

QUATERLY NEWSLETTER



150th Anniversary of the Constitution of Tonga

The Kingdom of Tonga commemorated the 150th anniversary of its Constitution, marking a century and a half since it was granted by His late Majesty King George Tupou I on 4 November 1875. Tonga's Constitution holds exceptional historical significance as the oldest written constitution of a sovereign state in the Pacific, pre-dating Australia's federation in 1901 and New Zealand's modern constitutional framework established in 1986. Unlike many constitutions in the region that emerged under colonial administration, Tonga's Constitution was entirely sovereign and locally conceived, firmly establishing the rule of law, a Bill of Rights, and a constitutional monarchy that has remained continuous and uninterrupted to the present day.

The official sesquicentennial commemorations were held in Nuku'alofa from 31 October to 4 November 2025, featuring an extensive programme of religious observances, cultural celebrations, and civic ceremonies. In recognition of the historic milestone, the Government declared 4 November 2025 a special public holiday, in addition to the annual Constitution Day on 3 November, allowing the nation to fully observe and reflect on the significance of the occasion.

Their Majesties King Tupou VI and Queen Nanasipau'u presided over the national celebrations. The commemorative programme formally commenced on Friday, 31 October 2025, with a Royal Prayer Breakfast held at the Queen Salote Memorial Hall, bringing together national leaders, clergy, and invited guests in a moment of collective thanksgiving and reflection. This was followed by the official opening of the upgraded Queen Salote International Wharf, symbolising both national development and Tonga's ongoing engagement with the wider world. Cultural exhibitions, sporting events, and community activities continued throughout the day, setting a celebratory tone for the days ahead.

On Sunday, 2 November 2025, a Thanksgiving and Memorial Service was held at the Centenary Church of the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, honouring the legacy of King George Tupou I and those who contributed to the establishment and preservation of the Constitution. The service was followed by a Royal Luncheon at Mala'e Pangai, and an evening programme featuring sacred and traditional choral performances, reflecting the central role of faith and music in Tongan society.

Throughout the commemorative period, traditional performances and ceremonies—including the classic early-morning entertainment known as Fakatakatofo—were staged across the capital. These events showcased Tonga's rich cultural heritage and reaffirmed the enduring connection between the Constitution, the monarchy, Christian faith, and the cultural identity of the Tongan people.

1) Remarks of the Ombudsman

Malo e lelei and warm greetings
from Tonga,

Highlights:

The December quarter 2025 included the national celebration of the 150th anniversary of Tonga's Constitution of 1875, The 50th anniversary of the Mystery Cross at, Pulela'aa, Ha'apai; and the opening of an Ombudsman office at Pangai, Ha'apai. They all reflected Tonga's en-during values, aspirations and constitutional history.



The Ha'apai office is tracking Tonga's ongoing commitment to justice, integrity, transparency and access to government services for all citizens, even in the most remote islands

In KIAMA speak, "A'a'l namo 'o fekita mo ha 'Ulua"

Mrs.'Alisi Numia Taumoepeau, KC

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2) Highlights

October -

55th Pacific Community meetings (SPC)

Sports & International Competitions

**27 October 2025 —Public Holiday for the
Mystery Cross at Ha'apai**

Tonga celebrated the

150th anniversary

of its Constitution, with a special public holiday on 3–4

November

and cultural parades, sports, torch lighting and other

festivities planned in late October through early

November.

November -

2025 general election on 20 November 2025

Law Week — 22 November 2025 to 28

November 2025

December -

**9 December— Opening of the Ha'apai
office of Ombudsman.**

15 December : Elect Prime Minister

**Lord Fatafehi Fakafānua was elected as Tonga's Prime
Minister**

3) Opening : Ombudsman Office Ha'apai



The Ombudsman Office in Ha'apai was officially opened on 9 December 2025, marking a key milestone in expanding access to Ombudsman services to the outer islands. The office was formally opened by the Governor of Ha'apai, Honourable Pita Taufatofua, and was attended by the Ombudsman, the Chief Executive Officer, staff members of the Ombudsman Office, and Officers-in-Charge from various government ministries based in Ha'apai.

The opening coincided with two nationally significant commemorations:

1. The 150th Anniversary of the Kingdom of Tonga's Constitution, and
2. The 50th Anniversary of the Mystery Cross at Pulela'a.

These occasions underscored the importance of constitutional governance, accountability, transparency, and the role of the Ombudsman in upholding public trust and good administration.

Establishing the Ha'apai Office

The establishment of the Ombudsman Office in Ha'apai is aimed at improving access to Ombudsman services for residents of Ha'apai islands. The office enables members of the public to seek assistance, lodge complaints, and obtain information locally. The availability of a local office significantly reduces the need for individuals to travel to Tongatapu to raise concerns or pursue complaints. This helps to lessen financial costs and practical challenges, while ensuring that matters raised by the public can be addressed more promptly and efficiently.

In addition, the Ha'apai Office contributes the promotion of good governance at the local level. Through its day-to-day operations and community outreach activities, the Ombudsman Office raises public awareness of its role, mandate, and services, and supports fairness, transparency, and accountability in the work of government ministries and public authorities.



Access Prioritised

The official opening of the Ombudsman Office in Ha'apai reflects the Government's commitment to ensuring equitable access to justice and accountability services across the Kingdom. The successful establishment of the office, despite logistical and financial challenges, demonstrates effective collaboration between government stakeholders and underscores the Ombudsman's vital role in serving the people of Tonga.

The establishment of the office marks a significant advancement in the decentralisation of government services and the strengthening of oversight mechanisms in the outer islands. By providing a local point of access, residents can lodge complaints and seek assistance more efficiently, ensuring that concerns are addressed in a timely and effective manner.

The Ombudsman Office in Ha'apai is expected to enhance public confidence in government accountability, facilitate the prompt resolution of complaints, promote awareness of citizens' rights and administrative responsibilities, and contribute to the broader national objectives of transparency, integrity, and good governance.

Mystery Cross in Ha'apai



Amid the celebrations surrounding the opening of the Office of the Ombudsman in Ha'apai, it is impossible to overlook the island group's profound historical and spiritual significance. Among its most remarkable legacies is the appearance of the Mystery Cross at Pulela'a in 1975—a monumental event in Tonga's modern history. In recognition of its enduring importance, the Government has declared 27 October a public holiday in 2025, marking 50 years since the Cross first appeared and allowing the nation to commemorate this extraordinary moment.

It is the view of the Office of the Ombudsman that the convergence of these events—the 150th anniversary of Tonga's Constitution, the 50th anniversary of the Mystery Cross in Ha'apai, and the establishment of an Ombudsman's office in Ha'apai—is neither coincidental nor merely ceremonial. Rather, together they carry a deeper meaning and purpose, symbolising a unifying moment in Tonga's journey that honours its faith, history, constitutional governance, and commitment to accountability, all in service of the greater good of the Kingdom of Tonga.

4) Law Week

The OP team reached TCC Village at 6:00 am just in time for the fun walk from TCC Village to Basilica and back. Members from the other MDAs were already present at the venue. The Police recruits had the largest number of turn outs for the program.

Prior to the walking event, housekeeping announcements were made with regards to safety of attendees. Participants were told that they should listen to their bodies, in case of fatigue or aches. Soon after, a staff from the Ministry of Health was called forward to lead a 15 – 20 mins warm up.

It was a sight to behold as the Heads of three agencies at the forefront of the Integrity Alliance particularly the Attorney General's Office, Office of the Commissioner for Anti-Corruption and Office of the Ombudsman led by example when they joined the fun walk.



When we arrived at back at TCC Village, we were again led by the employee from Ministry of Health in warming down. Afterwards, we set up the Office booth and waited for the Official Opening of the Law Week 2025. However, this did not stop attendees from approaching the booth for the merchandises.



'Elisiva Lui from the Attorney General's Office took to the podium and performed the welcoming remarks. This was followed by the opening remarks from the Attorney General ("AG"), Linda Folaumoetu'i. In her opening remarks, the AG mentioned that the law week of 2025 marks the eighteenth (18th) year of this event which first started back in 2007. After, the opening remarks from the AG, a promotional video for law week was then shown.



5) Outreach Programs

Talk back radio program



On 29 January 2026, Mosese Uili (Senior Investigations Officer) and 'Etivoni Pifeleti (Investigations Officer) hosted a talk-back radio programme as part of the Office's on-going public outreach and awareness efforts.

The programme opened with Mosese introducing the presenters and outlining the purpose of the session, as well as providing listeners with an overview of how the discussion would proceed. This helped set clear expectations and encouraged public participation.

6) Monthly Devotion

October— Siaosi 'Atiola and Tevita Kafoa led the October monthly devotion.

November— Silia Toakai led the morning devotion for the month of November.

December— Roman Vaihu led the monthly devotion for the month of December.

7) Staff of the Month

December— Latu Vehikite, our IT officer, received this award in appreciation of his tireless efforts and in valuable support in ensuring the successful opening of the Ombudsman's office in Ha'apai.

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