

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

REMARKS OF THE CEO

**THE OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN WISHES
YOU ALL A MERRY CHRISTMAS & A PROS-
PEROUS NEW YEAR.**



The last quarter of the Year 2021 has flown by at a “hurricane pace.” Belated Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year to you all.

Management and all staff retreats, World Ombudsman events, outreach, island hopping, and Law Week support, kept us all on our toes. General Election in November has brought in a new government and a new Prime Minister.

Our staff of the Year for 2021, Mr. Latu Vehikite, is to be congratulated on a job well done.

‘Ofa atu,

Mrs. ‘Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.

Chief Executive Officer.

STAFF OF THE YEAR, 2021



The Staff of the Year for the Office of the Ombudsman was awarded to Mr. Latu Vehikite, IT Officer.

Latu received the award after having been twice Staff of the Month for the year. He has successfully risen to the challenge of virtual meetings and zoom sessions. Latu accepted the award from the Ombudsman, Mr. ‘Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., (above), during the Christmas Party of the office marking the end of 2021.

CEO on Constitution of Tonga

The promulgation of the Constitution of Tonga in 1875 marked the beginning of an enlightened era. According to history, the Act of the Constitution of Tonga was submitted to the Legislative Assembly on 16th September, 1875. Tonga’s supreme law was promulgated on 4th November, 1875.

The CEO of the Office of the Ombudsman, Mrs. ‘Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., made the statement in a special program on Tonga’s Constitution. Mrs. Taumoepeau has previously served as the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Acting Chief Justice and currently a King’s Counsel.

The hour-long program on Tonga’s Constitution included former Ministers of the Crown, Right Hon. Lord Tangi of Vaonukonuka and Lord Matoto of Tu‘anekivale. It was a production of the Attorney General’s Office and was broadcast over radio and TV to coincide with the 146th Anniversary of the Constitution on 4th November, 2021. Mrs. Salote Sisifā was the producer. [@OMBTonga](#).

OMB Management & Staff Retreats focus on Leadership & Integrity

The Office of the Ombudsman successfully completed a two-day retreat at Neiafu, focusing on Integrity & Leadership and the Corporate & Budget Plan 2022/23. The aim is to hone the leadership skills of the management team, according to the Ombudsman, Mr. ‘Aisea Taumoepeau, SC.

The retreat was officially opened by the Ombudsman at the Neiafu branch of the Office of the Ombudsman, on Thursday, 11th November, 2021. It focused on five (5) core leadership values – Model the way; inspire a shared vision; challenge the process; enable others to act and encourage the heart: *Kouzes and Posner*.



The retreat was to empower and equip the line managers including the staff of the Vava’u office.
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It was led by the Chief Executive Officer, Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC. Participants were the Deputy CEO, Mr. Sateki 'Ahio, Director of Investigation, Mr. Roman Vaihū, Officer-in-charge of Vava'u office, Mrs. Tepola Fonongaloa, Communications & Media Officer, Ms. Nanise Fifita, Accountant, Mrs. Jane 'Atiola and IT Officer, Mr. Latu Vehikite. Mrs. Katrina Ma'u-Fatiaki of *Tapuaki Mei Langi Consultancy* conducted the session.

There was a hearing relating to an investigation matter. This was the second time a hearing was held at the Vava'u office.

Outreach

As part of the retreat, two outreach programs were carried out for the Hahake and Pangaimotu Districts. The outreach programs were a success, and the exchanges during the programs were an indication of how slowly but gradually the public is taking note and interest in the work of our office to uphold good governance values.

"The most important aspect is having an idea and putting it into practice during this challenging time (COVID-19) and expecting it to bear fruit. I found the program very educational and reminded me that there is more room for improvement in my leadership capacity as Head of Division," according to the Deputy CEO, Mr. Sateki 'Ahio.

The Director of Investigation, Mr. Roman Vaihū, believes it was beneficial to include Vava'u in the program.

"It was bold thinking to take a retreat to Vava'u, nevertheless, I'm thankful for the opportunity to go there and deliver two outreach programs to the community of Pangaimotu and Hahake Districts. Nothing more satisfying than seeing enlightened faces," Mr. Vaihū said.

The Assistant Secretary and Officer-in-charge of the Vava'u office, Ms. Tepola Fonongaloa, reflected on the importance of the program for her.

"The retreat was highly beneficial for the Vava'u Office. Firstly, the challenge presented in the leadership program is for us to pause; take another look, check if we are still on the right track; and be empowered and provide encouragement to each other. It was very refreshing and an eye opener, in terms of the office management and holding the investigation hearing here in Neiafu," Ms. Fonongaloa said. @OMB Tonga



Staff at the Leadership & Integrity session held at Neiafu, Vava'u.

OMB Office holds retreat on Budget & Corporate Plan

Ombudsman, Mr. Taumoepeau, SC., keynote address at retreat.



The retreat for all staff of the Office of the Ombudsman on the theme **Leadership & Integrity** was held on Tuesday, 30th November, at the Liku'alofa resort, Tofoa.

The D/CEO, Mr. Sateki 'Ahio led the opening prayer followed by the welcome made by the Director of Investigation, Mr. Roman Vaihū.

Performance

A key aspect of the program was an update on the performance of the office during the first half of the current financial year 2021/22 presented by the Budget Officer at the Ministry of Finance, Mr. Va'anono Hoeft and Miss Kiu Tatafu of the National Planning Division of the Prime Minister's Office. Mrs. Katrina Ma'u-Fatiaki of *Tapuaki Mei Langi Consultancy* also delivered the Integrity & Leadership session for all management and staff.

Both the Ombudsman and the CEO hailed the retreat as a success and "the best ever retreat she had taken part in since joining the Office," according to the CEO, Mrs. Taumoepeau, KC.

She emphasized that the Corporate Plan and the Budget are "the tools of business and to balance the financial year and that money is the same with performance made during the year and when it is done so, business is good. Money is good, planning is good, but it's about you and me. It's about attitude, character, professionalism and getting the job done."

She made the emphasis against a backdrop of over-expenditure including the Communications & Media Division but the CEO pointed out that those could be "justified that when we do the job, it's not about the money, it's about this country and what we're supposed to do. "Money is not an issue, but work must be done and it shall be done," the CEO again stressed.

In summing up the message of the Leadership & Integrity session, she said that it is all about "humility," and to accomplish the duties and responsibilities given to the Office to perform. Mrs. Taumoepeau also challenged staff on their legacy as mandated under the law to be united and to examine what they would contribute and leave for the office.

In delivering the vote of thanks, the Ombudsman highlighted the importance of the independence of the Ombudsman and his office.

Mr. Taumoepeau cited Section 31B of the Act of the Constitution of Tonga (Amendment) Act 2018 that stipulates (1) *There shall be an Ombudsman appointed by the Speaker with the consent of the Legislative Assembly* and (2) *The Ombudsman shall unless otherwise provided by law, have complete discretion to exercise his legal powers and duties independently without any interference whatsoever from any person or authority.*

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Meanwhile, the contribution of trainer, Mrs. Ma'u-Fatiaki was fully acknowledged as one of the local trainers. In a nutshell, the Ombudsman summed up the message from her training as to "grow" and that is "for the staff to grow individually, to help others to grow and it would eventually help the Office of the Ombudsman to grow. When you grow, it would automatically add value and grow the organization. Every one of us should try and grow and also help others to grow," the Ombudsman emphasized. He acknowledged the success of the retreat and thanked staff for their contribution and hard work and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. [@OMB Tonga](#).



The Ombudsman and staff following the retreat.

OMB engaging in Tonga Law Week 2021



The Attorney General, Mrs. Linda Folaumoetu'i (2nd from right), visits the information desk of the Ombudsman Office.

The Office of the Ombudsman set up an information desk at the Open Day of the Tonga Law Week 2021 on Monday, 22nd of November. The weeklong program highlights the theme of "Social Media and the Law." The theme aims to educate and foster awareness of the law relating to the very popular social media.

The Minister of MEIDECC, Hon. Poasi Tei officiated at the program where students were awarded with prizes for best Poster, Poetry, Essay and in the Tiktok/Short Video competitions.

The Office is grateful for the invitation from the Attorney General's Office to take part in the Open Day program. It was a platform to reach out to students, youth and members of the public and explain about Good Governance and the services of the office.

The Office of the Ombudsman has been supporting and will continue to support the awareness drive on the laws. [@OMB Tonga](#).

Media promotes Good Governance



Guest speaker, Mr. Kalafi Moala.

There has been a tremendous change in the media landscape in Tonga since the past 20 years, a shift from the print media to now the social media. And the rapid usage of the social media as a source of news and information has been embraced largely through mobile phones.

That's according to renowned journalist and media personality, Mr. Kalafi Moala. Mr. Moala was the guest speaker for the Office of the Ombudsman's All Staff Meeting for the December quarter. He explained that the traditional media for decades had been the government newspaper "*The Tonga Chronicle*" as well as the "*Tohi Fanongonongo*" of the Free Wesleyan Church and the "*Taumu'a Lelei*" of the Roman Catholic Church.

"For years, people have been obtaining their news solely from these newspapers – owned by two major institutions of government and the church," Mr. Moala explained.

Despite discouragement when he looked into running his own newspaper business, the first privately owned print media apart from the government and churches, Mr. Moala managed to begin the "*Taimi 'o Tonga*" newspaper in 1989. By the year 2000, he noticed a new trend where the newspapers were no longer highly demanded worldwide as people's major source of news and information.

"Broadcasting became a major source of news despite the notion that government owned media at the time only broadcasts government news instead of giving out news that people need to hear. At present, people no longer read the newspapers and circulation has dropped to about 300 a week.

"Print is dead. People had switched to listening to the radio which is free to air. The social media has now taken over effectively and efficiently. People can access using their mobile phones.

"Newspaper, radio and television are all inbuilt in only one device, the mobile phone. And every one has become a reporter even though unofficially. Acquiring the news through mobile phones are effective and efficient and are updated every minute instead of every hour or weekly as the other media.

"The aim of the media is not different from the purpose of the Office of the Ombudsman. The media serves as a watchdog body over government decisions and actions in speaking truth to power whether that power belongs to the church, community groups or the government. On that basis, media organizations should not affiliate with nor show bias against any political grouping or church as facts and truths clearly define the media," according to Mr. Moala. [@OMB Tonga](#).

World Ombudsman Day 2021

The World Ombudsman Day (WOD) 2021 was celebrated through an outreach by staff members in their respective church on Sunday, 18th October. WOD is observed globally on the second Thursday of October every year.

The Office of the Ombudsman further highlighted a localized theme of "V. V. V. Good Governance" in this year's World Ombudsman Day, as we venture into the beginning of a new decade of ombudsmanship works for Tonga.

The theme emphasizes the importance for all people to be "vaccinated" against COVID-19, being "victorious" in the promotion of Good Governance in the Kingdom, and the 20th Anniversary (Latin word *vicennial* for 20 Years) of the Office of the Ombudsman. The Office recently celebrated its 20th Anniversary on 18th August, 2021.

A special radio and TV program focused mainly on the theme. The staff of the office attended their respective churches and used it as an outreach opportunity. Mrs. Mē 'Aholelei and Nanise Fifita attended the FWC of Sopa 'o Taufa'ahau, where the Rev. Taufa Filiai made a special thanksgiving prayer for the Office. He highlighted the principles of Good Governance and that the work of the Office is important for the people when seeking assistance pertaining to government services and decisions. He wished the Office success and God's blessing on its endeavor to help those seeking their assistance. @OMBTonga.



Rev. Taufa Filiai (4th from left) and members of the FWC Sopa 'o Taufa'ahau on World Ombudsman Sunday.

CMD Report

A total of 22 outreach programs in various genres were conducted during the quarter. Most of them were face-to-face programs held on Tongatapu, Vava'u and Ha'apai. To be more visible and appreciated by the public, the Office manned information booths/tables at various occasions including the Tonga Law Week and the Ha'apai Rugby Tournament. Brochures consisting of key information on our functions, processes in lodging and investigating of complaints, jurisdictions, the principles of good governance and how to contact the office, were distributed to aid people's understanding. Free promotional items attracted the attention of the visitors to our information booths though only a couple may be able to receive one of the items.

The use of the radio due to immediacy and effectiveness of coverage was used for the live radio talkback/felafoaki programs as well as for general information programming. The use of the social media on our Facebook page and website gave out regular updates about the outreach and official activities to inform and help in enlightening the public about Good Governance. @OMBTonga.



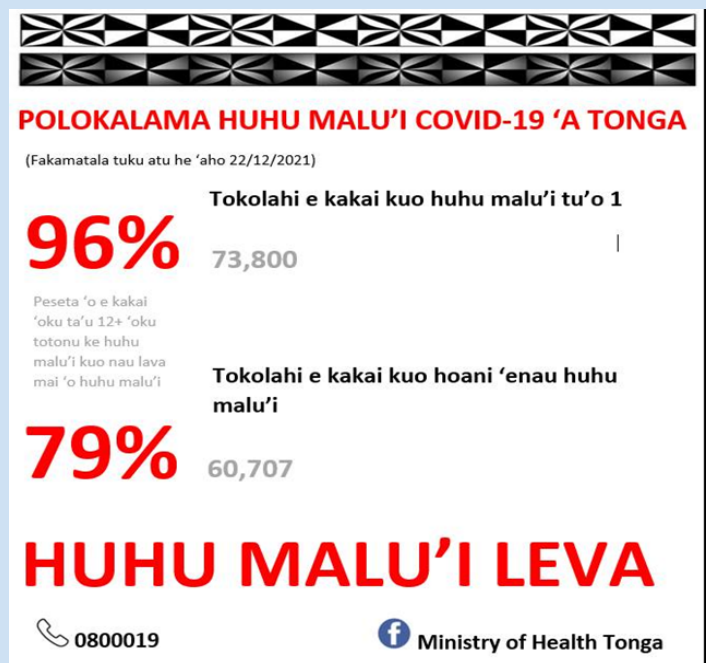
COVID-19 Vaccination Update

The Ministry of Health has reported a near 100% of people who have taken their first vaccination against COVID-19. The Ministry reported that 96% have taken their initial shot or 73,00 people, as of Wednesday, 22nd of December.

Those who have taken both shots accounted to 79%.

The Ministry still urges the public to make use of the near-expired vaccines and take their second dosage.

The seven (7) principles of Good Governance being promoted to guide the services and administrative decisions of the government are the—Rule of Law, Independent, Integrity, Transparency, Effective and Efficient, Accountability & Clarity of Purpose. For more information, call us toll-free on 0800 662 or email—investigation@ombudsman.to or reach us via Facebook Messenger on our page—Office of the Ombudsman. Our website is www.ombudsman.to.



Staff of the month



October, CMO Nanise Fifita



November, IT Officer Mr. Lātū Vehikite.



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