

2016 Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region Conference

Melbourne, 3 May 2016

Speech by Chris Field, Western Australian Ombudsman

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As Treasurer of the International Ombudsman Institute, and a former President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region, can I express my warm thanks to the Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave, and his staff team, for organising the 28<sup>th</sup> APOR Conference and putting together such an outstanding program for us.

APOR meetings are important for at least four major reasons.

First, they are a wonderful opportunity for us to renew acquaintances.

Second, to inform ourselves and share knowledge of key issues domestically, in our region and internationally.

Third, for members to provide advice to IOI Directors, namely Colin, Connie and myself, of issues that are important to you to raise at annual IOI Board meetings and

Fourth, as Colin will speak to this afternoon, to prepare for our quadrennial World Conference.

Can I also join Colin in warmly welcoming John Walters, President of the IOI. John, it is absolutely delightful to have you join us at our APOR meeting, particularly given your busy schedule, including the important event that you attended in Barcelona last week that we will hear about shortly.

Can I also extend my warm welcome to all returning APOR members and a number of newer members including Judge Peter Boshier Chief Ombudsman of the office of the New Zealand Ombudsman Dr Po-ya Chang, President of the Control Yuan and Professor Amzulian Rifai, Chief Ombudsman of the Ombudsman Republik Indonesia – all three institutions are great friends of this country.

This morning I am absolutely delighted to be able to officially launch the newest APOR and IOI project, the *Starter kit for new ombudsmen and developing or expanding offices*.

As you know, the IOI, through its regional subvention project, allocates a considerable portion of its yearly budget to fund subventions to IOI regions.

Each year, the Executive Committee of the IOI considers applications from the IOI regions for projects to support the purposes of the IOI.

Project proposals are assessed against a range of criteria, including:

- Contribution of the project to increase regional visibility of the IOI;
- The particular needs of the region;
- Strengthening the capacity and capability of Member offices; and
- The broader impact and wider application for the IOI community.

In 2013, following consultation with all APOR members, the (then) New South Wales Ombudsman, Bruce Barbour, and I applied on behalf of APOR for an IOI subvention.

We proposed to create a comprehensive resource for new Ombudsmen or developing or expanding Ombudsman offices that would draw upon the collective expertise and experience of APOR Members.

The Objective of the project was twofold. First, to provide a highly accessible, web-based induction tool for newly appointed Ombudsmen utilising the knowledge and experience of existing Ombudsman. In this way the Kit is designed to answer all those questions that each of us has asked in the first few months in our roles. Second, to provide a resource for those offices who are undergoing an expansion of functions or dealing with novel or challenging issues. As you know, the recent experience for Ombudsman around the world has been one of expansion of functions and successfully navigating such expansion was very much in our minds in developing the Kit.

The project team surveyed APOR Members to identify useful topics, information and resources for the Starter Kit. Many of your offices provided various resources for the Starter Kit, and these are now available as a resource for all APOR Members. I thank APOR members for generously contributing to the Starter Kit.

The Starter Kit is accessed through a secure web portal on the IOI website, and it is intended to be a living document. The resources and information in the Starter Kit can be updated and replaced as required, and my office will coordinate any changes to the Starter Kit.

As Rebecca is demonstrating, when you log in to the Member area of the IOI website, you will see a link to the APOR Starter Kit that will take you to the Starter Kit home page.

The Kit is structured into four broad areas:

- Core Principles;
- Governance and Office Management;
- Complaints and Investigations; and
- Stakeholder Engagement.

There is also a page with the contact information for all APOR Member offices.

Within each area of the Starter Kit there are a number of pages that provide information on a range of topics. For example, in Core Principles there is a *Guiding principles* page and a page on *How to build and maintain independence*.

On every topic page in the Starter Kit, information is provided in three sections:

- A brief overview of the topic with key information and considerations for new ombudsmen or developing or expanding offices;
- A list of publically available resources (with links to their location on APOR Member websites and other public websites); and
- A list of downloadable resources that have been provided by APOR Members but that are otherwise not publically available.

The topics covered in the Starter Kit were identified through the survey of Members and in this way we hope the Starter Kit is truly a work that draws on the collective expertise of Members and meets the needs of offices in the region.

I encourage you to log in and explore the Starter Kit. As I mentioned, the Starter Kit is intended to be a living document, so please feel free to provide additional or updated resources to my office for inclusion in the Kit.

I am also pleased, and excited, that the Starter Kit will be made available to all IOI members – further enhancing the value of the Starter Kit and the assistance that is able to be provided to new Ombudsman taking office all around the world and those who are considering the expansion of functions for their offices.

Can I finally acknowledge my sincere appreciation for the support of the office of the New South Wales Ombudsman, particularly to my colleague Professor John McMillan and Tom Millet of John's office, Rebecca Poole and Lindon McKenna of my office, and the staff of the IOI Secretariat in Vienna for their very hard work in delivering the Starter Kit. I am delighted to be able to launch a project that I believe provides a rich library of very helpful information in one central place that I believe will be a valuable ongoing and living resource for all of us and our offices.