Minister, Distinguished Ombudsmen, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Roland Rich, and I am the Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions.

I have been granted the honour of chairing the opening session of the Workshop on Accountability and Corruption in Melanesia: Evaluating the Roles of Ombudsmen and Leadership Codes. Usurped may be a better term because we should acknowledge at the outset the dynamic role of Tony Regan of the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, in putting the workshop together.

There are a number of features about the workshop I would be remiss in not commenting on.

- The high quality of the participants
- The focused and practical approach to the agenda so as to make it as useful as possible to the participants
- The high quality of the background papers
- The generous participation of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and his office and of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Accordingly, I believe the workshop is an excellent point at which to commence the work of the CDI.

I am determined that CDI should be relevant to the needs of the region, maintain the highest quality standards in its project delivery and draw on the best practices of Australian institutions.

I might also point out that the current workshop is part of a course on corruption and anti-corruption being conducted by the National Centre Development Studies with the expert assistance of the Independent Commission against Corruption and Transparency International. A month long carnival of anti-corruption as Peter Larmour has said.
The financial supporters of the course are worth mentioning in this context because they form a coalition of donors with a growing interest in the issue of fighting corruption. The sponsors of various participants are CDI, AusAID, the Canada Fund, USAID and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. It is these sorts of coalitions that CDI must try to build to focus attention and resources on the increasingly important development issues associated with civil good governance and human rights.

My main task this morning is to introduce our guest speaker to open the Workshop. There is no one more appropriate to undertake this role than Foreign Minister Alexander Downer. He has a number of qualities that qualify him.

First, he is a great friend of the countries of Melanesia and he has made the sort of political contribution to the resolution of conflict in the region of which any Australian Foreign Minister could be justifiably proud.

Second, he is the Minister responsible for the Australian Aid program, in which under Mr Downer’s stewardship and direction, there has been shift in emphasis towards aid in matters of good governance and human rights.

Finally, the Centre for Democratic Institutions owes its existence very much to Mr Downer’s inspiration and detailed planning. He thought through the concept, found the resources for it, gave it its name and, I have to accept, he will be the key person to pass judgement on it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, please welcome Foreign Minister Alexander Downer.