

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

**Greetings from the new Ombudsman,
Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.**

Mālō ē lelei from the Kingdom of Tonga.

June Quarter 2023 was buzzing with travelers both domestic and international. Church conferences, Royal Agricultural Shows, Heilala Festival, Tonga High School's 75th celebrations and 80th-year celebration of the Tonga Medical Association (TMA), kept us all celebrating.

Transition from the retired Ombudsman to the new has been seamless with the efficient action taken by the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly within a very tight schedule. An interim Ombudsman appointment was effective from 18 February, 2023 – 30th June, 2023.

We look forward to continue working with you all.

'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.
Ombudsman



Above, from left: Ms. Debbie Sorensen, CEO of Pasifika Medical Association, NZ., Lady Tangi, HRH Crown Princess Sinaitakala Tuku'aho, Guest of Honour, Ms. Miriam Carter, Acting Australian High Commissioner and Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., Ombudsman, during the TMA 80th Anniversary's Commemorative Ladies' Breakfast, held at Ancient Tonga.

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**Professionalism and integrity are bedrocks of health
and legal services: Ombudsman Taumoepeau, KC.,
at 80th Anniversary of Tonga Medical Association
(TMA)**



The theme of the TMA 80th Anniversary and Annual Conference was "Investing in the Future of TMA: Learning, Developing and Cultivating." A special program was held to mark eight decades of the TMA and the annual conference 2023,

officiated by the Guest of Honour, HRH Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala (*above*). His Royal Highness was grateful for the beliefs and values of the association from the beginning that have been sustained over the years. He also thanked members for choosing to work in Tonga.

"I know your professions, there are other better financial opportunities and alternatives that people have taken ... but despite this, you choose to serve here in Tonga. The level of service that you give our country ... I think it's a good credit that all these other health professionals all over the world want to come and help and I think that's because you're exemplary and you have a very high level of service. Overall, I want to thank you, not only for the service that you give to our people but for being exemplary of being the salt of the earth. Malo 'aupito."

Founding Members of TMA

The former Director of Health, Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola, paid tribute to the legacy of the founding members of TMA who have contributed tirelessly to the establishment of the organization in 1942. However, TMA was officially recognized by the Government eight years later when it was gazetted on 28th July, 1950.

"This organization ... has a constitution, approved by the Minister of Health at the time and its aim and objectives are for discussion of medical matters primarily, and formulation of proposals and recommendations regarding the standard and conduct of medical practice," Dr. 'Akau'ola said.
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The founding members of TMA were Dr. Sione Posesi Fanua (Fanua Lofanga), Dr. 'Alokihakau 'Eva, Dr. Siaso Niumeitolu, Dr. Samiuela Ma'afu Tupou, Dr. Sione Mangisi, Dr. Samiuela Taumoepeau, Dr. Sateki Tupou and Dr. Fakava'inga Taumoepeau, as well as two non-founding members but have contributed significantly to the organization, namely Dr. Sione Tapa and Lord Dr. Tangi 'o Vaonukonuka, who have served as Ministers of Health.

"I think I have brought out the very rich history of how the TMA has evolved over the years ... to share some inspirational stories with all of us to reflect upon," Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola (below) concluded.

The Annual Conference of TMA brought together 20 medical specialists and professors.



The President of the Church of Tonga, Rev. Dr. Tu'ipulotu Katoanga offered the anniversary thanksgiving prayer. Former Minister of Health and Specialist Surgeon, Lord Tangi 'o Vao Nukonuka made the vote of thanks.

Fahina 'o Vaiola in support of TMA

The 80th Anniversary of the TMA also recognized the help of the Fahina 'o Vaiola group towards the association. A Commemorative Prayer Breakfast was graced by HRH Crown Princess Sinaitakala Tuku'aho, as the guest of hon-



our. Her Royal Highness The Crown Princess applauded the initiative of the Fahina 'o Vaiola with the help of the Australian government.

"This is our investment on the health of our people and in the future. With the changing times and needs, I believe that the Fahina 'o Vaiola could expand more and adapt as a female chapter of TMA to provide support for our doctors especially our female doctors. May I suggest to consider inviting key women partners and champions, committed to the betterment of the health of Tonga and her people to join. I leave you TMA President and your group of super women doctors with the challenge which is to strengthen the Fahina 'o Vaiola as our collective investment in the future of TMA," according to Princess Sinaitakala.

Advent of Fahina 'o Vaiola

The Fahina 'o Vaiola group was formed in the late 1970's to help raise money to build an academic center for the doctors. The idea was mooted by Drs. Siaso Niumeitolu, Samiu Taumoepeau, Fakava'inga Taumoepeau, Sateki Tupou, Lutui Fonua, Tevita and Tilitili Puloka, Mumui Tatala, Sateki Tu'itavake, Laumeesi Malolo, Supileo Foliaki and many other young doctors.

According to Lady Tangi, speaking on behalf of the Fahina 'o Vaiola, the initial fund raising drive of the doctors came up with a net profit of \$26. The spouses of the doctors, led by Mrs. Kolotolu Puloka and Mrs. 'Oto'ota 'Eva, successfully decided to help their husbands in raising funds to build the Tonga Medical Association's center.

Professionalism and Integrity

The newly appointed Ombudsman, 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., (right) invited in her capacity as President of Tonga Law Society, emphasized two important commonalities between the services of doctors and lawyers to the people, namely professionalism and integrity.



Ombudsman Taumoepeau stressed that "the legal and the medical professions share the noble pursuit of service to others and improving lives. As lawyers, we advocate for justice, defend the vulnerable and uphold the rule of law. Similarly, as doctors, you're entrusted with the healing ministry, alleviation of pain and bringing hope during times of suffering.

The COVID pandemic has highlighted the challenges and the blessings of your work. "In both our professions, professionalism and integrity serve as the bedrock of our work. Professionalism demands high level skill, qualification, competence and commitment to continuous learning.

In terms of integrity, she told health professionals of doctors and nurses as well as guests that "integrity forms the moral compass, guiding our actions and it is the unwavering adherence to ethical principles even in the face of many challenges we face. Our service to this country is too important to compromise on integrity.

She also stressed the importance of Tonga's Christian heritage "and amidst the complexity and demands of our professions, we recognize the value of our spiritual grounding – prayer, reflection and meditation – provides us with deeper meaning, fostering clarity, compassion and wisdom in our daily work.

"Today, as we gather under the banner of Tonga Medical Association's Fahina 'o Vaiola, let us celebrate the power of unity and collaboration, professional alliance by sharing knowledge, personal growth and mutual support."

Ombudsman Taumoepeau also extended her deepest gratitude on behalf of the country, to all health professionals for their dedication to caring for the sick which is truly commendable.

"You're the unsung heroes, selflessly devoting your life to serving our people. Let us remain steadfast in our commitment to professionalism and integrity and together let us pray for strength, wisdom and divine guidance as we continue to serve, heal and be a comfort to others.

"May professionalism and integrity be the guiding principles that lead us towards a brighter, healthier future," concluded Ombudsman 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.

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The Fahina 'o Vaiola is an informal group of female doctors and personnel of the Ministry of Health and wives of doctors who assist doctors. The Commemorative Ladies Breakfast was held to celebrate the 80th Anniversary of TMA, at the Ancient Tonga and attended by health professionals and many guests, the first of its kind. @OMBTonga.



Above: The Hon. Prime Minister Hu'akavameiliku, Hon. 'Alimatea Vaha'I, Ombudsman 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., and members of the Diplomatic Corps as well as medical specialists and professors and invited guests at the opening ceremony of the TMZ 80th Anniversary and Annual Conference, 2023.

Parliament appoints new Ombudsman, Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Tonga, Lord Fakafanua, has appointed, with the consent of the Legislative Assembly, on 28th June, Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., to be the new Ombudsman of Tonga, effective from 1st July, 2023.

Mrs. Taumoepeau was former Chief Executive Officer and Interim Ombudsman prior to her five-year appointment.

Mrs. Taumoepeau's appointment was made under section 3 of the Act that stipulates *"the Ombudsman shall be appointed after due recruitment process by the Speaker with the consent of the Legislative Assembly. In the event of the absence or incapacity of the Ombudsman or if the office of Ombudsman is vacant, the Speaker with the consent of the Legislative Assembly, shall appoint a person to temporarily perform the duties of the Ombudsman."*

"A person is not eligible to be appointed as Ombudsman or to act in that capacity unless the person is a person – (a) of integrity, resolution and high standing in the community; (b) with extensive experience in law, government administration and governance; (c) having been admitted to practice as a law practitioner in Tonga or in a Commonwealth country; and (d) who is not subject to a court declared debt, or has been declared by a court, or a court appointed receiver, as bankrupt."

According to the Speaker in his submission to the House, the new Ombudsman of Tonga has a wealth of legal expertise and qualifications. She had served 26 years in the public service, being a Solicitor General, Attorney General and Minister of Justice. With over 40 years in the legal profession, Mrs. Taumoepeau currently serves as a King's Counsel (KC). She has also served as Acting Chief Justice of Tonga and has received various recognitions based on her services to the church and the government, in Tonga and abroad.

Members of the Legislative Assembly consented to the appointment of Ombudsman Taumoepeau, KC., a very important constitutional position in relations with the laws, governance, investigation and conflict resolution.

Under the Constitution of Tonga, the Ombudsman is independent in the dispensation of her powers and legal responsibilities without any interference from anyone or authority.

Mrs. Taumoepeau replaces Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., who retired from the post on 18th February, 2023, after about 10 years. @OMBTonga.

Right: Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., taking her oath as Interim Ombudsman in February, with the Chief Clerk of the House, Gloria Pole'o.



Above: Ombudsman Taumoepeau receives congratulatory messages from D/CEO Sateki 'Ahio on behalf of the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman following her appointment.

Tonga takes part in Human Resources (HR) workshop

The Office of the Ombudsman took part in a workshop titled “The HR Essentials for non-HR Managers.” The New Zealand Ombudsman’s International Development and Engagement team invited participants from the Pacific, including Tonga, to engage in this six-module workshop series.

Two out of six of the workshop series have been completed so far, covering the employment life-cycle and recruitment process. The workshop emphasizes the vitality of Human Resource processes that managers are encouraged to use to adequately manage employees throughout their employment life-cycle and to have a deeper understanding of it.

The recruitment process is essential in assisting managers to hire the right-fit employees who can maximize productivity within the organization.

The D/CEO, Sateki ‘Ahio, Senior Assistant Secretary, Sisilia Tokai and Assistant Secretary, ‘Akanesi Fa’otusia took part from the office. @OMBTonga.

Legislative Assembly approves OMB Budget 2023/24

The Legislative Assembly has approved the budget for the Office of the Ombudsman for FY2023/24 of about \$1.5 million.

In presenting the office’s budget to the Committee of the Whole House of the Legislative Assembly, Speaker, Lord Fakafanua informed that there are no major changes between the current and new budget for FY2023/24.

People’s Representative of Tongatapu 4, Hon. Mateni Tapueluelu, praised the work of the Office in scrutinizing decision making and services of the government and saving major losses and in avoiding misuse of powers through maladministration and injustices. He cited an estimated loss of five per cent in the world annual economy, according to the World Bank, which equates to about 51 million dollars a year in Tonga.

“That is the rationale of my support towards this vote in curbing such losses due to shortfalls or corruption. I fully support this vote for the office and would like to thank them,” Hon. Tapueluelu told the House.

The People’s Representative for ‘Eua 11, Dr. Taniela Fusimalohi, also spoke in favour of the functions of the office in promoting good governance and countering corruption and maladministration as outlined in the office’s Corporate Plan.

“I am grateful for the services of this office. I also note that they aim at incorporating information on good governance into primary and secondary school syllabuses that may help in fostering better understanding in future,” MP Fusimalohi said.

He also highlighted the favourable progress of investigation works and timely manner of one month to three or four months of investigating complaints.

“This timeframe gives satisfaction to complainants that their concerns would be addressed efficiently. Their tasks are important to Tonga’s economic developments,” Dr. Fusimalohi told the House.

The Legislative Assembly passed the National Budget for the Financial Year 2023/24 on Wednesday, June 28th, 2023. @OMBTonga.

SEVEN (7) KEY PRINCIPLES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

1. RULE OF LAW

Good governance requires fair legal frameworks that are enforced by an impartial regulatory body, for the full protection of stakeholders.

2. INDEPENDENCE

Ensuring & demonstrating freedom/impartiality in decision making and policies enforcement.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensure governing body is accountable/responsible to those who will be affected by its decisions and actions.

4. TRANSPARENCY

Encourage Openness – ensure that processes/policies/information are accessible to those who will be affected (public)

5. CLARITY OF PURPOSE

Inform public of work process, strategy and outcomes

6. EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT

Promote and maintain quality service delivery

7. INTEGRITY

Ensure that decision making complies with the law and policies

“If you cannot identify any of the above principles in a service provided by a government ministry, department, agency or a public enterprise, feel free to contact us NOW!”

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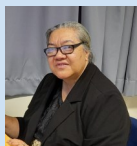
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Staff appointments

Mrs. Luseane 'Aho has been appointed to the position of Senior Assistant Secretary, effective from 3rd April, 2023. She was also awarded the Staff of the Month for May, 2023.



Miss 'Akanesi Fa'otusia (right) was appointed as Assistant Secretary effective from 14th April.



Staff of the Month

April—Mr. Fotu'aika 'Ataveifoa (VIP Driver, (right) was awarded Staff of the Month for April 2023.



June—Mele'ofa Mohenoa, Senior Investigation Officer, was the Staff of the Month for June, 2023.



Outreach—The actual number of outreach programs held during the quarter compared with the baseline requirements under the Corporate Plan 2022/23 included nine (9) OPs consisting of:

- Three (3) signage installed at Fua'amotu International Airport, Pangai, Ha'apai and Neiafu, Vava'u to replace damaged ones;
- Newsletter for the March quarter in two (2) Tongan and English languages;
- Two (2) radio Talkback programs;
- One (1) information booth at the Tongatapu Royal Agricultural Show;
- One (1) face-to-face outreach program with students of the Faculty of Education, Art and Humanity of the Tonga National University (TNU).

Outreach Genres

Five (5) OP genres were conducted during the quarter.

They included the production of the quarterly newsletter, signage, face-to-face outreach, radio talk-back program and an information booth.

Outreach Programs for June Quarter 2023

Nos.	Dates	OP Genres	Venues
1	20/04/23	Signage	Pangai, Ha'apai
2	21/04/23	Face-to-face	FEAH, TNU
3	29/05/23	Newsletter (E)	Local & Overseas
4	10/06/23	Signage	Neiafu, Vava'u
5	06/06/23	Newsletter (T)	Local & Overseas
6	08/06/23	Radio Talk-back	Radio Tonga 1 & 2
7	30/05/23	Information Booth	Tongatapu
8	10/06/23	Signage	Fua'amotu International Airport
9	30/06/23	Radio Talk-back	87.5FM



Above & right—OP for students of the Faculty of Education, Arts & Humanity, Tonga National University (TNU).



THEMES FOR SEPTEMBER QUARTER, 2023

JULY—Healthy sportsmanship promotes good governance

AUGUST—Clarity of purpose drives good governance

SEPTEMBER—Efficiency and effectiveness contribute to good governance

Right & below —The Information booth of the Office at the Royal Agricultural Show 2023 of Tongatapu, to reach out to growers, farmers and members of the public.



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