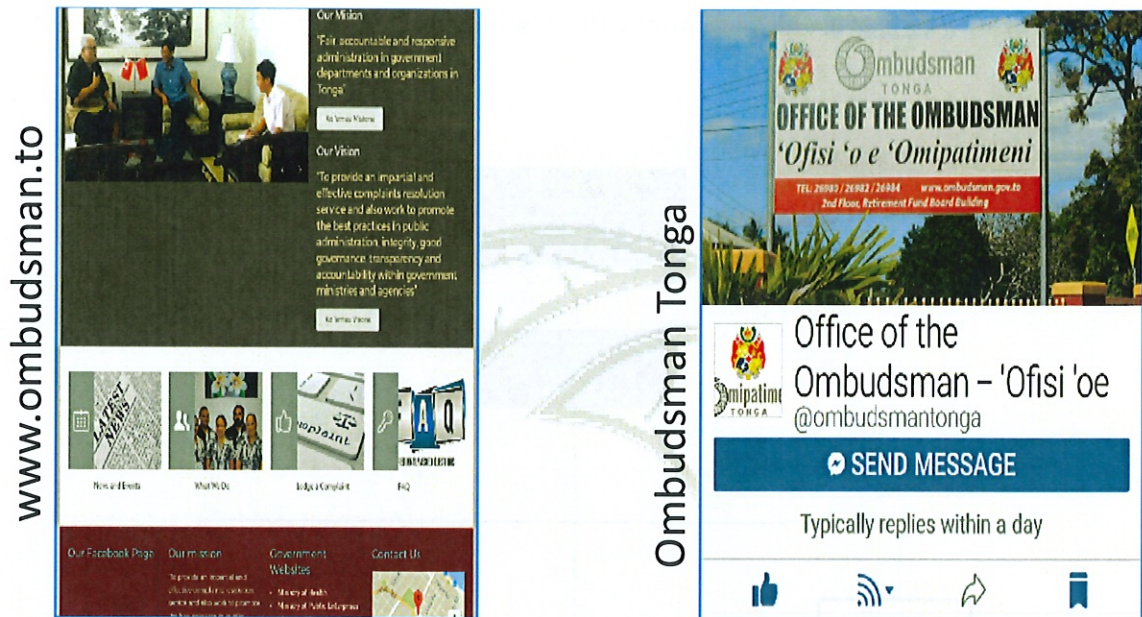
RADIO STATION	NO. CALLERS	MALE	FEMALE	AM/FM
87.5	14			FM
A3Z	11			FM
87.5	17	9	8	FM
A3Z	11	11	0	FM
87.5	19			FM
A3Z	12	8	4	FM
87.5	3	3	0	
TOTAL	87	31	12	

(e) Radio Talk Back

To increase awareness in the Office, regular radio talk back shows were initiated in March 2017 on a monthly basis and will continue as it is an effective way of connecting with people. When we started the talk back shows, most of the questions centered around who we were, what the function of the office was and jurisdictional issues. Now that we have regular programs the questions are markedly more focused on the work and how we can help people. We have received our share of negative feedback during these sessions including a comment that we do not provide regular follow ups to the complainants in that they lodge their complaints and then wait for weeks before they hear back from us. This was a very valid comment and we took immediate action to remedy this and have including in our investigative processes regular follow ups with the complainants even if there has been no development in the investigation.

(f) Social Media

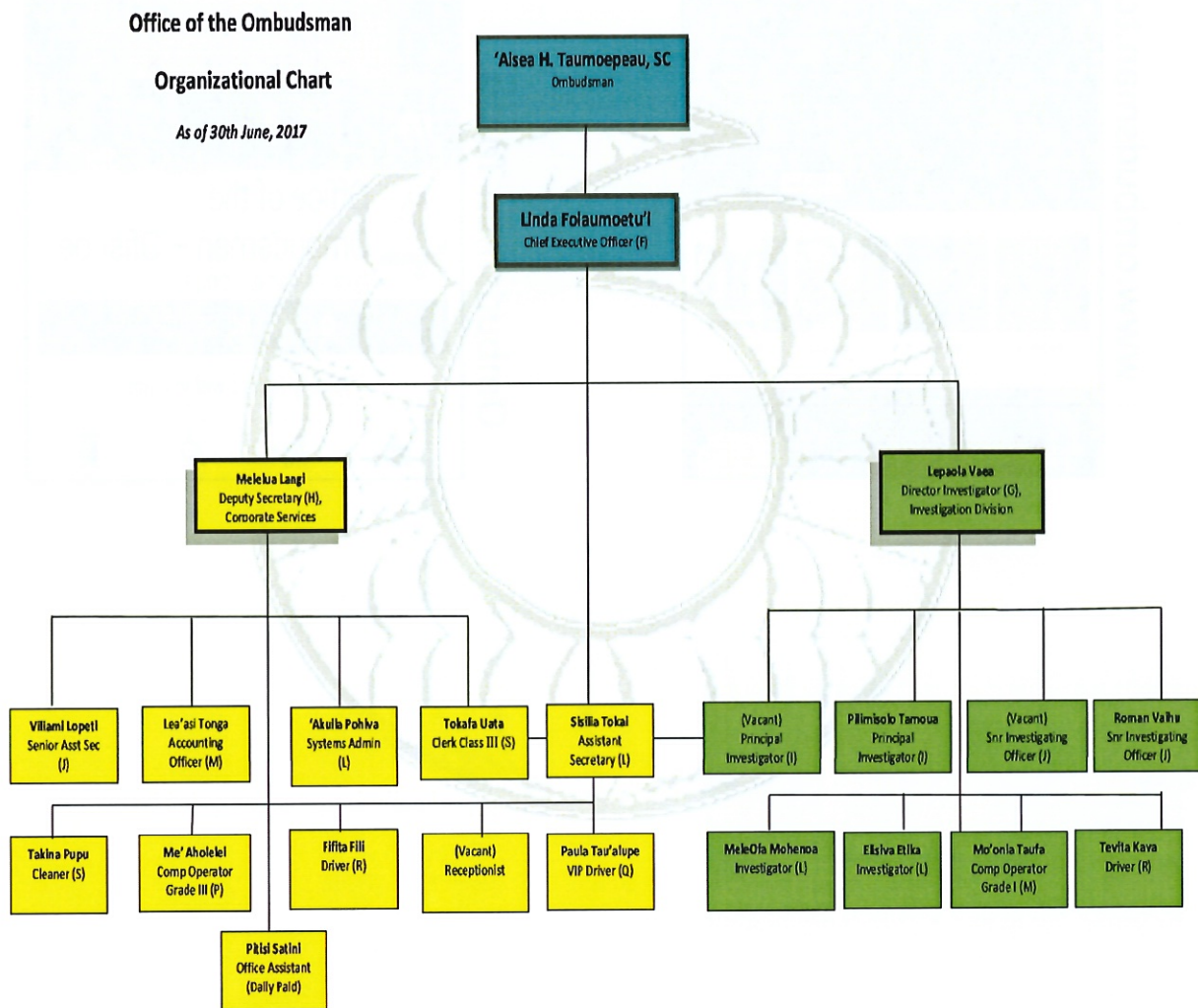
The Office followed the practice of other international Ombudsman Offices and launched its website in March 2017 followed by a Facebook account. We monitor queries and feedback and do our best to keep the material fresh and current.



4. OUR PEOPLE

4.1 Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of the OMB Office is displayed here in this chart. As outlined in the organizational chart and as of the end of this reporting period – 30th June, 2017, the Ombudsman heads an office which consists of a Chief Executive Officer, seventeen (17) permanent staff and one (1) daily paid staff.



4.2 Staff Matters

New Appointments

The Office of the Ombudsman had a priority at the beginning of 2016 to progress the recruitment of several vacant posts in the office. From our eleven (11) vacancies, there were nine (9) successful

recruitments, one of them being a promotion. A promotion can take place internally or through a transfer of staff from another government ministry but it should be noted that all potential candidates must go through our regular recruitment process. The following vacant posts were filled.

Figure 3.36 New Appointments

Staff Post	Staff Member	Recruitment Date
Receptionist	ʻItili Kauhalaniua	March 2016
Systems Administrator	Akuila Pohiva	April 2016
Senior Assistant Secretary	Viliani Lopeti	June 2016
Director of Investigations	Lepaola Vaea	July 2016
Senior Investigation Officer	Roman Vaihu	July 2016
Investigation Officer	Elisiva Lui	November 2016
Driver	Fifita Fili	November 2016
Driver	Tevita Kava	March 2017
Principal Investigation Officer	Pilimisolu Tamoua	March 2017 (promotion)

Since Pilimisolu Tamoua was promoted, his previous post of Senior Investigation Officer was vacated.

Resignation from the Office of the Ombudsman and PSC

Throughout this 18 month reporting period, there has been two (2) staff that have resigned and one (1) that was transferred from the Office. Due to migration overseas, Mr. Mapa Taumalolo, Investigator, resigned from the office in May 2016 and Mr. Nikola Pita, Driver, resigned from the office in November 2016. Once the Commissioner for Public Relations (Amendment) Act 2016 was approved on 2 December 2016, existing staff were given the choice whether to resign as government civil

servants under the Public Service Commission (PSC) and be employed with the Ombudsman Office OR remain under PSC and be transferred to a line ministry. One staff member, our receptionist, decided to remain with PSC while the rest of the staff resigned from the public service. On March 30, 2017, she was transferred to the Ministry of Tourism which vacated our receptionist post.

Retirement

Ms. Takina Pupu, Cleaner, has reached retirement age of 60 years old and fortunately, the Public Service approved her request for extension of service for one year. Consequently her service has been further extended for another year.



4.3 Workshops, Conferences, Trainings and Guests

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to encourage development and advancement of our staff. This can take place through attendance of workshops and conferences, training programs and attachments.

Figure 3.37 – The following table outlines the *overseas* meetings/workshops

Date	Meeting/Workshop	Attended by:
April/May 2016	Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) and the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) Australasia and Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR) members' meeting in Melbourne, Australia	Ombudsman, CEO, two (2) Investigators
24-26 October 2016	"Sharpening your teeth" Advanced Investigative Training for Administrative Watchdogs in Toronto, Canada – Ombudsman Ontario	Director of Investigations
1-3 November 2016	NZ Ombudsman Conference in Wellington NZ	Ombudsman, CEO, Deputy Secretary and Senior Investigation Officer
15 November 2016	<p>International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) "Evolution of Ombudsmanship" Bangkok Declaration adopted unanimously by all present and voting at the General Assembly in Bangkok, Thailand</p> <p>The Bangkok Declaration was adopted unanimously by all present. Tonga is a member of the IOI.</p> <p>WHEREAS the Bangkok Preamble states -</p> <p>i) Ombudsman institutions offer independent and objective consideration of complaints, aimed at correcting injustices caused to an individual as a result of maladministration; and</p> <p>ii) a further important objective of Ombudsman institutions to improve services provided to the public by ensuring that systemic failings are identified and corrected;</p>	Ombudsman, CEO and Senior Investigation Officer

	<p>and</p> <p>iii) the Ombudsman concept has now been adopted and extended across the world and includes the promotion and protection of human rights; and</p> <p>iv) the Ombudsman concept has proved extraordinarily adaptable and innovative while remaining true to its original core principles of independence, objectivity and fairness;</p> <p>v) the Wellington Declaration stated that Ombudsman institutions form an integral part of Good Governance and make an important contribution to the Rule of Law, Transparency, Democracy and Human Rights.</p> <p>Importantly under the Declaration was paragraph 3 which states that IOI -</p> <p><i>3.Calls upon all nations, states and territories to give constitutional status to Ombudsman institution"</i></p> <p>In this respect Office of the Ombudsman is striving to work towards giving the Office a constitutional status.</p>	
<p>3–8 April 2017</p>	<p>Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman (OCO) 40th Anniversary dinner and conference; International Integrity Leaders Forum in Canberra, Australia</p>	<p>Ombudsman and CEO</p>





Pics above. CEO and Ombudsman at the 11th World Conference of the International Ombudsman Institute 2016 in Bangkok Thailand



Pic: Pacific Integrity Leaders attending the International Integrity Leaders Forum in Canberra, Australia

Training/Work Attachments

Management continuously looks into opportunities for training attachments and courses that would be of benefit for staff. The following are trainings/attachments, local and overseas, that took place. To note, an application was submitted to the New Zealand High Commission in Tonga for a Short Term Training Award (STTA) for one of our Investigators, Mrs. Elisiva Lui, to be attached to the NZ Ombudsman Office. We were pleased to be informed of her successful application for placement with the New Zealand Ombudsman office in Auckland NZ.

Figure 3.38 Training & Work Attachment

Date	Training	Attended by:
March 2016	Investigation trainers, David Ward (Commonwealth Ombudsman Office), Tracey Harlen (Ombudsman NZ Office), Tracey Mikaele (Ombudsman Samoa Office). This training was conducted in Tonga.	POA sponsored trainers visit from Australia, NZ, and Samoa to give training on investigation skills to all investigation officers from the Office of the Ombudsman, Tonga.
October 2016	Work attachment to NZ Ombudsman Office in Wellington NZ. Visit to review role & functions of the Ombudsman in Wellington New Zealand	CEO and Deputy Secretary
April 2017	Training course – Human Capabilities in New Delhi, India	Senior Assistant Secretary
May 2017	“How to prepare Job Descriptions” – local with PSC	Director of Investigations, Senior Assistant Secretary
May 2017	Proposed Amendments to the Births, Deaths and Marriage Act – local with Ministry of Justice	Director of Investigations
May 2017	Coaching and Mentoring Skills – local with PSC	Director Investigations, Senior Assistant Secretary
May 2017	Conflict of Interest Management Training, Suva, Fiji – Commonwealth Ombudsman Australia	Principal Investigation Officer, Senior Investigation Officer





Visitors and Guest Speakers to the Office of the Ombudsman

Our office is always happy to receive guests. This gives us an opportunity to share information about our work. In August of 2016, the Ombudsman started an initiative to invite a guest speaker to address the whole OMB staff. This is held every month before our OMB all staff monthly meeting. The Speakers that were invited have experience in good governance, retired public servants, and people from relevant agencies within government or public enterprises. The objective of this initiative is for these learned speakers to share their experiences in their work and life. In turn we were able to learn and to ask questions on relevant topics relating to our work.

Figure 3.39 Visitors & Guest Speakers to the Office

Date	Guests/Visitors	Purpose
May 2016	Visit from the Swedish Ambassador	Courtesy call on the Ombudsman; The Ambassador met with the Ombudsman, Deputy Secretary and Senior Investigation Officer
June 2016	Guest Speaker: Mr. Sateki Ahio, Former Commissioner for Public Relations	Courtesy visit to the Ombudsman and also had discussions with the staff
August 2016	Guest Speaker: Mr. Siaso Aho, the First Commissioner for Public Relations	Courtesy visit to the Ombudsman and also had discussions with the staff
September 2016	Guest Speaker: Mr. Saia Havili, General Manager of the Retirement Fund Board	Presentation on retirement benefits and also invited as our landlord.



November 2016	Guest Speaker: Mr. Aminiasi Kefu, Acting Attorney General	Presentation on first court case that the the Ombudsman Office was taken to court for
December 2016	Visit from Australian High Commissioner, HE Andrew Ford	Courtesy call on the Ombudsman; The Australian High Commission met with the Ombudsman, Acting CEO and Deputy Secretary
January 2017	Guest Speaker: Mr. Sefita Tangi, Auditor General	The Auditor General shared experience of their offices becoming an independent agency, similar to our recent move to independence
February 2017	Guest Speaker: Ms. Lia Maka, CEO PSC and Mrs. Falemei Fale, Deputy Secretary PSC	Discussion on PSC policies and upcoming reviews to improve policies.
April 2017	Visit from the European Union Delegation, based in Suva Fiji	Courtesy visit from the the EU Delegation which consisted of: the Ambassador, Head of Political and Trade Section, Team Leader of Economic and Social Issues and European External Action Service Officer. The EU team met with the Acting CEO and Deputy Secretary
June 2017	Mrs. Rosamond Bing Pale, CEO of Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR)	Presentation on the work of MLNR and its mission for the people of Tonga

5. OUR PERFORMANCE

5.1 Corporate Plan Outputs and Targets

Our Corporate Plan for 2016/17 FY was similar to the previous year but additional outputs and targets were added. Management of the office focused their efforts on achieving goals that were set and these are outlined in the tables below.



Figure 3.40 Corporate Plan Outputs & Targets

External Organizational Outcome	Output	Targets/Activities Achieved
Outcome 1: Management behaviour towards stakeholders and employees/subordinates improves, consistent with adherence to the rule of law	Output 1. Complaints by external stakeholders against public officials are appropriately investigated and resolved Responsible: Ombudsman, CEO, Director of Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ongoing investigations and advice -Improvement of processes and procedures for case management -Implementation of OMB handbook, - Continuous monitoring & evaluation processes.
	Output 2. Proactive investigations appropriately carried out into individual public servants and public organisations which have a record of violating principles of good governance. Responsible: CEO, Director of Investigations, Investigation team, Assistant Secretary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Clearer assessment of frequently complained about departments, ministries or organisations - Reports generated on findings - Summon powers utilised
Outcome 2: Stakeholders adopt appropriate strategies towards the operation of the Office of the Ombudsman and the improvement of good governance	Output 3. Senior management exercise proper leadership and influence over the operations of the department, ministry, organization or stakeholders Responsible: Ombudsman, CEO, Director of Investigations, Investigation team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good Governance awareness programs presented to various MDAs -Recommendations are adopted by stakeholders
	Output 4. Improve public awareness and accessibility of services Responsible: Director of Investigations, Investigation Team, Systems Administrator, Corporate team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Developed new outreach program -Facilitated new outreach program -Carried out new outreach programs -Increased visibility of the OMB office to the public -Website and Social media avenues are active

Internal Organizational Outcome	Output	Targets/Activities Achieved
Organizational Outcome 1: That the Office of the Ombudsman operates efficiently, effectively and affordably based on appropriate balance	Output 1. Timely and effective internally planning and financial management system <i>Responsible: Accounting Officer,</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved established internal systems (stock, asset register) -Increased regular reporting (weekly and monthly) -Work flow charts created for each staff



between available budget and desired outputs	<i>Computer Operator Grade III</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -SunSystem was established with the Accounts section -Compliance with tax obligations
	<p>Output 2. Effective placement of appropriate staff, adaptable and capable, within a well-managed organisation</p> <p><i>Responsible. Deputy Secretary, Senior Assistant Secretary, Office Assistant/Receptionist, Clerk Class III</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved internal systems; -Recruitment of staff; -Training of staff to becoming more efficient; -Clear staffing structure with well-defined roles and responsibilities; -Focused on mentoring and coaching; -Developed staff surveys to understand the level of satisfaction;
	<p>Output 3. Efficient logistic support</p> <p><i>Responsible. Deputy Secretary, Senior Assistant Secretary, Systems Administrator, Drivers, Cleaner</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Improved the established functional administration processes and systems for transportation -Clear staffing structure with well-defined roles and responsibilities -Maintained office cleanliness & organization to contribute to efficiency
	<p>Output 4. Improved public satisfaction with the quality of service</p> <p><i>Responsible. Deputy Secretary, Senior Assistant Secretary</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop a 'customer friendly' environment in the office - Ensure ALL OMB staff receive proper training to understand their role in the office
	<p>Output 5. Increased monitoring of internal service standard for complaint handling</p> <p><i>Responsible. CEO, Director of Investigations, Deputy Secretary</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Establish a clear monitoring system to ensure relevant indicators are reviewed - Clear staffing structure with well-defined roles and responsibilities

5.2 Financial Performance

Even though the Office of the Ombudsman is no longer under the Public Service Act, we are still under the Public Financial Management Act and take measures to ensure we comply with the Treasury Instructions.

The budget allocated from the Government to the Office of the Ombudsman increased from previous years. The following table outlines the budget performance



Figure 3.41 Financial Budget & Total Expenditure

	FY 2015/16	Jan 1 to June 30, 2016	FY 2016/17
Budget Allocation	T\$1,419,900		T\$1,700,000
Total Expenditure	T\$1,127,587.48	T\$866,917.72 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries: \$439,354.72 • Operations: \$427,563 	T\$1,322,102.42 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries: \$597,132 • Operations: T\$724,970.42

6. CHALLENGES and WAY FORWARD

6.1 Challenges

The Office of the Ombudsman is pleased with the milestones it has achieved over the past 18 months. There have been positive working relationships between our office and external stakeholders and we are happy to recognize growth amongst our staff and satisfaction from the public in regards to services we provide. As mentioned in section 2.5 above, on the 30th June 2016 the Pacific Ombudsman Alliance (POA) ended. This may have been seen as a challenge for the Ombudsman offices of the Pacific. It is with great appreciation that the Australia Commonwealth Ombudsman continues to provide assistance to our office and our Pacific colleagues through funding and training.

6.2 Way Forward and Conclusion

With the increase in work load, it is important that the Investigation Team is appropriately staffed and trained. To this end vacancies will be advertised with a focus on recruiting legally qualified officers. Continuing education and training is a focus and attachments in New Zealand and Samoa are planned. The team will also receive instruction from the Police based on topics they offer in their basic investigation training. The Office also has a monthly in-house training session and a monthly guest speaker which has proved invaluable to maintaining focus and relevance.

The focus will continue to be in extensive outreach using all the mediums possible including talk back, radio and television advertisements, billboards, newsletters, newspaper articles, use of social media through Twitter, Facebook, our website and clinics both on the main island and the outer islands including the outer laying islands of Ha'apai and Vava'u. We are also committed to rolling out village outreach sessions on the main islands once a year including high level targeted outreach programs which the Ombudsman leads.



Regarding the investigation process, we are committed to streamlining and reviewing our processes to make them more effective and efficient. We have an Investigation Handbook which we update on a regular basis.

The Office of the Ombudsman has included two new posts to its staff list: an Accountant, to assist in the Accounts Section and a Communications/IT Officer, to lead the IT and Outreach initiatives of the office.

7. Acknowledgment

The Office of the Ombudsman continues to promote increased transparency and accountability and believes that all institutions in government can be partners in this aspect. We take pride in our effective working relationships with government organizations and public enterprises. We acknowledge the support we receive from the leadership of these establishments and are pleased when we all have a common understanding to support good governance initiatives in our work. We do our best to reach out to the communities and villages and we appreciate that they take time to get to know and understand our work as well.

We look forward to a new year of strengthening our relations with all stakeholders from government and the people of Tonga.

Ombudsman Staff 2016-2017



