

## **Address at the Parliament of New Zealand on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ombudsman of New Zealand**

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### **Introduction**

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa. The Honourable Chris Hipkins, Minister for the Public Service and Peter Boshier, Chief Ombudsman of New Zealand, it is a great honour to join you for the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Ombudsman in Aotearoa New Zealand.

I also warmly acknowledge members of the Chief Ombudsman's Māori Advisory Panel and Disability Advisory Panel, members of Parliament, former Ministers, members of the Judiciary, Heads of Government, former Ombudsmen of New Zealand and my colleagues, and friends, from the Australasian and Pacific Ombudsman region of the International Ombudsman Institute.

Today is, in my view, not just a commemoration, but a celebration of one of the world's great parliamentary democracies and of a treasured and trusted parliamentary institution.

### **The Ombudsman of New Zealand's work and value**

And indeed, there is much to celebrate. Since 1962, the Ombudsman of New Zealand has been a leader in ensuring that dealings between the State and citizens are universally and unwaveringly fair and dignified. There is no question in my mind that the Ombudsman of New Zealand embodies the very essence of the Venice Principles and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution, *The role of Ombudsman and mediator institutions in the promotion and protection of human rights, good governance and the rule of law*.

The Ombudsman of New Zealand is one of the oldest, and now largest, Ombudsman offices in the world. It has all the gravitas that its rich history bestows upon it, but is an absolutely modern Ombudsman institution whose mandate, particularly in relation to human rights, has expanded significantly in recent years. As just one example of many, this is the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ombudsman of New Zealand as the National Preventative Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, or OPCAT. OPCAT is an incredibly powerful mechanism to prevent human rights violations. It is truly a system of human rights ennobled and enabled and no more is this evident than the work that has been done by the Ombudsman of New Zealand.

## **The Ombudsman of New Zealand and IOI**

No proper recognition of the many accomplishments of the office of the Ombudsman of New Zealand could be complete without acknowledging the contribution that it has made, and continues to make, to the international Ombudsman community and the citizens it serves.

The International Ombudsman Institute, or IOI, represents over two hundred Ombudsman institutions from more than 100 countries worldwide across six global regions - Africa, Asia, the Australasian and Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America and North America.

Perhaps I can best exemplify the exceptional contribution that New Zealand had made to the IOI simply by noting that New Zealand Ombudsmen have held the office of President three times in the IOI's 44-year history, more than any other country. Two of these Presidents, Dame Beverly Wakem and Sir Brian Elwood join us here this evening. Dame Beverley and Sir Brian, it is a great honour for us that you are here tonight. Speaking personally, Dame Beverley was a great friend and mentor of mine when I first joined the World Board of the IOI.

This wonderful tradition has been carried on by Chief Ombudsman Boshier who has made very valued contributions to our region, to the global community and to the institution of the Ombudsman itself.

I also very warmly acknowledge the members of Sir Guy Powles family who are here with us this evening. As you know, Sir Guy Powles was the inaugural Ombudsman of New Zealand and prominent in his commitment to international engagement. His significant legacy is clearly woven through the fabric of everything that his successors have achieved.

## **New Zealand and Australia**

Before concluding it would, I think, be remiss of me not to mention one other matter. I want to recognise that Australia has no closer and more longstanding friend than New Zealand and with you we share the most comprehensive of all our bilateral relationships. We deeply admire your governmental, economic, social and cultural achievements. Indeed, although it sometimes pains us to say it, we also really do admire your sporting achievements.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, it is a testament to the wisdom of the Parliament of New Zealand sixty years ago, that we are here today to celebrate this anniversary. The institution of the Ombudsman upholds the great principles of fairness, transparency, accountability, human rights, good governance and the rule of law. I thank the Ombudsman New Zealand for being a champion of these principles for six decades.

Your work in service of this Parliament, the citizens of this great country and, of course, in supporting the global institution of the Ombudsman, is an achievement of which you ought to be extraordinarily proud and, for which, I am profoundly grateful.

Tena koutou.