The Centre for Democratic Institutions

OMBUDSMAN POLICY, PRACTICE, AND ACCOUNTABILITY SHORT COURSE, AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

The second professional Ombudsman short course was conducted by the Asia-Pacific School of Economics and Government, Australian National University from 3 - 28 November 2003. The course was designed and co-ordinated by a CDI Associate and former Australian Deputy Commonwealth Ombudsman, John Wood.

The Centre for Democratic Institutions (CDI) sponsored the attendance of six participants from the Pacific islands:

- Ms. Katie Bentin-Aimaasu, Secretary, Office of the Ombudsman, Samoa
- Mr. Daniel Damilea, Legal Officer Office of the Ombudsman, Solomon Islands
- Mrs. Sashi Lata Deo, Executive Officer, Office of the Ombudsman, Fiji
- Mr. Jim Prasad, Clerical Officer, Office of the Ombudsman, Fiji
- Mr. Peter Peraki, Deputy Director, Ombudsman Commission, Papua New Guinea
- Mr. Pasa Tosusu, Director of Investigations, Office of the Ombudsman, Vanuatu

In the past, CDI has worked with the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Thailand and with the National Ombudsman Commission of Indonesia leading to further AusAID funded projects with the two Commissions. Under AusAID funding, three staff members of the Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman of Thailand and two staff from the National Ombudsman Commission of Indonesia participated in the course. Two staff members from the Public Complaints Bureau, Malaysia were also funded by AusAID to participate in the course.

Background

Following feedback from participants in the first course in 2002, the Course was extended from three to four weeks. The course was structured to enable participants to understand in depth the role of ombudsman institutions in contemporary administration. In so doing it:

- considers the place of an ombudsman within administrative systems;
- explores different models for an ombudsman organisation;
- examines the challenges of the traditional ombudsman, and of various additional jurisdictions such as leadership codes, police, health, banking, and energy;
• considers methods for improving service delivery by government agencies;
• discusses issues surrounding integrity, ethics and accountability, and fighting corruption; and
• discusses and exchanges experience on practical aspects of administrative investigations and investigation techniques.

The course looks at a range of approaches adopted internationally, and is very practically oriented in order to enable participants to select aspects of an ombudsman institution’s practices that best suit their domestic culture and systems.

Course content

The course contained the following units:
• Introduction to the Australian system of government;
• Evolution of ombudsman institutions in the public and private sectors;
• Presentations by participants on their country’s ombudsman office;
• Accountability and Ethics;
• Ethics and corruption;
• Principles of an ombudsman institution;
• the ombudsman institution in perspective;
• Presentation: Parliament, accountability and the ombudsman;
• Special jurisdictions: Police;
• Presentation: Private sector ombudsmen: Energy and Water;
• Basics of administrative investigations: 1;
• Basics of administrative investigations: 2;
• Presentation: Private sector ombudsmen: Banking;
• Conducting interviews;
• Presentation: Taking complaints seriously: the Child Support Agency;
• Presentation: a Health Complaints system;
• Requirements for an effective complaint handling system: 1;
• Requirements for an effective complaint handling system: 2;
• Publicity and media;
• Major investigations design and implementation;
• Evaluating outcomes;
• Complaint handling systems and information technology: 1;
• Complaint handling systems and information technology: 2;
• Practices and principles for effective client service;
• Presentation: Customer service charters in the Australian Public Service;
• Case Study: A client service charter - the Department of Veterans' Affairs;
• Quality assurance;
• Drafting reports;
• Making recommendations and monitoring compliance;
• Standards for internal complaint handling: 1;
• Standards for internal complaint handling: 2; and
• Redress mechanisms.

Participants also completed individual assignments and presented their conclusions to their colleagues.

Summary

While most of the sessions involved considerable discussion to enable exploration of issues and to enable participants to learn from the practical experience of their colleagues in other countries, extra sessions were set aside for more in depth discussion of practical examples experienced by the participants.

The assignments also revealed a great commonality in identifying current strengths and weaknesses in their offices. These included: the need for assured funding to undertake their role effectively; the capacity to monitor implementation of recommendations made by the Ombudsman; the need for resources to undertake information and education outreach to more disadvantaged citizens; and the need to play a leading role in educating government agencies about improving complaint handling mechanisms.

An ANU Graduate Course Award certificate was given for satisfactory course completion of the course and all assessment. Candidates who subsequently enrolled for a Graduate Diploma or Master degree in Development Administration received credit for this course. All thirteen participants completed the course satisfactorily.

John T D Wood, Course Co-ordinator

PROGRAM

WEEK ONE

Monday 3 November
11.00-12.30 Introduction to course and participants including the Australian system of government
13.30-15.00  Evolution of ombudsman institutions in the public and private sectors  
*John Wood*

**Tuesday 4 November**

9.00-12.00  Presentation by participants on their country’s ombudsman’s office

13.00-14.00  Accountability and Democracy and the role of the Ombudsman  
*Roland Rich*

**Wednesday 5 November**

9.00-10.30  Principles of an ombudsman institution  
*John Wood*

10.30-13.00  Discussion

**Thursday 6 November**

9.00-10.30  Other kinds of ombudsman  
*John Wood*

11.00-13.00  Setting and discussion of assignments

**Friday 7 November**

9.00-11.00  Private sector ombudsman: energy and water  
*Clare Petre*

11.00-13.00  Discussion

**WEEK TWO**

**Monday 10 November**

9.00-12.30  Basics of administrative investigation  
*John Wood*

13.30-15.00  Working on assignments

**Tuesday 11 November**

9.00-10.30  Special jurisdictions: police  
*Phyl Crawford, A/G Director, Law Enforcement, Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office*
11.00-12.30 Taking complaints seriously: Child support Agency
Carolyn Mudie, Director, Complaints Service, Child Support Agency

13.30-15.00 Health Complaints
Ken Patterson, ACT Community and Health Services Complaints Commissioner

**Wednesday 12 November**
9.30-15.00 Parliament, accountability and the ombudsman
Alister Sands, Committee Secretary, Senate Committee Office

**Thursday 13 November**
9.00-12.30 Requirements for an effective complaint handling system
Kirstin McLeish

**Friday 14 November**
9.00-11.00 Conducting interviews
John Taylor, Senior Asst Ombudsman, Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office

**WEEK THREE**

**Monday 17 November**
9.00-10.30 Major projects design
John Wood

11.00-12.30 Private sector ombudsmen: banking
Colin Neave

13.30-15.00 Publicity and media
Steve Fynmore, Australian Taxation Office

**Tuesday 18 November**
9.00-11.00 Complaint handling systems and information technology
Peter Rankin, Director, IT, Commonwealth Ombudsman’s Office

11.00-12.30 Complaint handling systems and information technology
John Wood

13.30-15.00 Work on assignments

**Wednesday 19 November**
9.00-10.30 Practices and principles for effective client service
John Wood

11.00-12.30 Customer service charters
Pat Boling, Australian Public Service Commission

13.30-15.00 A client service charter
Matthew Klippan, Dept. of Veteran Affairs

Thursday 20 November
9.00-10.30 Accountability and ethics
Manu Barcham, National Centre for Development Studies
11.00-12.30 Ethics and corruption
Manu Barcham, National Centre for Development Studies

13.30-15.00 Work on assignments

Friday 21 November
9.00-10.30 Assignment progression discussion

WEEK FOUR

Monday 24 November
9.00-10.30 Drafting reports
John Wood

11.00-12.30 Making recommendations and monitoring compliance
John Wood

13.30-15.00 Work on assignments

Tuesday 25 November
9.00-12.30 Standards for internal compliance handling
John Wood

13.30-15.00 Work on assignments

Wednesday 26 November
9.00-15.00 Visit to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

Thursday 27 November
9.00-15.00 Presentation of assignments

Friday 28 November
9.00-11.00 Feedback from assignments
## FULL PARTICIPANTS LIST

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position/Office</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Nugroho Andriyanto</td>
<td>Administration Staff&lt;br&gt;The National Ombudsman Commission, Indonesia</td>
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<td>Mr Dominikus Fernandez</td>
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<td>Ms Kairica Nutpornvadi</td>
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<td>Mr Shanmuganathan Chelliah</td>
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<td>Mr Mohd Jamalludin Kasbi</td>
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