



**Address by the President of the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman
Region at the 29th Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman Region
Conference held on 28 November 2017, Perth, Australia**

Ms Connie Lau, JP

The Ombudsman of Hong Kong, China

Your Excellency the Honourable Kerry Sanderson AC Governor of Western Australia, Chris, Richard, Michael, Distinguished Speakers and Guests, Fellow APOR Members and Ombudsmen, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Good Morning. May I commence by thanking Dr Richard Walley for his welcome to country.

2. It gives me great pleasure to be taking part in hosting this 29th APOR Conference held in the beautiful city of Perth, where we could enjoy the best of both worlds, the soft-sand beaches, the scenic parks and a thriving metropolis of creative restaurants and curated street art.

3. Before we get started, I wish to express my particular gratitude to:

- the State of Western Australia, the Western Australian Ombudsman Office, the Commonwealth Ombudsman Office, the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) and the New Zealand Ombudsman Office for their tremendous supports to the Conference and to,
- all speakers and participants for their time and support to the Conference. That many of you travel long distances serves to remind us all how important our work is.

4. The APOR Conference, as its theme suggests, is embracing and enhancing the connections in our APOR region. You will certainly agree with me that good connections are most useful for ombudsmen from different jurisdictions to share experience, learn from one another and keep

themselves abreast of the latest development of ombudsmanship, so as to discharge their duty more effectively and to meet more readily new challenges.

5. The Conference which is about to commence will provide a pertinent platform for leading ombudsmen to offer us their expert views in various subjects of interest or concern, some universal, others more unique to this Region or to individual APOR members.

6. Indeed the conference is an excellent opportunity for us to share our concerns, especially the challenges we are facing, be it financial or political challenges, and to exchange our views and solution.

7. While on this, I note with great interest that this conference covers the area of “Engagement with First Peoples”. Most of us live in multi-racial communities. We, as ombudsmen, certainly have a duty to closely monitor the work and performance of the administration, and to ensure that the administration is benevolent, fair and equitable to people from all walks of life and of different ethnic origins. It is important for both the administration and the ombudsman to understand their sentiments, indigenous needs and aspirations, and to listen to their feedback and suggestions on policies and services.

8. Equally worth our attention is the evolution of the concept and role of ombudsman, the subject of the conference’s closing address. In many societies, as the ombudsman institution has become widely accepted in the public sector, there is demand for “ombudsman-like” institutions to be established in non-traditional areas and the private sector. No matter they are from the classical ombudsman model which is tasked to look after public sector interests such as freedom of information, health care, taxation and prisons or industry ombudsmen covering telecommunications, insurance and so on, all are seeking fairness and quality in administration or services in their respective ways.

9. I look forward to the stimulating discussions shedding light on where the roads may lead us.

10. As a bonus, the conference will include a training programme, which will be conducted by the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman and my office. That will again be an excellent opportunity for participants to take reference from the work of ombudsmen under different jurisdictions.

11. As APOR President, I always hold close to my heart the importance of communication and information dissemination among members. I invite you to view the APOR Starter Kit on the IOI website, so painstakingly designed by the Office of Western Australian Ombudsman in cooperation with the Office of New South Wales Ombudsman with IOI's financial support. The Kit provides comprehensive information useful for newly established Ombudsman offices as well as those undergoing expansion or looking for assistance to develop services or new functions.

12. One further initiative of our Region is an APOR E-Newsletter for information sharing and updating, which is under planning. That, by the way, is on the agenda of the APOR Business Meeting to be held tomorrow. Any ideas and suggestions from fellow members would be most welcome.

13. Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to join other hosts in welcoming all of you to this Conference and I look forward to your fruitful participation and deliberations.

14. Thank you.

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Office of The Ombudsman, Hong Kong SAR
November 2017