

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

Remarks of the CEO

Mālō ē lelei from Ombudsman Tonga.

The final quarter of FY2021/22 has come and gone in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We have cause to celebrate as we slowly but surely get back to normal.

The Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha'apai eruption and tsunami recovery is well underway as relocation and rebuilding continue.

Our song is still, resilience through good governance.

Stay safe and stay engaged!

'Ofa atu,

Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.
Chief Executive Officer
Office of the Ombudsman



"TEAM New Zealand"

The Vice President of International Ombudsman Institute, IOI, (Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand), Judge Peter Boshier, is keen to support the development of the Offices of the Ombudsman of the Pacific including Tonga. A team from Tonga recently visited the NZ Ombudsman Office making this vision a reality.

Mr. Matthew Lambie, the Advisor, International Development and Engagement of the NZ Ombudsman Office told the delegation from Tonga that investigators would learn from their NZ colleagues, both in the Wellington Office and in Auckland on short work attachment. He said the work of the Ombudsman in dealing with complaints against public administration and officials calls for highly skilled investigators. It needs constant training and sharing of expertise to stay abreast with the trends and cope with the challenges. Mr. Lambie said his office is also interested to learn from Tonga on conducting outreach programs.

The Principal Investigation Officer, Mr. Pilimisolo Tamo'ua, presented a brief overview of the development of the Tonga office to its present status. Since then, significant changes and development had been achieved.

The Ombudsman led the representatives from Tonga and included the Deputy CEO Mr. Sateki 'Ahio, Principal Investigation Officer, Mr. Pilimisolo Tamo'ua, and the Senior Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Sisilia Tokai. @OMBTonga.

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D/CEO, Mr. Sateki 'Ahio, leads discussion with the NZ Ombudsman Office.

Engaging with Tongans in NZ

The outreach team of the Office was well received by members of the Tongan communities in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin and in sharing core services that could benefit them. They paid a courtesy call to Tonga's Consul in Auckland, Mr. Sitafooti 'Aho, as shown below.



The NZ based Tongans embraced the discussions led by the Ombudsman, Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., on good governance principles that govern the works of his office and in guiding the administrative decisions and services of government ministries, departments, agencies and public enterprises. There were two live radio talkback programs over the Pacific Media Network (PMN) Tongan program in Auckland, that were livestreamed nationwide and globally.



A lively meeting was held with the Tongan Community leaders in Wellington, led by Rev. Hiueni Nuku, the Chairperson of the Tongan Community Leaders Council (*above photo*).

Rev. Nuku was honoured with the Queen's Service Medal (QSM) during HM Queen Elizabeth's 96th birthday in recognition of his contributions to the Pacific Community.



Rev. Nuku with members of the Council and the OMB Team

Council members voiced their passionate love for Tonga, their Motherland. Concerns were also raised about the poor service delivery in Tonga's public sector and lack of transparency.

An outreach program was also held for the Tonga Methodist congregation at Wesley.

The team then travelled and met the Tongan community in Dunedin, being led by Mr. Palanite Taungāpeau. A lively discussion was held where the Ombudsman and the Principal Investigation Officer responded to questions and queries. This session was livestreamed so other members who could not attend due to extreme weather were able to watch.

According to Mr. Taungāpeau, the discussion was lively and educational. The President of the Students Association, University of Otago, Melissa Lama, was interested in help with students' public sector research.

The Office appreciates the cooperation and enthusiasm shown by the Tongan communities they met in New Zealand. Overseas based Tongans have lodged complaints with the Nuku'alofa Office of the Ombudsman regarding land and immigration matters. @OMBTonga.

All Staff Monthly Devotions – a source of encouragement

Words of encouragement and biblical teachings have guided the staff and in highlighting the principles of good governance. Staff members take turn in leading each month's devotion and focusing on a particular theme of the month.

Themes during the quarter's monthly devotion included transparency, God's love as a refuge to everyone in times of disasters and difficulties as well as the importance of good governance.

Zooms enables staff members in Vava'u as well as those who were on official duties to participate. It is a time of deepening staff's commitment towards the principles of good governance in their daily tasks and responsibilities. @OMBTonga.



“The Heart of Recovery” – Adaptation from Kigali Theme of Human Rights for All at the Heart of Recovery - after COVID-19



The CEO, ‘Alisi Taumoepeau. and the Director of Investigation, Roman Vaihū, represented the Office at the biennial meeting of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, held in Kigali, Rwanda, on 16th and 17th of June.

Discussions focused on the theme *“Human Rights for All at the Heart of Recovery from a Pandemic.”* This meeting was a precursor to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2022 from 20-25 June in Kigali, capital of Rwanda. Tonga’s delegation to CHOGM was led by the Prime Minister, Hon. Hu’akavameiliku and included Tonga’s High Commissioner in London, Hon. Fanetupouvava’u Tu’ivakanō, Major Kiu Tu’ivakanō, Staff of the High Commission, as well as other official delegates.



The Commonwealth Forum of National Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) is an inclusive body of Commonwealth National Human Rights Institutions and other national accountability mechanisms with a human rights mandate. Despite not having an explicit human rights mandate, the Office of the Ombudsman Tonga was invited to join. Representatives shared their own experience on Human Rights work during the pandemic.

OMB Office helps tsunami victims

The Office recorded several complaints from tsunami affected people on Tongatapu who claimed of not receiving appropriate help in the wake of the tsunami. The Office took part in the REACH Mission (Rights, Empowerment and Social Cohesion) involving a number of government entities, non-government and civil society organizations held in May.

The aim is to reach out to people who have been affected by the tsunami triggered by the volcanic eruption from Hunga Tonga and Hunga Ha’apai (HTHH) on 15th January, 2022.

OMB Outreach Team for tsunami affected people, Kolomotu’a District.



“For Tonga, it was a total different experience as we had not experienced the pandemic like our other members had. It was an eye-opening experience to listen and learn from their experiences,” according to the representatives from Tonga.



Above: Delegates from 26 Commonwealth nations including Tonga at the Commonwealth Conference on Human Rights, Kigali.

The highlight of the meeting was the endorsement of the Kigali Declaration.

“With the Kigali Declaration now in place, we can utilize the principles to expand the scope of the work that we currently pursue. For example, there is an added emphasis on the protection of human rights that we had not previously touched.

“The Paris Principles is at the core of our work and what we do so we just need to strengthen our approaches in order to be more effective and efficient in what we do.”

A total of 51 delegates from 26 Commonwealth nations attended this biennial meeting leading up to CHOGM 2022. ©OMBTonga.

Right—The Pacific delegation at Kigali.



The UNDP REACH Mission in collaboration with the Governments of Japan and Tonga, covered the Hihifo, Kolomotu’a, Ma’ufanga and Hahake Districts, the vulnerable coastal areas badly affected by the tsunami.

Outreaching for the Hihifo District, held at Kanokupolu in April.



Reaching out through REACH mission to the public in villages, islands and communities has been an ongoing effort of the Office of the Ombudsman through its own outreach programs or in support of national events such as the Tonga Law Week and the Ministry of Finance’s Week.

Such support is to ensure every member of the public is well informed about the services being provided free of charge. Outreach programs cover villages, islands, civil service, community-based groups, schools of all levels, youth and women. ©OMBTonga.

Support for Mate Ma'a Tonga



The Ombudsman, Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., and staff in support of the Mate Ma'a Tonga team

The Ombudsman and his office supported Tonga's national *Mate Ma'a Tonga* rugby league in their quest against New Zealand on June 25th. Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., sent a message of good wishes to the team.



The Officer-in-charge of the Vava'u Office, Tepola Fonongaloa and colleague, Fifita Fili, took part in the float at Neiafu (above) in support of the *Mate Ma'a Tonga*. Nuku'alofa was robust with red and white decorated floats involving family members of the players, many government and private businesses as well as individuals. The score was 26 – 6 to New Zealand. @OMBOoffice.



Mate Ma'a Tonga Float along Taufa'ahau Rd., Nuku'alofa

Recognizing Staff's Commitment



Staff for the January – March Quarter, 2022, Latu Vehikite, IT Officer



Staff of the Month – April, 2022, Mosese Uili, Investigation Officer

In acknowledging the top performer of each month, the management committee names one of the employees as the Staff of the Month. However, a Staff of the March Quarter, 2022, was named for the first time. During the national lockdown period from January – March, the IT Officer, Latu Vehikite, was part of the essential staff who ensured that the office's IT connectivity was intact during a most challenging time due to the adverse impact of the volcanic eruption and tsunami that severed internet connectivity throughout Tonga. @OMBTonga.



Staff of the Month – May, 2022, 'Etivoni Pifeleti, Investigation Officer



Staff of the Month – June, 2022, Jane 'Atiola, Accountant

MONTHLY THEMES FOR THE JUNE QUARTER 2022

April - Integrity

May— Transparency

June—Accountability

Communications & Media Division (CMD)

Normal operation of the Office resumed on 11th April after the prolonged lockdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The only possible outreach programs at such a time were carried out over national radio and television stations as well as the social media Facebook page. They included the monthly Felafoaki or Talkback programs, the daily public community awareness radio and TV clips as well as information shared on our social media page on Facebook – Office of the Ombudsman – ‘Ofisi ‘o e ‘Omipatimeno. All content was shared simultaneously on the FB page and the website (www.ombudsman.to). In June, the Office conducted a series of outreach to various Tongan communities in New Zealand. Those who were able to attend or listen to them via livestream and radio interviews, were grateful for including them in outreach programs seeing they have interests and properties like land in Tonga.

Monthly themes 2021/22

During the period, good governance themes were given to the 3 months of the quarter. Emphasis were made on each theme promoted throughout internal all staff meetings and outreach programs.

The themes for the quarter were Integrity, Transparency and Accountability for April, May and June, respectively.

Outreach Programs (OPs)

A total of 17 OPs were carried out during the quarter. Eight (8) were held in various communities on Tongatapu focusing on people affected by the tsunami in the Hihifo, Kolomotu‘a, Ma‘ufanga and Hahake Districts. The Office took part in the REACH Mission together with various government entities, civil society and non-government organizations.

Five (5) OPs were held for the Tongan communities in Auckland, Wellington & Dunedin, New Zealand. Three (3) Radio Talkback programs were held over Radio Tonga and 87.5FM. The March quarterly newsletter was released at the beginning of this quarter. Through these genres, the Office ensures that outreach is every staff’s business to reach out to every sector of the Kingdom and the diasporas through livestreaming and face-to-face OPs. In comparison, this quarter trailed behind the second quarter of the FY2021/22 with 23 OPs, 1st quarter with 16 and the third quarter of only four (4).

Overall, the outreach programs picked up during the April – June quarter, when lockdown and restrictions were gradually eased off even though the alert level remained orange.



IO, ‘Etivoni Pifeleti, attends to a member of the Popua village.



Above: Vava‘u staff, Fifta Fili, prepares for outreach programs to MDAs & PEs.

The Vava‘u Office carried out a series of introductory outreaches to MDAs and PEs in June. They presented to Officers-in-charge some of the promotional free items including pens, mugs, water bottles, polo-shirts, amongst others. The Officer-in-charge (OIC) of the Vava‘u Office, Ms. Tepola Fonongaloa and staff, Fifta Fili, (pictured above), prepared 18 bags and distributed them with brief words about good governance. Following the long months of lockdown and COVID constraints, this was the first chance to reconnect with the MDAs in Vava‘u including the Governor’s Office. Lord Governor Fakatulolo expressed his gratitude for the works carried out by the Ombudsman Office, Vava‘u.

Social Media – Facebook page – Office of the Ombudsman – ‘Ofisi ‘oe ‘Omipatimeni

During the quarter, the average number of “posts reach” was approximately 8,200 per month, based on an average of 20 posts made by the administrators in April, May and June. “Posts reach” refers to the number of people who received all the posts made. Meanwhile, the average number of engagements during the quarter was 1,660, derived from an average of 1,550 per month.

In terms of age and gender, the majority of viewers of the Office’s FB page consisted of women of 60.5%. The predominant age groups were women from 25-34 years of age, followed by the 35-44 and 45-54 years old. Men trailed in these top three age groups.

Nuku‘alofa and Tonga recorded the highest cities and countries respectively of viewers, followed by Auckland and New Zealand as well as Sydney and Australia. @OMBTonga.



Outreach at the Hahake District, Tongatapu



Felafoaki program held over 87.5FM

The seven (7) principles of Good Governance being promoted to guide the services and administrative decisions of the government are the—Rule of Law, Independence, 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.



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