

## 19 Office of the Ombudsman – Te Mato Akamoeau

### 19.2 Background

The Ombudsman is an independent and impartial Officer of and responsible to the Parliament of the Cook Islands. It is mandated to investigate complaints of general maladministration against government ministries under the Ombudsman Act 1984. It is further tasked to investigate complaints under the Disability Act 2008, Official Information Act 2008 and the Police Act 2012.

#### 19.2.1 Vision

Fairness for all.

#### 19.2.2 Significant achievements and milestones

1. 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Office of the Ombudsman.
2. Cook Islands Ombudsman Elected President of the Australasian Pacific Ombudsman Region (APOR).
3. Cook Islands Ombudsman Joins the Governing Board of the International Ombudsman Institution (IOI)
4. UNPRPD Project.
5. Annual report to Parliament before sittings.
6. Investigations Case management system has improved via Smartsheet.

## 19.2 Outputs and Key Deliverables

<b>OUTPUT:</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>OUTPUT TITLE:</b>	<b>INVESTIGATION &amp; REVIEWS</b>
Responsible for assisting the Ombudsman with the investigation of public complaints regarding public sector agency administrative conduct, reviewing decisions on official information requests, conduct of policy and disability discrimination.			

NSDP Goal	NSDP Indic.#	Agency Strategic Plan Goal or Key Policy Outcomes (High-level Summary)	High-level Work Programme Deliverables and expected date of achievement	Budget 2025-26	Budget 2026-27	Budget 2027-28	Budget 2028-29
15.Governance	15.5	Good Governance & High Public Trust	Robust Complaints Case Management System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Comprehensive guidelines for managing complaints across all mandates, including investigative procedures completed by June 2026.</li> <li>2. Centralized case management system to streamline complaint handling and improve operational efficiency completed by June 2026.</li> <li>3. Strengthen processes to manage and monitor physical files, ensuring secure handling and compliance with archival standards (on-going)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Roll out guidelines for managing complaints, providing necessary training and resources to staff.</li> <li>2. Complaints Management System: Deploy the integrated system to facilitate efficient complaint tracking and resolution.</li> <li>3. Maintain effective oversight of physical files, addressing any identified gaps in record-keeping practices.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Test and Refine Investigative Procedures: Conduct evaluations of complaint management practices to identify and implement improvements.</li> <li>2. Enhance the Complaints Management System: Review and upgrade functionalities to meet evolving operational needs.</li> <li>3. Prepare for Transition to Digital Files: Lay the groundwork for digitizing records, including staff training and technology procurement.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement fully refined procedures and establish an annual review cycle for continuous improvement.</li> <li>2. Optimize the Complaints Management System: Ensure the system is fully operational and integrated into daily workflows.</li> <li>3. Fully Transition to Digital File Management: Implement digital systems to replace physical files, ensuring secure access and efficient record-keeping.</li> </ol>

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15.Governance	15.5	Good Governance & High Public Trust	Effective and efficient complaints handling	<p>Enquiries completed within 3months of receipt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of all complaints acknowledged within 2 days.</li> <li>2. Initial assessment conducted within 10 working days of acknowledgement.</li> <li>3. 100% of priority 0 cases completed within 1 month.</li> <li>4. 75% of priority 1 cases completed within 3 months.</li> <li>5. 75% of priority 2 cases completed within 9 months.</li> <li>6. 75% of priority 3 cases completed within 12 months.</li> </ol>	<p>Enquiries completed within 3months of receipt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of all complaints acknowledged within 2 days.</li> <li>2. Initial assessment conducted within 10 working days of acknowledgement.</li> <li>3. 100% of priority 0 cases completed within 1 month.</li> <li>4. 75% of priority 1 cases completed within 3 months.</li> <li>5. 75% of priority 2 cases completed within 9 months.</li> <li>6. 75% of priority 3 cases completed within 12 months.</li> </ol>	<p>Enquiries completed within 3months of receipt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of all complaints acknowledged within 2 days.</li> <li>2. Initial assessment conducted within 10 working days of acknowledgement.</li> <li>3. 100% of priority 0 cases completed within 1 month.</li> <li>4. 85% of priority 1 cases completed within 3 months</li> <li>5. 85% of priority 2 cases completed within 9 months.</li> <li>6. 85% of priority 3 cases completed within 12 months.</li> </ol>	<p>Enquiries completed within 3months of receipt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 75% of all complaints acknowledged within 2 days.</li> <li>2. Initial assessment conducted within 10 working days of acknowledgement.</li> <li>3. 100% of priority 0 cases completed within 1 month.</li> <li>4. 85% of priority 1 cases completed within 3 months</li> <li>5. 85% of priority 2 cases completed within 9 months.</li> <li>6. 85% of priority 3 cases completed within 12 months.</li> </ol>
15.Governance	15.5	Robust Monitoring & Accountability Mechanisms	Strengthen reporting and monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct and lead weekly case reviews, ensuring effective monitoring and management of all active files (on-going).</li> <li>2. Monthly progress report completed on time. (on-going)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct and lead weekly case reviews, ensuring effective monitoring and management of all active files.</li> <li>2. Monthly progress report completed on time.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct and lead weekly case reviews, ensuring effective monitoring and management of all active files.</li> <li>2. Monthly progress report completed on time.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Conduct and lead weekly case reviews, ensuring effective monitoring and management of all active files.</li> <li>2. Monthly progress report completed on time.</li> </ol>

NSDP Goal	NSDP Indic.#	Agency Strategic Plan Goal or Key Policy Outcomes (High-level Summary)	High-level Work Programme Deliverables and expected date of achievement	Budget 2025-26	Budget 2026-27	Budget 2027-28	Budget 2028-29
		Strategic Stakeholder Relationship Management.	Improve cooperation with public sector agency.	n/a	n/a	1. Develop public sector agency focal point contact list. 2. Develop list of available administrative remedies (complaints mechanisms).	1. Maintain & update public sector agency focal point contact list. 2. Review & update list of available administrative remedies (complaints mechanisms).

OUTPUT 1: Investigations and Review Funding Appropriation	Budget 2025-26	Budget 2026-27	Budget 2027-28	Budget 2028-29
Personnel	69,758	73,257	77,211	77,211
Operating	0	0	0	0
Administered Funding	0	0	0	0
Depreciation	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Gross Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>71,758</b>	<b>75,257</b>	<b>79,211</b>	<b>79,211</b>
Trading Revenue	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>71,758</b>	<b>75,257</b>	<b>79,211</b>	<b>79,211</b>

<b>OUTPUT:</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>OUTPUT TITLE:</b>	<b>COMPLIANCE</b>
Responsible for assisting the Ombudsman with "proactive" interventions and measures relating to investigations, reviews, monitoring compliance and good practice, and providing advice, guidance and training.			

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15.Governance	15.5	Good Governance & High Public Trust	Public Awareness Initiative on the Ombudsman's Role	1. Complete stakeholder survey on public	1. Public awareness sessions for target group by June 2027.	1. Refine public awareness resources and engagement	1. Integrate public awareness activities into standard

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			and Complaint Processes & Supporting Public Sector Complaint Handling Capabilities.	<p>awareness gaps by June 2026.</p> <p>2. Draft accessible information and education materials by June 2026.</p> <p>3. Comprehensive public engagement strategy drafted by June 2026.</p> <p>4. Public sector training modules for better complaints handling developed by June 2026.</p> <p>5. Draft complaints-handling guidance materials for agencies by June 2026.</p>	<p>2. Pilot and evaluate public sector training sessions on complaints handling completed by June 2027.</p> <p>3. Review and update complaints-handling materials finalised, published and distributed by June 2027.</p>	<p>strategies by June 2028.</p> <p>2. Deliver training sessions to public sector agencies by June 2028.</p> <p>3. Review and updated complaints-handling guidance materials by June 2028.</p>	<p>operations by June 2029.</p> <p>2. Continue refining and delivering training sessions to public sector agencies (on-going).</p> <p>3. Maintain and update complaints-handling guidance materials, ensuring relevance and effectiveness by June 2029.</p>
15.Governance	15.5	Robust Accountability & Monitoring Mechanisms	Improve monitoring and reporting	<p>1. Design and implement a system to track agency compliance with Ombudsman recommendations by June 2026.</p> <p>2. Standardized formats for compliance updates, statistical reporting, and case notes are developed by June 2026.</p> <p>3. Develop framework for 6-monthly statistical reports by June 2026.</p>	<p>1. Continue to monitor agency compliance with Ombudsman recommendations (on-going).</p> <p>2. Ensure timely release of compliance updates to agencies (on-going).</p> <p>3. Publication of 6-monthly statistical report.</p> <p>4. Case notes prepared for publication by June 2027.</p> <p>5. Monthly progress report completed on time.</p>	<p>1. Continue to monitor agency compliance with Ombudsman recommendations (on-going).</p> <p>2. Ensure timely release of compliance updates to agencies.</p> <p>3. Publication of 6-monthly statistical report.</p> <p>4. Case notes prepared for publication by June 2028.</p> <p>5. Monthly progress report completed on time.</p>	<p>1. Continue to monitor agency compliance with Ombudsman recommendations.</p> <p>2. Ensure timely release of compliance updates to agencies.</p> <p>3. Publication of 6-monthly statistical report.</p> <p>4. Case notes prepared for publication by June 2029.</p> <p>5. Monthly progress report completed on time.</p>

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				4. Develop template for case notes by June 2026. 5. Monthly progress report completed on time.			
15.Governance	15.5	Strong Ombudsman Institution	Strengthen internal compliance processes and build staff capacity through targeted training and resource development	1. Draft OMB Investigative Compliance Guidelines completed by June 2026. 2. Review of internal compliance checks for operational activities completed by June 2026. 3. Design and develop training modules and resources for staff by June 2026.	1. Implement OMB Investigative Compliance Guidelines. 2. Implement internal compliance checks for operational matters. 3. Deliver and evaluate training modules and resources.	1. Continue implement OMB Investigative Compliance Guidelines. 2. Maintain & refine internal compliance checks for operational matters. 3. Deliver and evaluate training modules and resources.	1. Ensure ongoing application of OMB Investigative Compliance Guidelines. 2. Review and improvements to internal compliance checks for operational matters completed. 3. Continue delivery and assessment of training modules and resources.

<b>OUTPUT 2: Compliance Funding Appropriation</b>	<b>Budget 2025-26</b>	<b>Budget 2026-27</b>	<b>Budget 2027-28</b>	<b>Budget 2028-29</b>
Personnel	42,998	46,498	50,452	50,452
Operating	2,500	3,000	3,000	3,000
Administered Funding	0	0	0	0
Depreciation	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Gross Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>47,498</b>	<b>51,498</b>	<b>55,452</b>	<b>55,452</b>
Trading Revenue	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>47,498</b>	<b>51,498</b>	<b>55,452</b>	<b>55,452</b>

<b>OUTPUT:</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>OUTPUT TITLE:</b>	<b>CORPORATE SERVICES</b>
Responsible for assisting the Ombudsman by overseeing and managing human resources, finances, administration, and IT.			

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15.Governance	15.6	Ensure that Corporate, Administrative, and Financial Services are executed effectively and equitably.	Strengthen human resources systems by implementing associated internal policies and procedures to enhance efficiency, consistency, and compliance.	1. Develop and implement the OMB Staff Manual in accordance with CI Government Policies by June 2026. 2. Annual performance appraisals completed for staff by June 2026.	1. Review and update sections of the OMB Staff Manual in accordance with CI Government Policies by June 2027. 2. Annual performance appraisals completed for staff by June 2027.	1. Review and update sections of the OMB Staff Manual in accordance with CI Government Policies by June 2028. 2. Annual performance appraisals completed for staff by June 2028.	1. Review and update sections of the OMB Staff Manual in accordance with CI Government Policies by June 2029. 2. Annual performance appraisals completed for staff by June 2029.
15.Governance	15.6	Ensure that Corporate, Administrative, and Financial Services are executed effectively and equitably.	Enhance financial management systems to ensure full compliance with MFEM policies, procedures, and audit recommendations, promoting transparency, accountability, and efficient use of resources.	1. Monthly finances and asset reports submitted to MFEM within 10 working days of the following month. 2. 2025-2026 Financial Report submitted to MFEM by deadline 2026.	1. Monthly finances and asset reports submitted to MFEM within 10 working days of the following month. 2. 2026-2027 Financial Report submitted to MFEM by deadline 2027.	1. Monthly finances and asset reports submitted to MFEM within 10 working days of the following month. 2. 2027-2028 Financial Report submitted to MFEM by deadline 2028.	1. Monthly finances and asset reports submitted to MFEM within 10 working days of the following month. 2. 2028-2029 Financial Report submitted to MFEM by deadline 2029.
15.Governance	15.6	Build a capable and motivated workforce to support the organizations goals by strengthen human resource development of OMB staff.	Staff training and development to improve delivery of OMB	1. Review priority capacity needs through consultation with staff by DEC 2025. 2. Implement options to support staff with short courses training and studying for	1. Review priority capacity needs through consultation with staff by DEC 2026. 2. Implement options to support staff with short courses training and studying for	1. Review priority capacity needs through consultation with staff by DEC 2027. 2. Implement options to support staff with short courses training and studying for	1. Review priority capacity needs through consultation with staff by DEC 2028. 2. Implement options to support staff with short courses training and studying for

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				formal qualifications related to their field of work, where possible, by June 2026.	formal qualifications related to their field of work, where possible, by June 2027.	formal qualifications related to their field of work, where possible, by June 2028.	formal qualifications related to their field of work, where possible, by June 2029.

<b>OUTPUT 3: Corporate Services Funding Appropriation</b>	<b>Budget 2025-26</b>	<b>Budget 2026-27</b>	<b>Budget 2027-28</b>	<b>Budget 2028-29</b>
Personnel	42,998	46,498	50,452	50,452
Operating	60,501	60,001	60,001	60,001
Administered Funding	0	0	0	0
Depreciation	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
<b>Gross Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>105,499</b>	<b>108,499</b>	<b>112,453</b>	<b>112,453</b>
Trading Revenue	0	0	0	0
<b>Net Operating Appropriation</b>	<b>105,499</b>	<b>108,499</b>	<b>112,453</b>	<b>112,453</b>



19.3 Staffing Resources

Figure 19-1 Office of the Ombudsman organisational structure

Te Mato Akamoeau – Office of the Ombudsman  
Organisational Structure - April 2020

