



MO LE SILAFIA

QUARTERLY



JULY - SEPTEMBER 2026 ISSUE 3

Komesina o Sulufaiga

Upholding Unchanging Principles in Changing Times / E Sui Faiga ae Tumau Fa'avae

Official Swearing-in of New Ombudsman 27 July 2026



Afioga Vui Clarence Joseph Nelson at the Swearing-in Ceremony on 27 July 2026

The Ombudsman, Afioga Vui Clarence Joseph Nelson, was officially sworn in as the fifth Ombudsman of the Independent State of Samoa on 27 July 2026.

The Ombudsman is an independent officer of Parliament responsible for promoting good governance, accountability, fairness, and respect for human rights. Through the Office of the Ombudsman, members of the public can raise concerns about the actions, decisions, or conduct of public authorities. The Office also serves as Samoa's National Human Rights Institution, promoting and protecting human rights.

The recommendation for Afioga Vui's appointment was presented through the Screening Committee's Report and approved by Parliament in June 2026. He was formally sworn in by decree of the Head of State before the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

The ceremony was held at Maota Tofilau Eti Alesana (MTEA), attended by Government leaders, members of the Judiciary, public officials, invited guests, and family members. The programme included welcoming remarks, a devotion, the official swearing-in, an address by the Honourable Prime Minister, remarks by the Ombudsman, closing prayers, and refreshments.

In his inaugural address, Afioga Vui outlined key priorities for his tenure, including protecting human rights, particularly the rights and wellbeing of children. He also emphasised strengthening public trust, accountability, and the Office's commitment to serving the people of Samoa.



AFIOGA VUI CLARENCE NELSON

Talofa lava. It is my pleasure to present this edition of the Mo le Silafia (MLS) Newsletter for July to September 2026.

Since being sworn in as Ombudsman on 27 July 2026, I have focused on laying the foundations and setting the direction for the six-year term ahead. This edition highlights some of my engagements, together with key events, activities, and achievements of the Office during this period.

A particular highlight was meeting with our valued donor and development partners, and expressing my sincere appreciation for their continued support of the Office of the Ombudsman and National Human Rights Institution.

I also acknowledge our dedicated staff for their professionalism, integrity, and commitment to serving the people of Samoa and upholding human rights.

As we look ahead, I look forward to working together to further strengthen our Office and its service to our people. **Fa'afetai.**

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OUR SERVICES ARE FREE !!

Ava Ceremony for New Ombudsman - 27 July 2026

The Management and Staff were honoured to officially welcome the new Ombudsman, Afioga Vui Clarence Nelson, to the Office through a traditional Samoan Ava Ceremony on 27 July. The newly sworn-in Ombudsman attended the ceremony with members of his family.



Afioga Vui Clarence Joseph Nelson acknowledges the Office during the 'Ava o le Feiloa'iga' ceremony with the OMB Staff

Pacific Disability Forum Strengthens Regional CRPD Representation - 22 - 24 September 2026

Our very own Ombudsman, Vui Clarence Nelson, recently featured as a key presenter at the Pacific Disability Forum held in Nadi, Fiji, from 22–24 September 2026. Co-organized by the Pacific Community (SPC), the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), and the Pacific Disability Forum, the event focused on preparing Pacific representatives for their roles on the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

This achievement represents a historic milestone for the Blue Pacific, marking the very first time our region will have direct representation on this prestigious UN Committee. Our Office is proud to have contributed to this landmark regional process. We extend our warmest congratulations to Ms. Maatafa Faatino Utumapu (Samoa) and Ms. Villaney Remengesau (Palau), whose historic terms will officially commence in January 2027.



In Memorium - Maiava Iulai Blackelock - Toma

5 July 1940 - 22 August 2026

Maiava Iulai Blackelock-Toma, the third and longest-serving Ombudsman of Samoa, dedicated more than 26 years to serving the people of Samoa, from 22 June 1994 until his retirement on 31 March 2021. Humbly describing himself and the Office as “a servant of the people,”

Maiava played a pivotal role in strengthening Samoa’s public service and human rights landscape. Under his leadership, the Office’s mandate expanded, the Ombudsman Act 1988 was transformed into the Ombudsman Act 2013, and Samoa became a National Human Rights Institution, achieving “A” status accreditation from GANHRI in 2016—the only A-status NHRI in the Pacific.

His legacy includes groundbreaking public inquiries, including Samoa’s first national inquiry into domestic and family violence. Beyond his professional achievements, Maiava will be remembered for his integrity, humility, commitment to God and family, and his unwavering dedication to serving others. “Ua e tau le taua lelei, ua iu ia te oe le tausinioga, ua e taofi i le upu o le faatuatua.” Tautai a’e, Maiava. Fa’afetai mo lou sao taua i le tautuaina o Samoa. Manuia lou malaga; tatou te toe feiloa’i i le taimi o le Atua.



Office Staff Photo 2015 with former Ombudsman Maiava



Previous Ombudsman Maiava in conversation with former Deputy Ombudsman Maulaivao



(L -R) Previous Ombudsman Maiava ,former Deputy Ombudsman Maulaivao & Principal Leota Taalo Leota



OMB Staff members 2018



Ombudsman Courtesy Calls with Diplomatic Corps - August and September 2026



The Ombudsman and members of his team met His Excellency Will Robinson, Deputy High Commissioner Simon Dawkins and Second Secretary James Lyon of the Australian High Commission, Samoa on 12 August.



The Ombudsman and senior management team met with the High Commissioner Her Excellency Sialei Van Toor and Second Secretary Jordan Allison from the New Zealand High Commission on Tuesday 11 August.



Samoa Ombudsman Meets His Excellency Andrew Nethercott of with British High Commissioner on 15 September 2026



Ombudsman meets H.E. Mr. Fei Mingxing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China on 14 August 2026.



Ombudsman of Samoa, Afoga Vui Clarence Nelson, paid a courtesy visit to the Ambassador of Japan to Samoa, His Excellency Ryotaro Suzuki on 4 September.



Ombudsman outlines strategic priorities during courtesy call on UN Resident Coordinator on 19 August 2026.



Ombudsman Courtesy Calls with Diplomatic Corps & Ministries

August and September 2026



UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Aliona Niculita and Deputy Resident Representative Mr. Paolo Dalla Stella paid a courtesy visit to the newly appointed Ombudsman on 24 August 2026



Ombudsman, Vui Clarence Nelson, paid a courtesy visit to the newly appointed Minister for the Legislative Assembly and the Office of the Ombudsman, Afioga Tea To'ola Peato, and Associate Minister Afioga Tuiā Pu'a Fuatogi Letoa - 28 August



Ombudsman meets Law & Justice Sector Consultant Muliagatele Potoae Roberts-Aiafi and Ms. Terenia Simanu of the Tautai Programme 25 August 2026



Office of the Ombudsman was honoured to visit the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs on 3 September.



Ombudsman meets with the Honorable Minister for Education and Culture on 27 August. 2026



Ombudsman and senior staff met the Minister of Family and Social Affairs and District Development Authority on 17 August 2026.



Strengthening Complaint Handling Across The Public Service -

August and September 2026

The Office distributed official letters to public service agencies to introduce and facilitate Complaint Handling Information Sessions. Several ministries and agencies responded positively to the Office's request, demonstrating their willingness to strengthen complaint management practices and promote accountability within their respective organisations.

These information sessions aim to improve understanding of the principles and procedures involved in receiving, managing, and responding to complaints from members of the public. Effective complaint handling is an essential part of good governance, as it helps ensure that public concerns are addressed fairly, transparently, and in a timely manner.

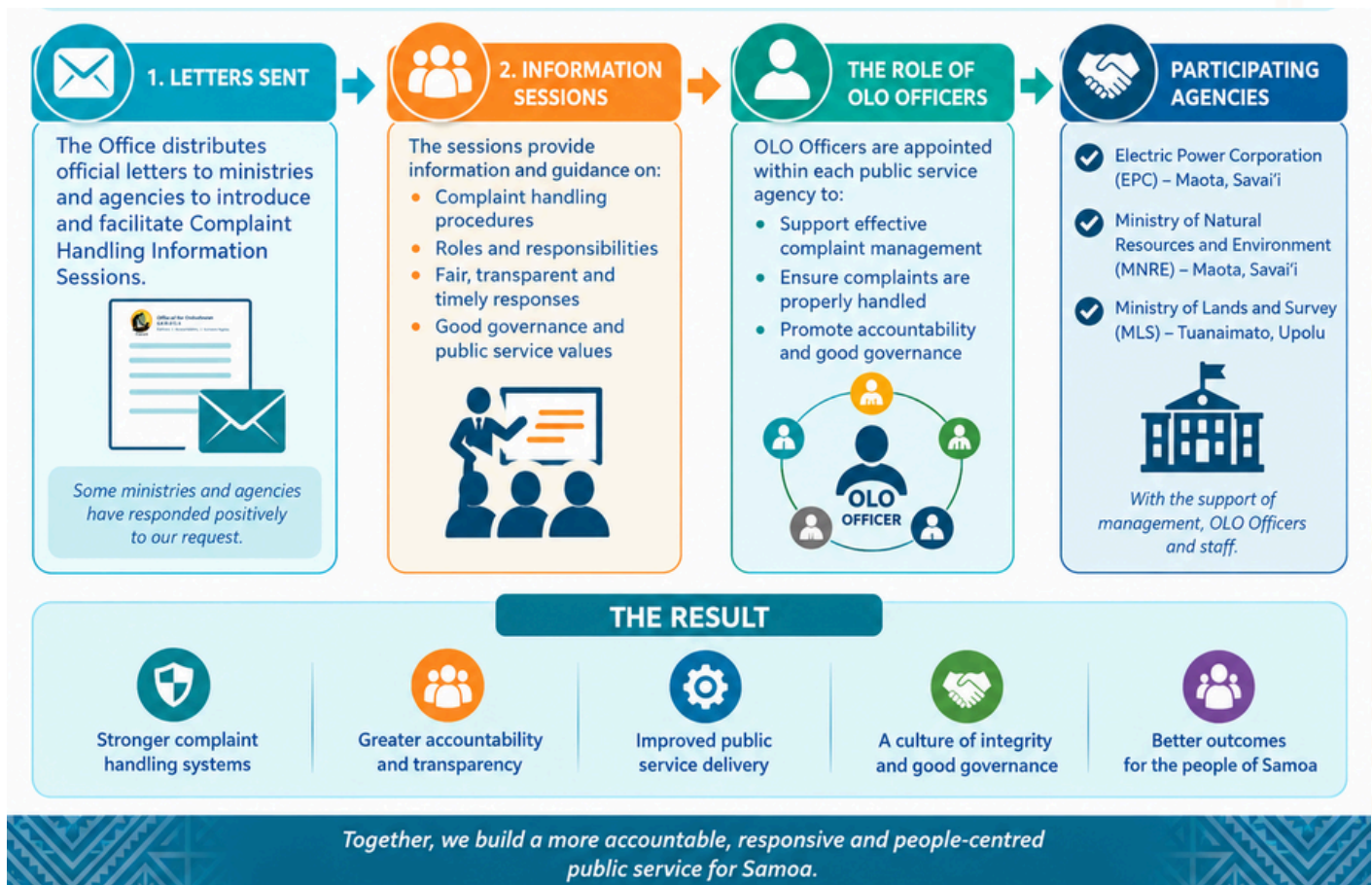
A key focus of the sessions is the important role of OLO Officers appointed within public service agencies. These officers play an important part in supporting complaint-handling processes within their organisations, helping ensure that complaints are appropriately managed and that members of the public have access to fair and effective channels for raising their concerns.

Through these engagements, the Office seeks to strengthen communication and cooperation with public service agencies, while encouraging a culture of openness, integrity, and continuous improvement. Providing OLO Officers and agency staff with the necessary information and guidance helps build confidence in complaint handling systems and reinforces their responsibilities in delivering quality public services.

The Office of the Ombudsman sincerely thanks the management, OLO Officers, and staff of the ministries and agencies that have responded to the invitation and participated in these sessions. Their cooperation and commitment are valuable in advancing accountability and improving public service delivery throughout Samoa.

The Office remains committed to expanding these capacity-building initiatives across the public service, working collaboratively with ministries and agencies to strengthen complaint-handling practices, uphold the rights of the public, and promote fairness, transparency, and good governance.

Together, we can build a more accountable, responsive, and people-centred public service for Samoa.



Complaint Box Inspections – Tanumala and Oloamanu Prisons - 7- 8 September 2026

The Special Investigation Unit (SIU) conducted inspections of the Office's complaint boxes at Tanumala and Oloamanu Prisons as part of its ongoing commitment to strengthening access to complaint and investigation services for members of the public, including persons in custody.

The inspections aimed to ensure that complaints submitted through these boxes were collected promptly and handled in accordance with the required confidentiality procedures. Regular inspections are an important part of maintaining a reliable and accessible complaint system, particularly for individuals who may face barriers to contacting the Office directly.

The complaint boxes provide a secure and practical avenue for persons in custody to raise concerns, report alleged misconduct, or submit complaints for the Office's consideration. This mechanism helps ensure that individuals who are unable to visit the Office in person still have an opportunity to bring their concerns to the attention of the appropriate authorities.

Through these inspections, the SIU helps support the proper management of complaints and reinforces the importance of protecting the privacy and confidentiality of complainants. Maintaining confidentiality is essential in building trust in the complaint process and encouraging individuals to come forward with genuine concerns without fear that their information will be improperly disclosed.

The Office of the Ombudsman recognises that access to complaint mechanisms is an important safeguard for accountability, fairness, and the protection of human rights, particularly in places of detention. Ensuring that complaint boxes remain accessible and that submissions are collected and assessed appropriately contributes to the effective delivery of the Office's investigative functions.

The SIU remains committed to conducting regular inspections and strengthening complaint-handling processes to ensure that every complaint received is appropriately considered, assessed, and addressed in a timely manner, in accordance with the Office's mandate and procedures.



(L-R) Senior SIU Investigations Officer Murphy Siupolu & Principal SIU Investigations Officer Leota Taalo Leota carry out their inspections.



STATISTICS

COMPLAINTS OVERVIEW (JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026)

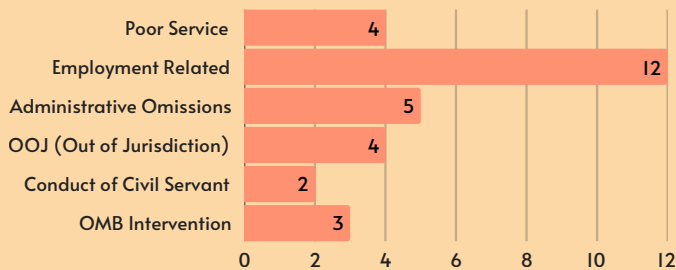
GOOD GOVERNANCE UNIT: NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

GGU received 36 cases concerning governance, administrative decisions, actions, non-actions and public service delivery.

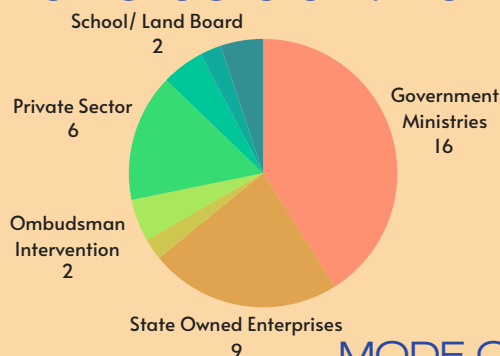
- 2 of the 36 cases are Enquiries.
- 20 are resolved and closed, 5 are monitored, and 11 are actively investigated.
- Of the resolved cases, 4 were internally referred to SIU as per jurisdictional authority and 5 were referred externally to the appropriate Agency.
- Majority of complaint were against Government Ministries (16) followed by State-Owned Enterprises (9), 1 against a Constitutional Entity and the remaining 6 were against Agencies outside the Ombudsmans jurisdiction.

- 72% of the complaints are lodged by men (26)

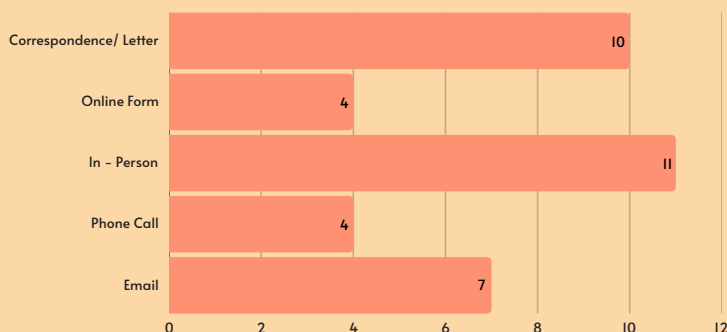
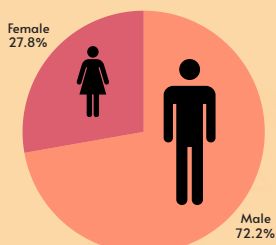
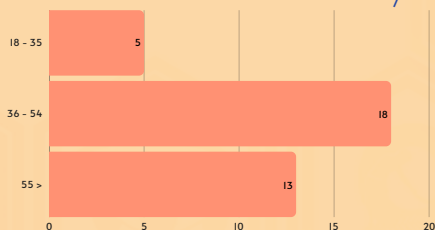
NATURE OF CASES RECEIVED



AGENCIES CASES ARE AGAINST

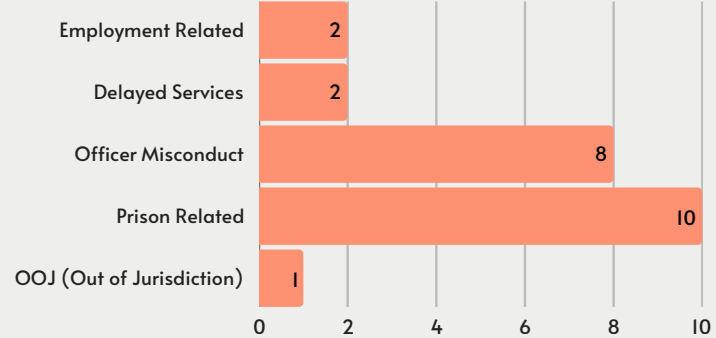


MODE OF RECEIVING CASES

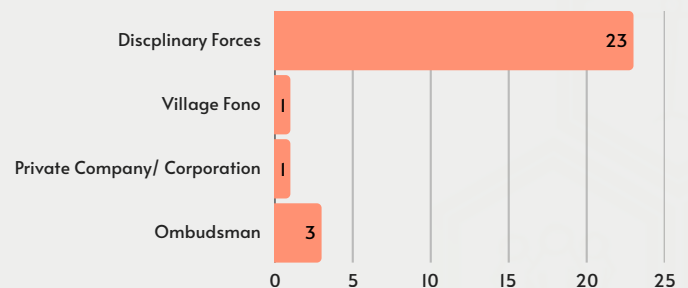
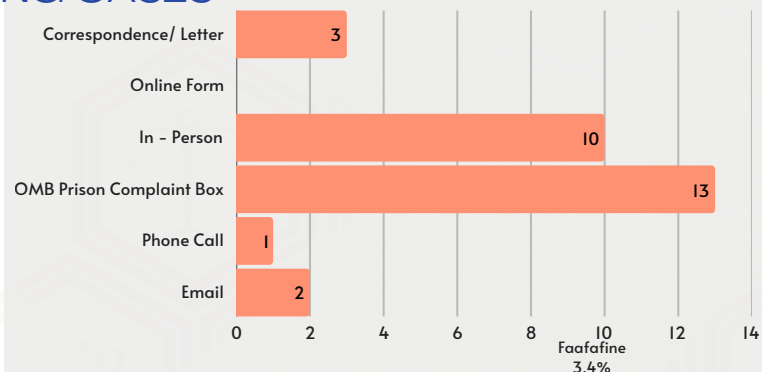
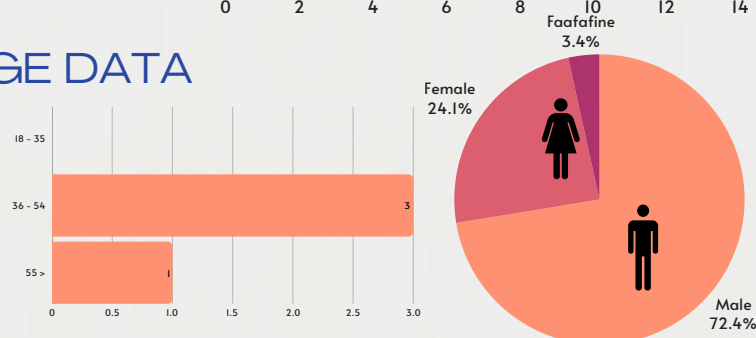


SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT: NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

From July to September 2026, the Special Investigations Unit recorded 29 complaints involving prison matters, officer misconduct and service delivery. Ten complaints related to prison matters, eight to officer misconduct, two to employment issues, two to delayed services, and one was out of jurisdiction. Complaints involved disciplinary forces (23), the Ombudsman (3), village fono (1), and private companies or corporations (1). Complaints were received through various channels, including in-person submissions, prison complaint boxes, online forms, correspondence, phone calls and email.



COMPLAINTS DURING THIS PERIOD WERE LODGED AGAINST THE FOLLOWING ENTITIES:



Inaugural Human Rights Advisory Council Meeting - 8 September 2026



Human Rights Advisory Council members

The inaugural Human Rights Advisory Council meeting for the 2026/2027 financial year was hosted by the Office on 8 September 2026, marking the first meeting under the leadership of Ombudsman Afioga Vui Clarence Nelson.

The meeting brought together Council members representing diverse sectors of Samoan society to strengthen collaboration and ensure that community voices, experiences and concerns continue to inform the Office's human rights work.

The Human Rights Advisory Council is comprised of eight members who contribute their knowledge, experience and understanding of the human rights issues affecting communities across Samoa. Members serve in advisory roles covering specific groups and areas of human rights, helping the Office better understand community needs and promote the protection of everyone's rights and dignity.

The Council's advisory areas and members include:

- Children and Youth: Rev. Dr Siaosi Salesulu and Audrey Natasha Lee Hang
- Women: Tavu'i Anne Eves Laumea
- Anti-Discrimination: Nanai Leiataualesa Mulipola Pologa Ioane
- Diversity: Ioimataopunialavaa Vaito'a Toelupe
- Community and Faith-Based Groups: Tafielea Fifita Leota
- Equal Opportunity: Maiava Iosefa Afele Maiava

Through their respective roles, Council members provide valuable community perspectives that support human rights awareness, encourage inclusion and help identify issues affecting different groups within Samoan society.

The Council plays an important role in strengthening dialogue between the Office of the Ombudsman and the communities it serves. Its' collective knowledge, experience and community connections contribute to advancing a more inclusive, equitable and rights-respecting Samoa.

The inaugural meeting under the new Ombudsman's leadership reaffirmed the importance of partnership and consultation in ensuring that human rights remain central to the Office's work and engagement with the people of Samoa.

Respecting the Rights of Samoa's Children - 16 September 2026

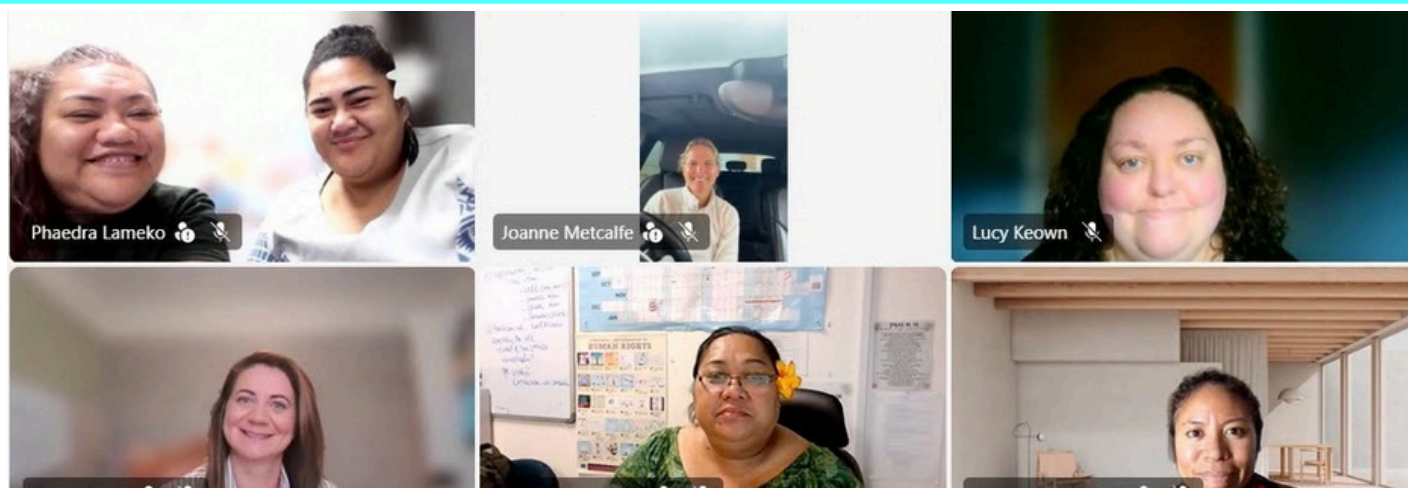
In light of the Samoa Observer publishing details of two children suspected to have died in tragic circumstances, the Office of the Ombudsman published an open letter on 16 September to remind all media personnel of Samoa's binding obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), specifically Article 16, which guarantees every child the right to protection against arbitrary "interference with his or her privacy, family, home" or to attacks "on his or her honor and reputation".

The Ombudsman's Office called upon the Samoa Observer and all media practitioners to:

- Immediately review and amend editorial policies on reporting the deaths of children and young persons.
- Adopt international best practice guidelines, such as those issued by the WHO and UNICEF, which emphasize non-identification, sensitivity, and referral to support services.
- Commit to training journalists on ethical reporting standards that uphold human rights and protect vulnerable groups.

The open letter can be accessed on the [Office of the Ombudsman's website](#).

Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions Sports Working Group via Zoom- 29 September 2026



CFNHRI Sports Working Group held a discussion on the links between sport, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) Sports Working Group held an inspiring discussion via ZOOM on the links between sport, human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Chaired by Michael Boyd OBE, the session brought together representatives from National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Games Sports Federation, City Councils and Sports Councils.

Dr Catherine Carty of Munster Technological University, Ireland, highlighted the importance of long-term planning to make sport inclusive and accessible for all. She emphasised removing barriers to participation, strengthening safeguarding measures and ensuring affected communities have a voice in decision-making. The discussion reinforced the vital role of NHRIs in gathering evidence, building partnerships and monitoring progress towards safer, more inclusive sporting environments that uphold human rights and support sustainable development for everyone.



Government Information Security Workshop 3 Information Classification & Handling Standard 3 July 2026

The Office of the Ombudsman participated in Government Information Security Workshop 3, hosted by SamCERT, which focused on the Information Classification & Handling Standard under the Government's Information Security Policy (2024). The workshop strengthened participants' understanding of the proper classification, handling, storage, sharing, and protection of official information, while providing an opportunity for government IT practitioners to exchange experiences and discuss emerging cybersecurity challenges, including the growing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and other technologies. The discussions contributed to strengthening cybersecurity awareness, information protection, and digital resilience across the public sector.



Law & Justice Sector Plan 2026–2031 Validation Workshop 23 July 2026



The Office participated in the Law and Justice Sector Plan 2026–2031 Validation Workshop organised by Ministry of Justice & Courts Administration - Samoa (MJCA) where it brought together representatives from Law and Justice Sector agencies and Development Partners to review and validate the strategic direction of the Sector for the next five years.

The workshop provided an important opportunity for participating agencies, including the Office of the Ombudsman, to contribute to discussions on the Sector Plan and to strengthen collaboration towards a more effective, inclusive and responsive law and justice system in Samoa. Discussions also focused on ensuring greater coordination between Sector agencies and Development Partners in supporting the priorities and objectives of the Plan.

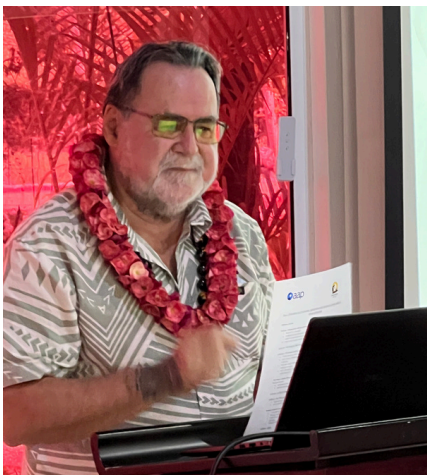
The Office welcomed the opportunity to participate in this important national planning process and to contribute to strengthening Samoa's law and justice sector.

Digital Media Literacy Train-the-Trainer Workshop 24 & 25 August 2026



Misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (MDM) on social media are serious threats to people around the world, including here in Samoa. The staff of the Office of the Ombudsman with the support of the Australian High Commission, Samoa spent two days in late August being trained in media literacy by AAP FactCheck.

The staff learned practical strategies and tactics to combat MDM as well as ways to take this important information out to communities. This train-the-trainer workshop was the first step in a larger education project our office is working on to help Samoans improve their media literacy.



IN-HOUSE MATTERS

Ombudsman NZ - Manaaki Scholarship Attachment Program

27 July 2026

Three staff members from the Office —Nepa C Papalii-Saua, Murphy Siupolu and Rosuweti Galuvao— participated in a two-week attachment with the New Zealand Ombudsman under the Manaaki Scholarship Programme. The programme strengthened their knowledge in administrative investigations, detention inspections and human resources, while providing opportunities to engage with New Zealand institutions and Ombudsman colleagues from Thailand, Cook Islands and Tonga.

The team also met New Zealand Chief Ombudsman John Allen and participated in community and democracy initiatives. The attachment strengthened professional networks, encouraged knowledge-sharing and provided valuable practical lessons to support professional development and enhance the Office's services and delivery.



Human Rights Capacity Building - Global South (New Delhi)

14-19 September 2026



The Office participated in a six-day Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Executive Capacity Building Programme on Human Rights. Senior-level functionaries of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) from the Global South, including Samoa, attended the training that was held in India.

The programme brought together representatives from 15 NHRIs to facilitate knowledge exchange, share experiences and strengthen cooperation in advancing human rights. The Office is grateful to the National Human Rights Commission of India and the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, for the invitation and valuable opportunity to strengthen international partnerships.

Building Pacific Capacity on Climate Mobility (Fiji)

14-18 September 2026

The Office participated in the Regional Pacific Climate Mobility Training of Trainers (ToT) in Nadi, Fiji, bringing together participants from 14 Pacific countries. The training strengthened knowledge, facilitation skills and regional collaboration on climate mobility and human rights.

It provided an important opportunity to exchange experiences, build professional networks and strengthen understanding of the human rights impacts of climate mobility across the Pacific. The Office acknowledges IOM Fiji for facilitating this valuable opportunity to enhance regional capacity and cooperation in this important area.



Recognising the Valuable Role of Fathers

5 August 2026



The Office of the Ombudsman held a special celebration to honour the fathers in our workplace on 5 August 2026 . The heartfelt programme was thoughtfully organised by the OMB Social Committee, together with the mothers of the Office, in recognition of the invaluable role fathers play in their families, workplaces, and communities.

The programme featured an inspiring message from Pastor Gagau Jerry Ah Kee, who shared the Word on the theme "God-Fearing Men," drawing from the life of Noah and highlighting the qualities of faith, obedience, and godly leadership. The Ombudsman also delivered Father's Day remarks, noting that while many countries around the world do not observe Father's Day as a public holiday, Samoa is truly blessed to set aside this special occasion to recognise and celebrate the important contributions of fathers. The celebration concluded with a fellowship lunch, providing staff with an opportunity to come together in appreciation and fellowship.

Health is Wealth - July to September 2026

Office staff take an hour from 4:00pm to 5:00pm for physical health and fitness on Tuesdays and Thursdays, promoting wellbeing, teamwork and a healthier workplace. Whether it's hiking up Mount Vaea to visit Uncle Robbie or enjoying a walk along the seawall to the Marina and back, the team makes time to stay active and healthy together.



Samoa Law Society Honours Legal Luminaries at Golden Jubilee - 16 August 2026

The Office congratulates Afioga Vui Clarence Nelson, Ombudsman of Samoa, on being recognised with the Golden Jubilee Lifetime Achievement Award by the Samoa Law Society.

The award was presented as part of the Samoa Law Society's Golden Jubilee celebrations, recognising distinguished legal professionals whose careers have made significant contributions to Samoa's legal profession, the rule of law, justice, and the wider community.

The recognition of Afioga Vui Clarence Nelson reflects his distinguished career and longstanding contribution to Samoa's legal and justice sector. The Office of the Ombudsman is proud to acknowledge this achievement and celebrates his continued service to the people of Samoa.

The Samoa Law Society, established in 1976, marked 50 years of service to the legal profession under the theme "Honouring our Heritage, Shaping Tomorrow." The Golden Jubilee Lifetime Achievement Awards celebrate a generation of legal professionals whose dedication has helped shape Samoa's legal landscape and continues to inspire future generations.

The Office is also proud to share and congratulate our former and first female Ombudsman, Luamanuvao Katalaina Sapolu who was among those recognized. She continues to be a trailblazer in her current role as the Assistant Secretary-General for Global Operations at the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS).



The Head of State, Afioga Tuimaleali'ifano Va'aleto'a Sualauvi II, presenting the award to Ombudsman Vui Clarence Nelson.

Photo: Anetone Sagaga.



MO NI ISI FA'AMATALAGA - FOR MORE INFORMATION

O FEA E TU AI LE TATOU OFISA O SULUFA'IGA - WHERE WE ARE LOCATED



Afio mai: Fogafale 2, SNPF Plaza



Come see us: Level 2, SNPF Plaza

A TU'UINA MAI SAU FA'ASEĀ - TO LODGE A COMPLAINT



Vala'au mai: 25394

Call us: 25394

**Lodging a
Complaint**



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