

## QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

### Promoting Integrity



Above: Ombudsman 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., Attorney General Linda Folaumoetu'i, SC., Former Ombudsman 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC., Former CEO of Ministry of Health Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola and FWC General Secretary Rev. 'Alifeleti 'Atiola, at the 2023 'Professionalism' Retreat of the Office of the Ombudsman.

### Remarks of the Ombudsman

Greetings & Mālō ē lelei from the Office of the Ombudsman, Tonga.

The Integrity Industry is alive and vying for top prize in our development endeavours.

Professionalism, Integrity and Independence are our themes for the September Quarter as we continue to ensure that "complaints are freely heard, deeply considered and speedily resolved ...." We feature in this quarter some of the faces of Integrity in Tonga.

As we distribute our September Newsletter, we note and support the International Anti-corruption Day, with its theme "Forge a future free from fraud."

Thank you for your support for the Ombudsman Office.

Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC.  
Ombudsman.

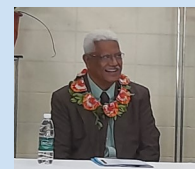
### 'Professionalism' - OMB 22nd Anniversary

The Office of the Ombudsman marked its 22nd Anniversary in August with a retreat on the theme of 'Professionalism.' The guest of honour was the immediate former Ombudsman, Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, SC, (right).

Other speakers included the Attorney General and former CEO of the Office, Mrs. Linda Folaumoetu'i, SC., and former CEO of the Ministry of Health, Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola.

The 22nd Anniversary Thanksgiving prayer was offered by Rev. 'Alifeleti 'Atiola, the General Secretary of the Free Wesleyan Church (FWC) and Principal of Tupou College. All staff members attended this special program. The acting CEO, Roman Vaihū, made the welcoming speech and the Ombudsman, Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., delivered the vote of thanks.

The guest of honour and fellow speakers firstly congratulated the Ombudsman and staff for the 22nd Anniversary of the Office.



### Former Ombudsman, Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, KC.

In highlighting the importance of professionalism, former Ombudsman and Senior Partner of TMP Law, Mr. Taumoepeau, focused on 'Calculating Professionalism, Building a Stronger Ombudsman Office.' He contextualized 'professionalism' to the Office's Vicennial song 'Ki-Ama' as a hope for the future.

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### In this edition ...

- **"Professionalism" is the theme of the 2023 Retreat & 22nd Anniversary**
- **Why we embrace Methodist church of NZ: Rev. Tevita Finau**
- **Office information booths at RAS of Ha'apai & Vava'u**
- **Staff news & Outreach programs**

(from p.1) “The idea of professionalism is to perform to the best with good hope for the future and ‘tacking in joy’ while smooth sailing is being experienced or in Tongan ‘*tauala ‘o e vaka*. That is the outcome of professionalism when we constantly work ‘day and night as the way to go.’ It refers that nothing will be achieved from superficial effort. Instead, professionalism is attained through dedication and commitment.”

Professionalism is a conduct, attitude, demeanor, sacrifice and high standard of competence, ethics and respect in our work environment. These values “encompass not only technical skills but also how we interact, communicate and uphold ethical standards. They are all related to our theme of professionalism today,” according to Mr. Taumoepeau.

He also emphasized the benefits of professionalism in enhancing professional credibility, conduct and in building trust with stakeholders. “It is obvious that improved performance, trust placed on employees by the public and stakeholders would lead to improved collaboration, professional interaction, foster team work and efficiency. When professionalism is achieved, we enjoy working for the organization and very keen every morning to get up and get ready to go to work. We should work collaboratively and cooperatively with understanding at all times.”

On the other hand, the challenges of professionalism are cultural taboos, lack of clear guidelines and abuse of power, misrepresentation and lack of conscientiousness.

“Your work does not only impact the office, instead, it also has positive impacts on the society in Tonga, churches, communities and all affected places. You make constructive impacts,” concluded former Ombudsman, Mr. ‘Aisea Taumoepeau, SC.

#### Attorney General Folaumoetu’i

Meanwhile, Mrs. Linda Folaumoetu’i, SCm, (right), the Attorney General and former CEO of the Office, reminded of the vision and mission of the office to act as a mediator between people who have been adversely affected by government entity.



“That is the core responsibility of the office,” Attorney General Folaumoetu’i emphasized.

She stressed the meaning of professionalism as given by the European Ombudsman in 2020 as “*a style of behavior in all work related activities which by being honest, diligent, responsible, efficient, open, co-operative, pro-active and courteous and consistently delivers a high quality service to the public.*”

Mrs. Folaumoetu’i reminded staff that professionalism refers to sustained characteristics of good mannerism in all services of the Office, which requires everyone to work with integrity, law-abiding, cordial, fairness and with responsibility, efficiency and effectiveness.

She said that the office should be open for discussion and exchanges and to work together towards building the office to a higher level of professionalism.

“You have a very important role including upholding and committing to the office’s vision and missions at all times. Now the office has been constitutionalized and the onus is on every staff member to be loyal and dedicated in carrying out your duties in accordance with the constitution, ombudsman act and the policy manual. You have to perform with utmost honesty and that is the core reason of establishing the office,” according to Mrs. Folaumoetu’i.

#### Former CEO of Ministry of Health, Dr. Siale ‘Akau’ola

Dr. Siale ‘Akau’ola (right) expressed his gratitude to the office for the cooperation when the office referred a complaint concerning the Ministry of Health while he was the CEO.



“You provide exceptional services and professionalism,” Dr. ‘Akau’ola told the staff of the Office of the Ombudsman. From most of the letters I received, the ones from your office stand out due to clarity of background and requirements for us to provide. I feel I have to respond immediately knowing in my heart the query given was good and beautiful and should be accorded the same quality in return.

“I think you’ve done a good job as a team ... to me that is exceptional,” Dr. ‘Akau’ola said. He thanked the former Ombudsman and CEO as well as the current Ombudsman and her staff.

He then emphasized three core values of professionalism including efficiency, competency and quality as they are based on compassion. If someone wishes to become professional in his work, he should have compassion.

“Without compassion, one cannot have endurance and responsibility and to be determined and committed to what you do even without the presence of your boss. That’s how I interpret professionalism in our works. I am delighted that the Ombudsman office has achieved and created a high level of professionalism through independence and without any conflict of interest. That is beautiful,” according to Dr. ‘Akau’ola.

In terms of leadership, Dr. ‘Akau’ola said it refers to empowering your employees through reciprocity to become leaders themselves. Good leadership involves compassion, mutual trust and respect. When we become leaders like Roman (A/CEO), we place our trust on him to perform his best and to responsibly spend taxpayers’ money in our work knowing who we serve. As pointed out by the former Ombudsman, our services should be well proportional of equal importance to disadvantaged and poor people, and that is when the foundation is love.

“I feel that professionalism is when you put love in your heart and do your best to be efficient and competent in providing a service for the public,” Dr. ‘Akau’ola concluded.

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**Rev. 'Alifeleti 'Atiola, General Secretary of FWC**



Rev. 'Atiola pointed out the opposite of professionalism as treating things as right in accordance with the accepted norms and contrary to professionalism.

"In this context, we can escape with many things when we try to exercise professionalism, or we make excuses.

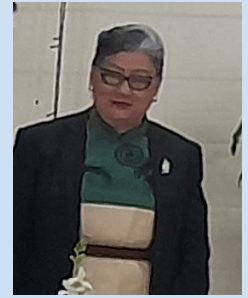
"I can understand why I was invited, a calling for me to come in my capacity as the general secretary so I could go back and enforce the real meaning and the tools of professionalism in the work of the church," Rev. 'Atiola emphasized.

He also contextualized the theme of the church for the year "*tonunga*" or having minimal supervision in our work.

"When I hear the speeches today, if we're professional, we may not have strict supervision in what we do. That is independence.

"If we perform precisely in our work with everybody, then our supervision is made by God as we are independent," concluded Rev. 'Atiola.

**Ombudsman, Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC**



Ombudsman Taumoepeau highlighted the most important milestone for the office when the status of the office was constitutionalized and passed by the Legislative Assembly in 2018.

A new sub-clause 31(B) was incorporated and consented to by His Majesty in July, 2021. It stipulates that *"There shall be an Ombudsman appointed by the speaker with the consent of the Legislative Assembly. 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 shall have complete discretion to exercise his duties independently any interference whatsoever from any person or authority."*

The Ombudsman said that the wording is a "very, very strong language and its gravity is important when it is written in Tonga's supreme law and one of the highest milestones in ensuring this service is being made in Tonga."

Ombudsman 'Alisi Taumoepeau then conveyed her gratitude to the guest of honour and former Ombudsman Taumoepeau, SC., as well as speakers – Attorney General Folaumoetu'i, General Secretary of the FWC and Principal of Tupou College, Rev. 'Alifeleti 'Atiola and former CEO of Health, Dr. Siale 'Akau'ola, for their words of encouragement and their insights of professionalism.

The Retreat program followed in the afternoon with a group work involving all staff focusing on principles of good governance as well as a musical activity.

Tupou Tertiary Institute group sang the "Ki-Ama" sonata and performed other items. ©OMBTonga.



*Above: The Acting CEO, Mr. Roman Vaihū, in making the welcome remarks at the Retreat. Mr. Sateki 'Ahio, D/CEO, (2nd from left) was the MC., with the Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) students, led by Save Mataele, who provided the musical performance and songs.*



## Tongan Methodist minister emphasizes importance of “discrimination based on theology” - Why we embrace Methodist Church?

Rev. Tevita Finau of the NZ Methodist church has shed light on the rationale for many Tongans for remaining in the church that embraces social immoralities like same sex marriage, transgender and gay members of the clergy. Rev. Finau and his wife, Valeti, were invited as guest speakers for the office in September’s all staff meeting.

According to Rev. Finau, “the fact that they belong to the Methodist church has been a source of ridicule and ostracism. So the question is, why do we still cling on to the church instead of moving to other churches or follow what other Tongans did when they left the Methodist church?”

Rev. Finau believes that everyone has a choice in the church they belong to, a church one wishes to embrace in order to Praise God as in the Psalms and the Gospel where “in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. It was in the beginning with God and of His came into being through Him and without Him not wanting him into being.” It is his strong belief that we can either go to Heaven or hell from whatever church we belong. “This is the benchmark that helps me avoid discriminating against my church. One can fellowship with God in any church of his choice.”

In terms of human rights, Rev. Finau asks how do we, Tongans, discuss human rights in the Methodist church when most of us do not share the same belief? “So we can stand tall in the church and emphasize what we believe in knowing that we respect instead of violating human rights. We can do this with the support of the government so we can express with pride what we believe in so others can respect us.”



“We do not believe nor support same sex marriage. The Tongan platform in the Methodist church does not share that same belief, however, we can discriminate based on theological grounds. We can say no to have a gay priest or to exercise same sex marriage even though it is accepted by the Methodist church. Instead, in order to protect us, we can argue that their theology is different from the theology that we practice. We cannot say that we cannot accept it because of human rights issues but we can discriminate based on theological grounds. In this way, we can embrace and tolerate one another. It’s a big enough “waka” or boat and there is room for everyone.

“That’s the spirit of God who gather all of us. If we cannot worship together, at least we can love each other. It is the advice of Jesus not to discriminate based on religious beliefs but based on love,” maintained Rev. Finau.

He also said had they discriminate based on ethnicity instead of theology, they would waste their time arguing, face legal battles in courts and do not love others. They had initially decided to search for the real meaning of Jesus and the teachings of the Bible in their lives as they see it, instead of being interpreted by others.



Above: L-R Rev. Tevita & Valeti Finau, Ombudsman Mrs. 'Alisi Taumoepeau, KC., and Mr. 'Aisea Taumoepeau, former Ombudsman.

### Youth turnaround

Rev. Finau and wife, Valeti, have managed to turn around a declining morality among youth members of their church into one of encouraging and promising future. He said they pay special care and love for their youth in Sunday school as well as women, elderly and disabled people and those who are sickly.

“It is important to help our children and youth. In the past, we help them in problems such as poverty, crimes, underachieved and lack of qualification as well as suicide as Tongan youth of the church had recorded the highest suicide rate.

“Over the last 13 to 15 years, the upward trend of youth suicide, unemployment, low qualification and poverty amongst the Tongan Methodist church had declined. At present, it is the other Tongan denominations that have recorded increases in these youth problems. These successes are due mostly to the importance of adhering to the teachings of the Bible.

Rev. Finau said there are other issues like abortion, transgender and cloning. However, that is a work in progress for them within the church so they could cope with such rapid changes and development.

“We focus within amongst our children and youth. Now, their successes are far-reaching in various areas such as medicine, science, even agriculture and other technical fields. I believe that is the result of why our monarch wanted his people to seek opportunities overseas in education and other areas to improve their lives. We believe that we should focus on those areas especially education and religion while other ministers focus on the development of spiritual lives of people. We believe that is the reason for our successes in Wellington as we work collaboratively and harmoniously,” according to Rev. Finau.

Rev. Finau was a former Superintendent of the Auckland Methodist Church for many years before retiring last year, 2022. He is the grandson of Rev. Tevita Finau, who accompanied Dr. Moulton to translate the Bible from English into Tongan.

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## Mrs. Valeti Finau and “Famili Ako Lelei” Project

(from p. 3) Meanwhile, Mrs. Valeti Finau, who hails from Holonga, Vava’u, has been one of the pioneers in developing Tupou Tertiary Institute (TTI) in the early 1990’s when she was based in Wellington.

“I was the key player in NZ and Feleti ‘Atiola here in Tonga who put things together in effort to establish TTI. The link TTI had with Wellington Polytechnic began in the days of Tupou High School. That is between a tertiary institute in NZ and a secondary school in Tonga. The general conference of the FWC in 2004 in Neiafu, Vava’u, saw the agreement of His Late Majesty King Taufa’ahau Tupou IV and the then President of the church to name it Tupou Tertiary Institute. Thousands of Tongans here were able to access quality education in NZ, qualifying my name to be written in the Golden Book of Life of Heaven based on my life journey,” Mrs. Finau said with a wide smile for a job well done. She “graduated well” from her first university of Holonga village, Vava’u, the Ako Teu of the FWC as well as Siu’ilikutapu College. She became dux when the Tonga Higher Leaving was first introduced in Vava’u and Ha’apai instead of having to come to Tongatapu. She and other duxes of the church schools entered Tupou High School that used the Australian matriculation in which she was the top student of their examination results from Australia. The next dux was Rev. ‘Alifeleti ‘Atiola, the current principal of Tupou College and General Secretary of the FWC. Mrs. Finau then obtained a scholarship from the Commonwealth to study for her first degree in Canberra before returning and taught at Tupou High School. She later met her husband, Rev. Tevita Finau, before continuing further education for her Masters in Wellington where she met the former and current Ombudsman, Mr. ‘Aisea and Mrs. ‘Alisi Taumoepeau, at the church they attended.

“Today, I am a living testimony in receiving Christ in my life and He will do the rest,” Mrs. Finau said.

She made reference to the size of the Office of the Ombudsman saying that it is big enough to make a change. “You’re here to make a change. Likewise, I was sent to Wellington and now to Auckland for a reason.”

### **Famili Ako Lelei**

Mrs. Finau now leads the “Famili Ako Lelei” of the Methodist Church with the vision “Ke Ako’i ‘a e ngaahi Famili, Famili Ako Lelei ‘oku Mo’ui Lotu pea mo e Famili Lotu ‘oku Ako Lelei,” or “Well Educated Family – To educate families well who live prayerfully or Religiously and Well-educated Families.” She maintained that it is very dangerous for well-educated families that do not pray at all.

“That is a smart devil and we cannot deal with them. Likewise, it is dangerous prayer of those who are not educated at all. They create unnecessary noise in the churches when they are under-educated but wish to be religious. So that is the vision of the Methodist “Famili Ako Lelei” project of NZ. There are over 10,000 members and we’re the biggest Tongan group in NZ.

“Well educated families who receive Jesus Christ. Families who have Christ in their lives are well-educated, to spread the Good News of Christ. That’s our vision.”



Mrs. Finau (above) was honoured by the NZ Government in 2018 based on her services in education for the Pacific and NZ that included “the key player of establishing TTI in Tonga as well as other projects for the rest of the Pacific. That is the vision that I currently work on, ko e famili lotu ‘oku ako lelei, ko e famili ako lelei ‘oku mo’ui lotu. I lead the program known as “Laulotaha” or “Excellence.” This is the benchmark in our war for Christ (Tau Ma’a Kalaisi) as His education is excellent. Because, if we worship a Living God, He doesn’t give the second best. He gives the best. I am a living testimony. You and I are gifted people to God.

“His Majesty, The First Monarch of Tonga realized that we cannot live in Tonga, but can you imagine the moment he said “God, I wish to give you the people of Tonga to look after and we’re God’s adopted people whom God lavishly love as the way we love our adopted children more than we love our own children. So God’s chosen people are the Israelites and Tongans, so whatever we do and put our mind to, God will do the rest,” encouraged Mrs. Finau.

She associated the relationship with God with the achievements of Tonga’s Tala Netball team, Mate Ma’a Tonga Rugby League Team and even the project of their youngest son in the “Red, White and Brass” movie that became NZ’s top Movie of the Year, 2023 and first written by a Pacific islander in his own language, Tongan. It is amongst the top 20 movies of all time in NZ.

“This is the reality of receiving God as our Saviour. And to the Ombudsman and her staff, God put you here for a reason, so, don’t miss the boat. Run with the ball. Score tries for your families, for this office and also score tries for Tonga and the world. The world is ours and I love you all,” concluded Mrs. Finau. @OMBTonga.



Above: Rev. Tevita Finau (3rd from left, front row) and Mrs. Valeti Finau, as guest speakers for September, 2023.

## Staff empowerment

To maintain staff development and empowerment in their respective tasks and responsibilities, the office held an all-staff training session on 23rd August.

Two line managers, D/CEO Mr. Sateki 'Ahio and Director of Investigation, Senior Assistant Secretary, Mrs. Luseane 'Aho, and Legal Officer Sione Hamani Topui, respectively covered three areas on leave processes, Budget Monitoring & Evaluation and rental contract.

These sessions are aimed at facilitating a deeper understanding of various operational matters outlined in the Ombudsman Staff Policy Manual. ©OMB Tonga.

**Staff of the months (SOM)** - During the quarter, three (3) of the staff members were acknowledged for their dedication and commitment to their respective work and upholding the values of Integrity.

Mr. Fifita Fili, (below), Driver, Vava'u Office, was the SOM for July.



Mr. Fotu 'Ataveifoa, VIP Driver, (left below) was presented with the SOM for August by Rev. Tevita Finau of the NZ Methodist church.



Mrs. Konikotia Taunaholo, Accounting Officer, was the SOM for September.



## Outreach programs

Nine (9) outreach programs were carried out during the quarter:

- 3 Live radio talkback/felafoaki programs were held.
- 2 Physical outreach programs consisting of 2 information booths at the Royal Agricultural Shows of Ha'apai and Vava'u, and
- 4 re-broadcasts of Vicennial Documentary over Radio & TV Tonga as well as BroadCom 87.5FM.



*Above: His Majesty, King Tupou VI, views the information booth of the Office of the Ombudsman at the Royal Agricultural Show of Vava'u. The OIC Vava'u, Tepola Fonongaloo, Acting CEO, Roman Vaihū and Fifita Fili, (right) manned the information booth. (PC: BroadCom)*



*Senior Investigation Officer, Mosese Uili (left) and Investigation Officer, Siosaia 'Ofa Tu'i'onetoo, at the information booth at the Royal Agricultural Show of Ha'apai, held in July.*



**Office of the Ombudsman, Tonga, Quarterly Newsletter for July— September, 2023.**

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