



**OFFICE OF THE
OMBUDSMAN OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**SPECIAL REPORT
OF THE OMBUDSMAN ON
OMBUDSMAN'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PROVISION OF SERVICES BY SOME
MUNICIPAL SERVICE PROVIDERS IN
HONIARA.**

SPECIAL REPORT NO: 04/2011

**Presented to
THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS
Pursuant to Section 98 (3) of the Constitution**

Parliament Paper No: 15 of 2012



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

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Our Ref: OMB: 3/1/1

Date: 26th October 2011

Your Ref:

Sir. Allen Kemakeza, KBE
Speaker of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands

Dear Mr. Speaker,

In accordance with **section 98 (3) of the Constitution**, it is my pleasure and honour to present to the National Parliament this **Special Report No: 04/2011** on the Ombudsman's Investigation into the provision of services by some Municipal Service Providers in Honiara. Please have the Report tabled at the earliest Parliament Meeting.

I, yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai'.

Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman.

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OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

“HEMI NO WAKA GUD”

**A REPORT OF MY INVESTIGATION INTO THE
PROVISION OF SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN
HONIARA**

INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 01/10

Report by the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands, Joe Poraiwai, under the
Solomon Islands Independence Order 1978 and the Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1981

A. OMBUDSMAN'S INTRODUCTION

1. Authority

(i) Legislative Mandate

Pursuant to Section 96(1) of the Constitution and the Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act, 1980 below outlined are the Vision and Mission of the Ombudsman

Vision

- *To promote fair, transparent and accountable public administration that benefits the people of the Solomon Islands.*

Mission

The Ombudsman safeguards the interest of the Solomon Islands community in its dealings with government by:

- *Assisting people to resolve complaints about government administration;*
- *Independently investigating and reporting on the actions and practices of government; and*
- *Fostering accountable, lawful, fair, transparent and responsive administration.*

As noted above, section 97(1) of the Constitution provides that the functions of the Ombudsman are to:

- Enquire into the conduct of any person to whom this section applies in the exercise of his office or authority or abuse thereof;
- Assist in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies;
- Ensure the elimination of arbitrary and unfair decisions.

2. Change of Focus

As always reiterated, the office has attained thirty years since inception, it is time it should be proactive.

One of the aims of the office is to venture into Own Motion and Systemic Investigations, a twist from the normal practice of just waiting to investigate into complaints received from complainants, some of which are minor and irrelevant. What the office will hence focus on is to have the Investigators make regular intensive investigations and follow ups where responses are neither received nor slow.

3. Own Motion and Systemic Investigations

As this being one of the series of Systemic Investigation, the task gave the Investigators very good learning experience in conducting interviews and investigations. There is a plan in place for a Unit within the Investigation Division to be headed by a Principal Investigation Officer assigned mainly to deal with Own Motion and Systemic Investigations

4. **Number of complaints and Investigations**

There have been numerous public complaints in both the Newspapers and the Radio about the level of services provided by some of the service providers, particularly the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority, Solomon Islands Water Authority and the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation. Most complainants raised that the services provided to the people in Honiara are inadequate and poor which needs to be improved.

In order to verify the complaints, it is important that investigation be done into the Agencies so under my powers pursuant to section 5 (1) (c) of the Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act, I initiated an Own Motion Investigation into SIEA, SIWA, SIPC and extended it further into Inland Revenue Division (MOFT) for Vehicle Licensing Fees and MOID for Vehicle Inspection and Servicing Fees.

5. **Visit to Authorities – Meetings with Agency Heads**

On completion of the Investigations, section 9 letters were written to the Agencies investigated with recommendations. I held conferences with those who were available and accepted my request for a dialog over the Reports. I visited and held meetings with General Managers of SIEA, SIWA, SIPC and the Permanent Secretary/ MID. As For the Ministry of Finance, it was not possible to meet with the officials in person so the letters to the Permanent secretary/MOF was posted.

On completion of the Investigations, **Investigation Report No: 01/10** was compiled and distributed for Natural Justice Comments. After thirty days as required by my instructions for them to response, unfortunately no respond was made to assure me whether my Recommendations were attended to. A lot of problems were revealed in the investigation and the survey carried out. Pursuant to section 97 (1) (b) of the Constitution, I will work with the Agencies to assist where possible in rectifying some of the problems detected and to make improvements where required.

6. **Investigation Report**

I am privileged to furnish Parliament with this **Investigation Report No: 01/10** on my Investigation into the Provision of Municipal services in Honiara by some of the Service providers.

It is my hope Parliament will take note of the content of this Report with the recommendations and the responses with suggested remedial actions as highlighted in this Report under cover of **Special Report No: 04/11**.

B. OMBUDSMAN'S CONCERN FOR PARLIAMENT TO TAKE NOTE OF.

Power of the Ombudsman

While the Ombudsman has Recommendation Powers and as such Agencies are not obligated to act on his recommendations. Agencies at times could not take Recommendations seriously and at times deliberately ignore to take actions to recommendations of the Ombudsman.

Status of the Ombudsman

The High Court of Solomon Islands has stated that because the Office is a constitutional institution Ministers, Members of Parliament and officials all have legal obligations to cooperate with the Ombudsman's Office.

Public office holders and public servants have a duty not to undermine its authority. It should not be ignored, and must be afforded the courtesy of prompt replies and clear explanations. Ombudsman recommendations are important, and should be acted upon unless there is exceptionally good reason not to.

The High Court has also said that the failure of public officials to respond Ombudsman Office inquiries or to implement Ombudsman recommendations tends to perpetuate corruption by encouraging a belief on the part of upright people that graft and corruption work better.

- *Pacific Architects Ltd v Commissioner of Lands [1997] SBHC 10*
- *Maesimae v Trade Disputes Panel [1998] SBHC 51*

I rely on the above High Court Rulings which indicates that Agencies should comply with the Ombudsman's Recommendations.

The Court decisions are at *Appendix. "2 (A) and 2 (B)"* attached to this Report.

In this particular Own Motion Investigation, the compliance rate in as far as responses and compliance feedback from Agencies was rated 50%. The responses and actions taken to the Recommendations from the Ombudsman are at **PART 4: NATURAL JUSTICE COMMENTS AND AGENCY RESPONSES**.

I am bringing to the attention of Parliament to be made aware that the Ombudsman not a Judicial Review body nor a Court, as it only recommends and he has no now of enforcement, there are times which Authorities tend not to adhere to his Recommendations.

Over the past three decades the office has been finding difficulties with the area of noncompliance and non-responsiveness. Since 2009, on assumption of the Post of the Ombudsman, I tried to see how such problems could be dealt with and addressed.

I made some initiatives to address this problem area by:

- Including a Provision for a Tribunal in my proposed amendment of the Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980 ¹
- Working with Provinces and Ministries to appoint Ombudsman Focal Point Officers or Contact Officers in their respect Agencies.

C. Reports by the Ombudsman

Under the *Solomon Islands Independence Order (the Constitution) 1978* ("the Constitution") and the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act'), the Ombudsman's Office investigates the actions or conduct of specified public officials, assists in the improvement of administrative practices and procedures, and fosters fair and reasonable decision-making. The Office investigates and reports on complaints from members of the public about the actions of Government officials and agencies or following an invitation from a Minister or Member of Parliament. The Ombudsman can also commence an investigation on an 'own motion' basis, that is, on his own initiative.

Before commencing an investigation the Ombudsman must notify the relevant agency or organisation of his intention to investigate. When conducting an investigation, the Ombudsman can require a person to attend an interview, require a person to provide any documents considered relevant to an investigation to the Office, and can enter premises at any time in order to carry out an investigation after the giving of 24 hours' notice.

If, after an investigation, the Ombudsman is of the opinion that an action was contrary to the law, based wholly or partly on the mistake of law or fact, unreasonably delayed or otherwise unjust or manifestly unreasonable, the Ombudsman can make recommendations to address the problem.

If the Ombudsman considers that remedial action is needed, the Ombudsman will report his opinion and reasons to the officer, the department or authority concerned, make such recommendations as he thinks fit, and send a copy of his report and recommendations to the Prime Minister and to any Minister concerned. The Ombudsman will also inform the person who has made a complaint of the result of his investigations, if the investigation relates to an open complaint. Where the Ombudsman makes critical comments in a report, the Ombudsman must provide an opportunity to comment to any person, officer or authority adversely affected.

When reporting his opinion to an officer of the department or authority concerned, the Ombudsman may request such officer to notify him within a specified time of the steps (if any) that are proposed to give effect to the Ombudsman's recommendations. If within a reasonable time after a report has been made no adequate or appropriate action is taken, the Ombudsman may after considering any comments made by or behalf of any

¹ The draft amendment Bill is currently with the Attorney General's Office.

department, authority, body or person affected, make a further report on the matter to Parliament.

The Office is subject to secrecy provisions and for reasons of privacy and confidentiality, a report by the Ombudsman is not always made publicly available. However, in the interests of transparent and accountable government and administration, the Office will endeavour - to the extent possible within the law - to ensure that its reports and activities are made public, so that the Solomon Islands community can be assured that the Office is working to safeguard its interests in its dealings with government and administrators.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Municipal services in Honiara are critically important to the safety and well-being of Honiara residents.

Solomon Islands, state owned enterprises (SOEs) like the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) and the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA) are responsible for providing services to meet some immediate and basic needs. The Postal Corporation is responsible for providing critical communications and carriage services and the Department of Works (Works) and the Inland Revenue Department (IRD) are responsible for vehicle registration and drivers' licensing arrangements.

Public perceptions of these services providers are universally poor. People have little confidence in the organisations or their management and staff, and do not trust them to operate reliably or efficiently.

Many Honiara residents expressed high levels of dissatisfaction about the adequacy and sufficiency of utility services in Honiara. People want changes and improvements, seeking more convenient and accessible services, more reliable and consistent supplies, better customer service and more competition.

Investigation

The primary purpose of this own motion was to obtain from the residents of Honiara, their views about the provision of essential and important services, so that the office could formally make practical recommendations to the service providers about how they could improve their practices and procedures and service delivery.

This is consistent with my office's constitutional mandate, as per section 97(1) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands.

Another important purpose underling this investigation is that the my office has a key role in fostering accountability and transparency in Solomon Islands, but not all Solomon Islanders are aware of what the office does and how it can assist them.

Therefore, it is very important that Solomon Islanders know and understand that if they have problems with the decision, actions or conduct of public officials, they can come to the office and make a complaint or seek our assistance.

Further, unlike many Ombudsmen around the world, I have the jurisdiction to look into the delivery of services. Often the focus of my office in the past has been on the actions and conduct of officers in government ministries and department. It worth remembering that for many Solomon Islanders, service providers are the public authorities that they have the most dealings with.

Thus, it is very important that Honiara residents know that they can contact my office about any problems they may be having with the public bodies.

One of the reasons that the office has decided to conduct this own motion by going out into the public and asking questions, is that many Solomon Islanders are reluctant to come forward and make a complaint.

We went out to the public and invited them to give us information so that my office could get the widest possible range of views from the broadest range of Honiara residents.

My officers asked interested people a series of questions and also gave them the opportunity to put forward their views and tell us about their concerns and issues.

The information given to us would be treated in confidence and we will not give their names to anyone else.

We would use the information provided to us to try to identify problem areas and make recommendations on how service delivery could be improved.

We have tried to be careful and creative, making practical recommendations that service authorities could implement without incurring costs. In fact, we were able to make recommendations which would both improve services and save the authorities money – that is we tried to improve their productivity if at all possible.

Expected Results and effects of the Investigation

This report gives expression to some of the major issues and sets out some recommendations about what the Honiara public wants in terms of improved service.

My specific recommendations for each organisation are set out in the body of Section 2 of my report, and are supplemented by thematic recommendations set out in Section 3.

My hope is that this report will lead to the consideration and implementation of remedial or corrective measures improve utilities administration and service delivery, leading to improvements in the daily lives of Honiara residents.

PART 1 INTRODUCTION

Background

I decided to initiate an investigation into the accessibility and efficiency of Honiara municipal services because local or municipal government is often the level of government closest to the people it serves.

In Solomon Islands, state owned enterprises (SOEs) like the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) and the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA) are directly responsible for providing services to meet people's most immediate and basic needs, such water and electricity supplies. The Postal Corporation is responsible for providing very important communications and carriage services. In other instances, Solomon Islands government ministries and departments are responsible for essential road infrastructure and maintenance along with vehicle and drivers' licensing arrangements.

I recognise that the task of providing adequate and sufficient utilities services in Honiara is made difficult by a range of internal and external factors that have an enormous impact on service providers. For example, Honiara's rapidly increasing population has led to an increased demand for electricity and water services and placed considerable pressure on its roads. In addition, service providers face difficulties in collecting sufficient revenue to enable them to develop and maintain the administration and infrastructure needed to sustain reasonable levels of service.

As a consequence, many Honiara residents regularly express high levels of dissatisfaction about the adequacy and sufficiency of utility services in Honiara and I felt it important that my office looked into these issues, give expression to some of the major themes, and recommend some options to improve service levels and reduce customer displeasure.

Methodology

After I decided to initiate the investigation, I commenced a small media campaign to raise community awareness of the investigation and invite members of public to come forward and provide information on their experiences. I also instructed my staff to go into the field and survey the customers and clients of the various service providers. This involved my staff undertaking direct interviews with people or leaving questionnaires to be completed and returned to my office on a voluntary basis. In the end, my staff surveyed domestic customers as well as larger clients like schools, shops and businesses, and government offices.

We received just over 200 completed survey responses.

Our survey questions involved a mixture of closed and open questions. The closed questions were designed to elicit responses to particular issues that I thought relevant, while the open questions gave participants the opportunity to put forward their own thoughts and views about matters of interest to themselves.

The information we collected about these services was collated, analysed and interpreted by my staff. While the information provided was not always detailed, it provided my office with a better understanding of the concerns and problems experienced by Honiara residents and gave us a better idea of what type of aspects of utilities service delivery were important to Honiara residents.

It is important that readers remember that this survey is not to be a detailed report that identifies every problem utilities service delivery. Rather it is meant to provide a snapshot of the views of Honiara residents so that government and service providers can get a better understanding of what their customers want.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS

PART 2.1: *Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA)*

Survey Demographics

Of the 200 completed survey questionnaires that were returned to my office, 64.5% of respondents indicated that they had monthly power usage bills of less than \$500. This suggested to my office that the majority of respondents were domestic users.

Major Themes

Customer Satisfaction

Sixty nine per cent (69%) of all respondents were unhappy with current SIEA service levels. Twenty four and a half per cent were satisfied and 6.5% made no comment.

Nearly all participants reported that they had been adversely affected by power outages (“black-outs”), power decreases (“brown-outs”)² or power surges³. Damage to electrical appliances in homes and businesses was a concern for 37.5% of respondents, while another 13% reported damage to perishable items like foodstuffs when power outages were experienced. Consequential damage resulting from power problems was a major issue for consumers, who were left out of pocket when expensive electrical items ceased to work or food was spoiled. Many domestic participants said they could not afford to protect their appliances by purchasing an Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) or a surge protector board (SPB).

² A brown-out is a temporary interruption or partial loss of power in which the electric power is reduced rather than being cut-off completely, as in the case of a full scale power outage or “black-out”. A brown-out may cause lights to flicker and electronic devices to turn on or off spontaneously. More significantly for Honiara residents, they can cause considerable damage to electrical appliances like computers and televisions.

³ A power surge is a fast and short voltage spike in an electrical circuit that can be caused by power outages, power transitions in other large equipment on the same power line and malfunctions caused by the power company. They can also seriously damage electrical appliances.

A further 26% reported that they had been inconvenienced or disrupted by power outages, while 10.5% complained that they felt their quality and enjoyment of life had been curtailed or diminished. People reported that they were unable to go about their normal lives easily – they frequently could not play games or musical instruments with family and friends, or pursue their hobbies. Another 1% stated that their ability to pursue educational goals had been compromised.

Seven per cent of participants specifically mentioned that their businesses had been adversely affected by power problems, either by way of damages to goods or loss of custom.

Five per cent of people expressed concern about a loss of security during black outs.

Power Types and Usage

Of the 200 respondents, 46% used Cashpower, 37.5% relied on metered power and 7% reported using a mixture of both Cashpower and metered power. Another 8.5% indicated that they used other sources, including domestic generator sets and solar power.

Cash power Users

The most common concern for Cashpower users, apart from frequent interruptions in supply, was the difficulty they experienced in getting to Ranadi to buy coupons – 46.5% found it time consuming, inconvenient and expensive.

Some respondents had tried to use the Cashpower facility that briefly operated at the Honiara Post Office, but had experienced trouble with coupons issued there. These respondents thought that having a number of Cashpower outlets at different places around Honiara was a good idea that would be beneficial or advantageous – provided the coupons issued at various outlets worked properly.

Thirty seven per cent of survey participants indicated that the long queue times they experienced when paying bills and buying Cashpower coupons was a problem and felt that it could be corrected through the provision of additional Cashpower outlets around Honiara.

Metered Power Users

Metered power users were generally unhappy with SIEA's performance – 49% expressed general dissatisfaction compared to 17.5% who were satisfied and the remaining 10% who felt that SIEA was doing a "reasonable" job in all the circumstances.

Nearly a quarter of all respondents (24.5%) indicated they had "other concerns" about SIEA's metered power including:

- Delays in receiving bills resulting in large bills accumulating
- Power being disconnected and reconnection fees being imposed
- Undue delays in reconnection after disconnections
- Black-outs and brown-outs without warning

- Disruption to work and services
- The employment of unqualified electricians and engineers
- The adverse impact of power Honiara supply for Solomon Islands national image due to the impact of power outages and brown-outs on tourists, visitors and foreign investors.

A major concern for metered power users was problems with meter readings – people were generally unhappy with the quality and accuracy of meter readings. Twenty per cent of people complained that readings were inconsistent with actual usage, 21.5% claimed they had received excessive charges while 12.5% of respondents felt that SIEA was “just guessing” about their actual power usage.

Forty six per cent of respondents reported specific issues such as:

- their meters had not been read at all, or only once or twice every three months
- when meters were read, the readings were incorrect
- being charged them for higher levels of consumption than was actually recorded on their meters
- their meter readings had increased during times of an actual blackouts

These concerns might be described in general terms as “inadequate readings leading to excessive charges”.

Remedial Action

When asked what corrective or remedial action should be taken to address the problems that they had identified, the following responses were received:

- 35% of people wanted SIEA to review its management and administration
- 12.5% wanted more training for SIEA staff, with 7.5% calling for more qualified staff
- 12.5% thought SIEA needed better logistical support
- 2.5% thought Parliament should legislate to address SIEA’s problems
- 10% thought more Cashpower outlets would be useful
- 7.5% wanted SIEA to invest in renewable energy
- 5% wanted more competition as a way of improving service delivery and access
- 12.5% of respondents made specific recommendations including that SIEA should address illegal connections by squatters, inform people of likely blackouts and ensure a continuous supply of electricity for priority areas, such as street lighting and hospital services.

Ombudsman Commentary

Our survey results showed that a clear majority of SIEA customers (69%) were dissatisfied with SIEA’s services. They were particularly unhappy with the irregular power supply, the consequential damage done to appliances and foodstuffs, and the disruptions that power shortages caused them in their daily lives.

Nearly half (49%) of all metered power users were unhappy with SIEA in relation to meter readings and bills, along with delays in connection and reconnection – most regard SIEA meter readings as mere guesswork. A significant grouping of people wanted Cashpower to be made

the only way of accessing power, as a means of reducing the scope for corrupt practices through dishonest and fraudulent meter readings.

To address these matters, internal review by SIEA of its management and administration is always possible. Further, it is usually appropriate as a means of ensuring continuous improvement within the organisation. However, the value of any review depends on the level of commitment of the SIEA executive to the review and the implementation of any corrective measures or recommendations. Many respondents commented adversely about their perception that SIEA staff regularly engaged in corrupt practices and wantok business, and wanted strong enforcement action to be taken. Taking into account the comments provided to my office, any review might also include a review of staff conduct and their skill levels, with a view to managing performance and implementing plans to upskill staff and improve SIEA's organisational ethics.

While some respondents felt that SIEA needed more logistical support from SIG, and others wanted Parliament to legislate solutions, these are matters upon which I pass no comment. This

Cash power users also want SIEA to adopt more flexible payment options, including opening outlets across Honiara and adopting systems similar to the "top-up" services provided by telecommunications operators like *Our Telekom* and *Bemobile*. People want more Cashpower facilities and the availability and convenience that "top-up" facilities provide. This seems to be something that SIEA could usefully consider. By making it easier for customers to purchase Cashpower coupons, SIEA should be able to realise an increase in its revenue stream, making more funds available to it. Similarly, greater integrity in improved meter readings and billing systems should also increase revenue generation for SIEA.

seems to be a matter of high level government policy for the SIG executive. Nor, in my opinion is it always appropriate to use legislation to address administrative and management problems within an organisation. Administrative solutions could be attempted beforehand.

A surprising survey result related to a matter of policy, about which I feel it is appropriate to comment. A relatively large group of respondents endorsed greater competition as a way of ensuring that SIEA's services improve. Again, these people compared their current experiences with SIEA to their experiences with telecommunications providers following the SIG's decision to allow *bemobile* to enter the local market. Many consider that opening the electricity sector to competition would be a good way to ensure lower costs and better service levels.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1. Customers want a better and more reliable power supply from SIEA, to avoid consequential damage to their goods and to minimise disruption to their activities.**

1.1 *SIEA should investigate, as a matter of priority, all available options for improving supply.*

2. Customers want better and more convenient access to SIEA administrative facilities for the purpose of paying bills and purchasing Cashpower coupons.

2.1 *SIEA should consider opening Cashpower and bill-paying outlets in different parts of Honiara to make it easier for customers.*

2.2 *SIEA should review its current billing system and investigate options for improving the quality and accuracy of meter readings.*

2.3 *SIEA should consider entering into relationships with other utilities providers like SIWA to establish “one-stop shops” for bills and services to improve revenue generation and lower processing costs.*

3. Customers want more competitions as a way of providing for cheaper and more reliable power and better and more convenient access.

3.1 **SIG** might consider, as a matter of policy, options for greater competition in the electricity sector as a means of improving supply and service.

PART 2.2: Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA)

Survey Demographics

Twenty per cent of respondents advised that their monthly water usage was less than \$100, with 22.5% using less than \$200 per month, 12% less than \$300 per month, 3.5% less than \$400, 5% less than \$500, 4% less than \$600, 1.5% less than \$700, and 0.5% less than \$800.

Business house reported that they paid large amounts of money for their water with bills ranging from \$2500-7000 per month.

The remaining 31% provided a range of responses. Some claimed that they were billed for water during times there was no supply when they relied on rain water. Others suggested that their bills were not consistent with their actual water use.

Major Themes

Customer Satisfaction

Of the 200 completed survey questionnaires returned to my office, 64% of respondents indicated that they were unhappy with current SIWA service levels. Twelve per cent indicated

they were satisfied. Another 24% reported that they did not rely on SIWA for their water, but used their own water or alternative sources.

Those dissatisfied with SIWA outlined a number of concerns. Just over a quarter (26.5%) of people wanted SIWA to improve its service levels generally. Eighteen per cent said that unreliable water supply had caused them a loss of amenities, while 10% said unpredictable home water supplies had caused them inconvenience. Another 2.5% said that their education had been disturbed.

Nine per cent stated that SIWA bills were inconsistent with actual water usage.

Seven and a half per cent were worried that SIWA water was not fit for human consumption.

The remaining 14% of respondents raised concerns about supply security (such as illegal connections, tampering with lines and the interruption of supply) or were dissatisfied with SIWA's maintenance of pipes, claiming SIWA was poor at fixing leakages and breakages.

Supply Reliability

We asked people to answer questions about the reliability of SIWA water supplies.

Just over a quarter (26.5%) said supply was very unpredictable, while 21% advised that they only received supply at their homes at night. Both groups reported that irregular supply had caused disruption to many of their activities, including their work performance and attendance. Another 7.5% complained that they could access their water supply during daytime only.

Nine per cent of respondents indicated that they were not concerned about SIWA water supply in Honiara because it was just as it had always been, implying that these people had very low expectations and very little confidence in SIWA.

Five per cent of respondents claimed that they did not receive water at all, despite being connected.

Thirty two per cent of respondents expressed a range of views about some causes of supply problems.

Some felt that extra demands were being placed on the water system by the increase in Honiara's population owing to urban drift and by expanding business and commercial activities. Others indicated that they thought water supply problems had been compounded by SIEA power failures.

A number of respondents raised concerns about water supply pressure, particularly those residents living at higher or elevated locations. Some respondents suggested that illegal connections were a potential cause of a loss of supply pressure and a common concern was that because of low water pressure, consumers needed to use their own pressure pumps to maintain supply, which used up electricity and was an extra expense.

Other respondents reported that supply pressure was variable and could reduce or stop for periods of up to a week at a time.

Customer Convenience and Access

Opening Hours

We asked people for their views about SIWA's opening hours, as one way of assessing how convenient and accessible SIWA's billing services were for its customers. The following responses were received:

68.5% wanted SIWA management to open its office during lunch hour (like SIEA's Cashpower office) with another 17.5% indicating this would make it more convenient for them to pay their water bills. On the other hand, 10% of people felt that SIWA staff needed to have a lunch break like other workers and public officers, and that it did not need to open over lunch time.

Another 9% went further, suggesting that SIWA should consider opening its office during the weekend on each of Saturday and Sunday.

Sub-Offices

A massive grouping of 70.5% of survey participants want SIWA to consider establishing sub-offices at various locations across Honiara to provide better customer convenience and access. This clearly suggests that a considerable segment of respondents felt that SIWA's current single bill-paying location caused them inconvenience and expense. Another 10% of respondents rejected the idea, noting that SIWA would incur additional costs in establishing sub-offices.

Alternative suggestions to sub-offices included that SIWA bills should be payable over the internet (5%), while 14.5% of people thought that SIWA could consider using a mobile bus to visit residences far from the main office and collect payments or establish a system similar to "Top-Up" for its customers.

Remedial Action

When asked what corrective or remedial action should be taken to address the concerns that they had with SIWA, the following responses were received:

- 17.5% want SIWA to review its management and administration
- 12.5% suggested SIWA explore new water sources and sites
- 26% want SIWA to improve its customer services
- 5% think SIWA should improve its staff's skills
- 5% want supply competition a way of improving service delivery and access
- 3% thought Parliament should legislate to address SIWA's problems
- 31% listed other options such as:
 - Establishing outlets like Top-Up for easy access and bill payment
 - Tougher measures on people tampering with water supplies
 - Construction of more water tank reservations

Ombudsman Commentary

Our survey results showed that a clear majority of SIWA customers (64%) were dissatisfied with current SIWA service levels. People were particularly unhappy with irregular and unreliable water supplies, which they reported as having caused a loss of amenities or inconvenience. Others were variously concerned about health aspects of SIWA water, illegal connections, corrupt staff, deliberate interruptions of or tampering with supply and SIWA's maintenance performance.

Large groupings of people want SIWA to review its billing and payment facilities - 68.5% wanted SIWA management to look at opening its cashier's desk during lunch-times, while another 9% went further, suggesting that SIWA should consider opening its office during the weekend on each of Saturday and Sunday.

SIWA should give consideration to these ideas as ways of improving customer access and convenience and at the same time, maximising its revenue generation. It appears neither difficult or unreasonable for SIWA to look into revisiting its cashier facilities and staffing arrangements with a view to implementing changes.

While it is somewhat realistic for customers to expect SIWA to open its office outside normal business hours, as an SOE, SIWA should give consideration to opening on Saturday mornings, like many other commercial or business houses. Further, while staff occupational health and safety is always a valid concern, there are a number of ways to accommodate both customer and staff concerns - for example, staggered lunch breaks for staff or a shift roster might provide workable solutions on fuller consideration.

Over 70% of people want SIWA to consider establishing sub-offices at various locations across Honiara to provide better customer convenience and access. SIWA's current single bill-paying location and cashier opening hours were reported as being inconvenient for customers. SIWA customers clearly want more accessible and more convenient access to SIWA offices for the purposes of paying bills, organising connections and managing their accounts. Other potentially useful suggestions for further consideration by SIWA management include providing an internet payment facility, using a mobile bus to visit distant residences or the establishment of systems like the "top-up" facilities used by *Our Telekom* and *Bemobile*. Looking at remedial or corrective actions, as per my observations in relation to SIEA above, generally speaking, it is always open and advisable for organisations to regularly conduct internal reviews of administrative and management practices. A significant segment (17.5%) of our respondents felt SIWA would benefit from such an overhaul. Another 5% per cent of people identified SIWA staff skill levels as a problem that needed to be remedied. This suggests that people are looking for SIWA to improve its administrative and management practices as a way of improving its service standards.

A significant proportion of respondents thought that SIWA should be looking to establish new water supplies and sources, presumably to enable it to cope with the future demands and pressures of Honiara's expanding population, housing and business sectors. Again, this showed that SIWA customers want reliable water supplies for the present and the future.

A small proportion, 3% of respondents, wanted Parliament to legislate solutions to water supply issues while 5% of respondents called for greater competition as a way of ensuring that SIWA services improve. It seems there is popular support in Honiara for increased competition - people see this as an effective way of improving outcomes for customers.

Conclusions and Recommendations

4. Customers want reliable more water supplies for both the present and the future.

- 4.1** *SIWA should investigate, as a matter of priority, all available options for improving supply.*

5. Customers want more accessible and more convenient access to SIWA offices for the purposes of paying bills, organising connections and managing their accounts.

- 5.1** *SIWA should consider expanding its current cashier opening hours to make it easier for customers.*
- 5.2** *SIWA should review its current billing system and investigate options for establishing systems like the “top-up” facilities used by Our Telekom and bemobile*
- 5.3** *SIWA should consider entering into relationships with other utilities providers like SIEA to establish “one-stop shops” for bills and services to improve revenue generation and lower processing costs.*

6. Customers want SIWA to improve its administrative and management practices as a way of improving its service standards.

- 6.1** *SIWA management and administrators should consider reviewing its organisation structure and processes as a means of improving water supply and customer service.*

7. Customers want more competition as a way of providing for cheaper and more reliable power and better and more convenient access.

7.1 *SIG might consider, as a matter of policy, options for greater competition in the water sector as a means of improving supply and service.*

PART 2.3: Postal Corporation of Solomon Islands (the Postal Corporation)

Major Themes

Customer Satisfaction

Of the 200 people who completed survey responses, 22.5% stated that the Postal Corporation's services were adequate, 21.5% claimed they were inadequate. A smaller group of 6.5% of people felt the Postal Corporation was doing an average job. Over 50% of respondents said they had "other concerns". When analysed more closely, these turned out to be a mix of matters, ranging from specific instances of lost or delayed post to more general concerns about systemic issues such as staff competence.

In more detail, 15% of respondents wanted the Postal Corporation to improve its delivery services. Lost, missing or damaged postal items were a concern to 23.5 % per cent of people. Nine per cent felt that customer service needed to be improved, 8% wanted a review of management and administration. Some specific comments included:

- Mail delivery times were slow and mail was sometimes wrongly delivered
- Mail often went missing, as had money included in mail, and mail was often damaged or opened
- Fees were excessive, causing people not to use Postal Corporation services
- There were insufficient post boxes to meet demand
- The Postal Corporation car park pot holes need to be fixed
- More sub-offices were needed in Honiara
- The quality of rural postal services was generally poor

Fees

The fees charged by the Postal corporation were not problematic for consumers. Fifty five per cent of participants made no comment about fees. Thirty three per cent indicated they were felt that fees were reasonable or fair. Only 12% of respondents indicated that they thought fees were too expensive.

Post Office Boxes

A majority of respondents did not provide comments in relation to the availability of post boxes (63%), suggesting that many Honiara residents do not feel the need to rent a box.

Of the 37% who responded on the issue of availability, 12% felt there were sufficient numbers of post boxes while 21% thought that more were needed. The remaining 5% reported a range of specific concerns – two respondents felt that this was a matter for market forces, one felt that another post office was needed and one commented that the processes involved in obtaining a box was a “hassle”.

Twenty three % of respondents indicated they had not experienced any problems in obtaining a post box while 5% reported difficulties, including delay and non-availability.

Customer Service and Facilities

Results were split in terms of customer service with 12.5% of respondents saying that the Postal Corporation provided a high level of service while another 12.5% felt the serve was just average. A smaller grouping of 7.5% thought that Postal Corporation staff needed more and advanced training in customer service.

A very large group of 67.5% of survey participants listed that they had “other concerns”, citing unfriendly staff whom they felt had poor communications skills and unhelpful attitudes. When analysed further, many respondents made specific comments – for example, one respondent suggested that the Postal Corporation limit the range of activities it carries on and concentrate on mail services as a priority.

Some of the other specific comments overlapped with some of our earlier categories of response - for example, some respondents thought that Postal Corporation staff needed training to become more professional mail handlers who could respond more helpfully to customers who needed assistance. Others felt that additional training was particularly needed for staff working in provincial post offices.

We asked people if they were aware of the various facilities provided for in the post office: such as the store that sells postal items, stationary supplies, household goods, drinks and snacks; the Western union Office; the internet café; and the SIEA Cashpower outlet.

Fifty seven per cent of people did not respond to this question. Of the 43% that did, 30% considered it was a good idea for the Post Office to have all these facilities in the single location and under one roof, praising its ease and convenience for customers. Thirteen per cent were not aware of these facilities, and of these. A few respondent expressed qualifications about the Post Office providing multiple services within a single “shopfront”. These respondents wanted the Post Office to ensure its “core” services did not suffer.

While the clear majority appeared happy to use these facilities as needed and as available, a few participants called for the facilities to be improved or upgraded, particularly the SIEA

Cashpower outlet and the internet café. While the Cashpower outlet was commended because it meant some people could avoid having to travel to Ranadi, some people were disappointed that it did not operate effectively. Thirty two per cent of respondents said that, were it possible, they would like to be able to pay their water and power bills at a single place to save themselves time and money. Seven per cent preferred otherwise.

Remedial Action

When asked what corrective or remedial action should be taken to address the concerns that they had with the Postal Corporation, the following responses were received:

- 5% wanted improvements in “mail security”
- 10% felt that the Postal Corporation must improve its service quality generally
- 12.5% thought that the Postal Corporation needed to expand its services within the provinces and to institutions and colleges on the outskirts of Honiara
- 5% said that the Postal Corporation should hold public awareness programs about their services, and the processes and procedures of mail handling and distribution
- 6% wanted to a proper review of Postal Corporation management and administration

A large group of 61.5% listed that they had “other concerns” about how the Postal Corporation could improve its service. Some suggestions included:

- Establishment of sub-offices in Honiara
- Expansion of services in rural areas
 - Renovation and repair of provincial sub-offices
 - Implementation of postal agents in schools and churches in rural areas
- Use mobile transportation to deliver mail to customers
- Introduce radio communication equipment and facilities between all post offices
- Regular auditing of Postal Corporation assets and financial operations
- Improve the standard of the Honiara Post Office internet café so that it attracts more customers
- Privatised the Postal Corporation and provide for competition

Ombudsman Commentary

The survey results about the Postal Corporation raised interesting issues.

Many customers complained specifically about instances where mail had been delayed, gone missing or been damaged or mishandled – some felt that the Postal Corporation did not have adequate procedures for maintaining mail security and reliability, or for investigating and remedying problems. Others felt more concern about Postal Corporation staff service levels and skills. These were considered generally to be poor and in need of improvement through training in mail handling and customer service skills.

Other Honiara residents strongly called for improvements in provincial postal servicing arrangements. Undoubtedly many had felt frustrated by the difficulties they have encountered when attempting to correspond with their relatives and wantoks in the provinces. This thematic grouping suggests that postal services are popularly regarded as a key means of internal

communications within Solomon Islands, and as such, are vitally important to the interest of all Solomon Islanders.

Some ideas for improved provincial servicing appear to merit further consideration.

The Postal Corporation already has a presence in all provincial capitals except Renbel. I recently agreed with the Postal Corporation under my Complaints Aerogramme Initiative to use its regional network and presence to make it easier for grassroots people to complain to my office. The Postal Corporation's management and administration provided considerable support in implementing this initiative and I commend its contribution - its current provincial network and presence has provided an ideal platform for my office to expand its own provincial services through agency agreements with designated organisations or individuals.

The introduction of radio communication equipment and facilities between all post offices may also merit further exploration. I acknowledge that while it would provide for a wider range of communications options, its implementation would be subject to budgetary and strategic considerations and is a matter for the Postal Corporation executive rather than my office.

I express no comments about the suggested need for the Postal Corporation to regularly audit its assets and financial operations, other than to say that regular audits is a key element to sound financial and asset management and there is nothing before me suggesting the Postal Corporation has failed to properly do so.

Few respondents commented on more recent and visible initiatives at the Post Office, such as the increase number of post boxes and its exterior renovation. This may have been due to time lag between the survey commencement and analysis phases. Some people thought the repair of the car park should receive higher priority as a matter of customer service. While this too is a matter for the Postal Corporation executive, I stress that it also appears to be a matter of some concern to its customers.

Significantly, only one respondent expressed dissatisfaction with the Honiara Post Office providing multiple services within a single "shopfront". As noted above, these are varied and diverse by local standards. More importantly, they seem popular and appreciated for reasons of convenience and efficiency. Some said they were willing to use these facilities as needed, and as available. A couple people called for improvements to the internet café, suggesting that convenience is contingent on reliability. Overall and unsurprisingly, there seemed a general consensus that "one-stop shop" arrangements were more convenient and preferable, as contrasted to processes involving multiple transactions in different locations.

Finally, and again, a small group of survey respondents called for greater competition as a way of ensuring that postal services improve.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8. Customers want internal review and quality assurance processes implemented, especially in relation to claims of damaged or lost mail and staff customer service levels.**

8.1 *The Postal Corporation should consider establishing an internal complaints or review process to address customer concerns about mail.*

- 9. Customers appreciated the accessibility and convenience of multiple service options in the central post office, or a “One Stop Shop”- provided they were reliably functional.**

9.1 *The Postal Corporation should maintain and improve current facilities.*

9.2 *The Postal Corporation should consider expanding the “One-Stop Shop” concept to its provincial offices.*

- 10. Customers want the Postal Corporation to improve its customer service standards.**

10.1 *The Postal Corporation management and administrators should consider options, such as staff training as a way of improving customer service levels.*

- 11. Customers want better provincial services.**

11.1 *The Postal Corporation should consider options for improving rural service, including the possibility of agency agreements with designated organisations or individuals.*

PART 2.4: *The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and the inland Revenue Division (Works and IRD)*

Survey Demographics

Of the 200 completed survey questionnaires that were returned to my office, 30% of respondents indicated that they held a driver's license, while 20% did not. The remaining 50% did not respond on this point, and stressed instead their "other concerns".

This part of the survey appears to have received less attention from respondents than those relating to SIEA, SIWA and the Postal Corporation. Many questions in this part were answered with "no comment". This smaller survey group probably reflects the fact that many Honiara residents do not drive, and thus have less contact with Works and IRD in relation to vehicle and driver licensing services.

This was not unexpected. In fact, this part of the survey was included in part because of anecdotal complaints about how complex and difficult it was for people to obtain and renew licences. The insights gained from our survey of this area of service delivery are significant and useful.

Major Themes

Customer Satisfaction Levels

Customer satisfaction service delivery was mixed. The following table sets out the responses we received.

Services are	IRD	Works
<i>Good</i>	18%	17%
<i>Sometimes good</i>	9%	10%
<i>Average (OK or reasonable)</i>	21%	27%
<i>Slow</i>	30%	18%
<i>Unreliable</i>	2%	-
<i>Poor</i>	4%	6%
Staff are	IRD	Works
<i>Helpful</i>	2%	2%
<i>Unhelpful</i>	2%	2%
<i>Fees are expensive</i>	-	1%

Twelve per cent of respondents suggested ways the IRD could improve its processes and 18% per cent commented that Works could improve. These considerations are discussed in more detail under Remedial Action below.

Convenience and Complexity

Drivers' Licences

Our survey questions in this part were designed to have respondents tell us about their experiences with drivers and vehicle licensing administration, such as obtaining, renewing or attending to licensing matters.

Of those respondents who provided answers other than “no comment”, 15% thought that getting a drivers license was easy, and 11% felt that the process was fair or reasonable. On the other hand, 30.5% thought it was a long and time consuming process and 12% said it was unnecessarily complex. People reported that the overall process could take anywhere from a few hours to months depending on circumstances.

Many people gave overlapping answers. Those worried about time and complexity may have shared similar concerns with the 20.5% of respondents who thought that too many ministries or offices were involved.

Some people gave complex answers - one commented that the process was both easy and time consuming while another said that it was complex but not difficult, and that responsible staff were helpful.

Two people mentioned that the process could be computerised to make it easier and more convenient. One expressed concern that the process gave insufficient emphasis to road rules and training.

When we asked people to specify the number of Ministries that were involved responses varied enormously. Fifty one per cent had no idea. One per cent suggested that no ministries were involved at all. Others variously suggested that between 1-8 Ministries were involved: 6% said one ministry, 17% said two ministries, 16% said three, 7% opted for four ministries, 1% for five and 1% for eight.

Vehicle Licences

Our survey results for vehicle licensing matters were very similar to those for drivers licenses.

Of those respondents who provided answers other than “no comment”, 28% thought that getting a vehicle licensed and registered was easy. One respondent said the process was easy but time consuming.

On the other hand, 12% said it was “not easy”. The largest grouping 44%, thought it took either “some time” or “a long time”. People reported that the overall process could take anywhere from a few hours to months depending on circumstances.

Twelve per cent reported that the process was unnecessarily complex because of the number of different ministries involved. One person commented that that despite this, the responsible staff were very helpful.

Responses again varied about the number of Ministries that were involved in the overall process. Fifty one per cent had no idea while 18% said one ministry was involved, 38% said two ministries, 34% said three, 6% said four, and 3% said six ministries were involved.

Single Processing Point - One Stop Shop

We asked respondents to express their views on whether they would prefer a process where, if possible, they could attend to all licensing and registration requirements in one place. All of those who answered other than “no comment” endorsed it as a good idea that would make things much easier and more convenient for people. Others said it would be a “positive step” and a “relief”.

One respondent noted that it would make the financial aspects of the process easier to manage, a factor that government might usefully consider in terms of maximising revenue collection.

Remedial Action

When asked what corrective or remedial action should be taken to address the concerns that they had with the drivers ad vehicle licence administration, the following responses were received:

- 24% thought that the ministries responsible for these tasks should be housed under one roof for greater customer convenience, a one-stop shop where everything necessary can be done
- 18% wanted stricter regulatory controls emphasising road safety and skills as part of licensing process
- 12% wanted extra or better qualified staff in attendance with expanded opening hours to reduce delays and queues
- 12% thought the payment and registration system could be computerised
 - 6% wanted modern drivers license cards and vehicle windscreen labels
- 10% said that the responsible authorities needed to improve their customer service generally
- 8% wanted the authorities to review their management and administration
- 6% wanted the responsible authorities to build better facilities

Miscellaneous Comments

Respondents took the opportunity to tell us, in addition to remedial suggestions, a wide range of views about things of concern to them.

Some comments reiterated remedial suggestions – for example:

- more computerised processes in IRD
- more staff, especially during peak busy periods
- modern windscreen registration labels

Other comments variously raised important issues for Honiara residents about infrastructure capacity and maintenance. Peoples’ concerns included:

- the increasing number of vehicles in Honiara and their impact on road surfaces,
- unrestrained importation of vehicles,
- more frequent and enduring traffic congestion,
- a lack of driver training, skills and knowledge about road rules and safety
- more traffic policing

Ombudsman commentary

As noted above, this part of the survey received less responses from participants than the sections about SIEA, SIWA and the Postal Corporation. This may reflect the fact that many Honiara residents do not drive or own vehicles and thus have less contact with Works and IRD than the other agencies included in the survey.

However, the insights gained from our survey of this area of service delivery remain significant and useful.

Customer satisfaction with service delivery was mixed, but more positive than expected. Clear majorities were not unhappy with either IRD (64%) or Works (74%). Those who commented adversely reported that the processes were slow (IRD (30%), Works (18%)). Few people reported that service was poor.

Overall, most critical comments said that the process of obtaining drivers licences and registering a vehicle was unnecessarily time consuming, inconvenient and complex. People reported that it could take anywhere from a few hours to months depending on circumstances. We also found that people did not have a clear idea of the processes involved, or how many ministries they had to visit to complete formalities. Two people suggested that computerised processes might make things easier and more convenient. Notably, respondents commented positively about staff involved, who often made the process easier by being helpful and informative.

Significant percentages of participants advised that they found the processes relatively easy, fair and reasonable – 26% for driver's licenses and 24% for vehicle registrations. This suggests that people's experience varied markedly, and that the system can operate well at times. That said, equally significant percentages of respondents felt there was room for improvement. Taken together, this seems to imply that current administrative processes might benefit from some fine-tuning, rather than a major overhaul.

Most respondents expressed a preference for a system where they could attend to all necessary licensing and registration requirements in one place. This was regarded as a compelling way to improve customer convenience. One respondent noted that improvements to make things easier for customers might improve revenue collection for SIG.

Conclusions and Recommendations

12. Customers want simpler, easier and faster licensing and registration processes and practices.

12.1 *IRD and Works should consider options for simplifying and expediting these processes, including through the use of on-line payment facilities*

13. Customers appreciated the accessibility and convenience of multiple service options in the central post office or a “One Stop Shop”.

13.1 *IRD and Works should consider options for establishing a single shopfront or location in which customers can complete all necessary formalities and payments.*

14. Customers are generally happy with Works’ and IRD’s customer service levels.

14.1 *IRD and Works management and administrators should look into fine-tuning their systems as a way of maintaining and improving current customer service levels.*

PART 3 - THEMATIC CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Our survey of Honiara residents about their experiences with utilities providers and licensing authorities in Honiara revealed some interesting matters and observations.

My specific conclusions and recommendations were discussed at the end of each section of my report dealing with SIEA, SIWA, the Postal Corporation and Works and IRD individually. This section of my report discusses some common themes.

Convenience and Accessibility

Generally speaking, all consumers and customers want better and more convenient access to SIEA and SIWA offices for the purposes of paying electricity and water bills, purchasing Cashpower coupons and organising connections and accounts.

Customers invariably expressed a preference for single transactions where possible, in the same location – the “one-Stop Shop” concept. Respondents endorsed and supported the number of services and facilities available at the Honiara Post Office, which might be a model for other instrumentalities to consider.

SIWA and SIEA customers strongly called for an increase in the number of outlets in Honiara for attending to these matters. Both SIEA and SIWA should consider opening additional outlets. Start up and establishment costs might be reduced by both organisations sharing premises or infrastructure.

SIWA and SIEA customers also want more modern, more accessible coupon systems, and consideration of online payment and purchasing facilities. Were such improvements to be

made, SIEA and SIWA might reasonably anticipate increases in revenue collection and an improvement in their financial positions.

Customers of IRD and Works found having to attend to different offices to complete all relevant formalities inconvenient, time consuming and complicated. Again, the establishment of a “one-Stop Shop” facility for all licensing and registration requirements might improve income generation and productivity.

Reliability and Security

Almost all Honiara residents expressed dissatisfaction with the reliability and security of electricity and water supplies. These are fundamental essential services and the lack of regularity and consistency in supply is a matter of utmost important to the health, well-being and safety of Honiara residents.

Further, current problems with electricity and water supplies entails additional but unnecessary financial costs to Honiara residents, who have reported consequential damage to goods and property, as well as disturbance to their daily lives and activities, including schooling and business.

Honiara residents are concerned that the lack of reliable services is having a negative impact on the country beyond its effect on consumers here. It is regard as being an impediment to both foreign investment and local development and was an embarrassment when it adversely affected foreign tourists and visitors.

Honiara residents are entitled to more from SIEA and SIWA, whose performance is popularly regarded as inadequate and below standard. SIEA and SIWA executive administration must accept responsibility for these failures and commit to a process of continuous improvement or the situation will remain unchanged and Honiara residents will continue to be ill-served by these SOEs.

People also want better and more reliable mail services, which they can trust to deliver mail in an undamaged state to its recipients. Postal Corporation customers want internal mechanisms established within postal administration to deal with customer complaints about lost, missing or damaged mail.

Honesty and Integrity

Many Honiara residents expressed anecdotal views that corruption, nepotism, wantokism and criminality were key problems affecting SIWEA and SIEA, resulting in poor services, dishonest meter readings, fraudulent conduct and illegal connections. Others expressed concern over the performance of managing boards and executives.

Some Honiara residents made similar observations in relation to Works and IRD staff charging for services that should be free. However, other respondents praised Works and IRD staff for their helpfulness. Some people reported concerns about the integrity and security of their mail, stating that items had been dishonestly removed from parcels and letters.

Clearly these are serious matters that threaten to undermine public confidence in the relevant organisations.

SIEA and SIWA boards must take responsibility for the particularly poor public perceptions about their organisation and should note that the public expects more of staff, management and executives. To the public's eye it seems no-one is above reproach. The Postal Corporation, Works and IRD must guard against similar perceptions by committing to accountable, honest and fair dealings with their customers.

Anecdotal comments suggest that Honiara residents have 'endured' years of poor service and consider that a lack of honesty and integrity is a key cause. Honiara residents want solutions, including stronger compliance and enforcement action against offenders such as prosecution and dismissal from service.

While it may be that the public has had enough, I also caution the public that responsibility for ongoing corruption, nepotism, wantokism and criminality does not rest solely with these organisations or SIG. Members of the public are often the beneficiaries of these actions. Some consumers facilitate illegal connections, meter "readjustments" and other outcomes out of self-interest.

Put simply, improving honesty and integrity in these areas is a matter that the whole of the Honiara community must address if it is to be successful. Honiara residents must behave properly and not solicit illegal connections or self-interested outcomes if they are to expect better of service providers.

Increased Competition

A small grouping of survey respondents called for increased competition as a way of improving service standards, as per the situation with telecommunications providers.

While this is a matter for SIG to decide as a matter of government policy, I refer to it because it was a common theme in responses on each of SIWA, SIEA and the Postal Corporation.

Honiara residents perceive it as a means of solving some of the problems they have endured to date.

PART 4: NATURAL JUSTICE COMMENTS AND AGENCY RESPONSES

(i) Letter to Agencies – Natural Justice Comments

For Natural Justice Comments, I had to give copies of my Report to Agencies which were subject to the survey. I held conferences with representatives of the following Agencies and hand in their letters, requesting comments from them.

Date	Agency	Representative	Handed Letter	Response received
08/08/11	Solomon Islands Electricity Authority	(i) Mr. Norman Nicholls, General Manager (ii) Mr. Barnabus Upwe, Legal Officer	08/08/11	12/08/11
11/08/11	Solomon Islands Water Authority	(i) Mr. Phil Bradford , Board Chairman (ii) Mr. Richard Austin, General Manager (iii) Mr. Ron Davis, Financial Controller/ Administration Manager.	11/08/11	12/09/11
09/08/11	Solomon Islands Postal Corporation	Mr. Allen Arafoa, General Manager	09/08/11	12/09/11
12/08/11	Ministry of Infrastructure Development	Mr. Moses Virivolomo, Permanent Secretary	12/08/11	NIL
Unfortunately request to make appointment with PS/MOF were not successful so I had no prior conference with the PS. However letter was posted to the Ministry.				

I would like to thank the Management of the three State Owned Organisations and the Permanent secretary, Ministry of Infrastructure Development for their time and corporation with me during the conferences I held with them.

(ii) Agency Responses

As indicated at the Table above, the three State-owned Enterprises responded. These Agencies cooperated with the Ombudsman in the survey and took heed of the Recommendations. Even at the Conferences and in their written responses, they pledged to take the recommendations on board.

In fact, most of the recommendations were what were already in the plans of some of the Agencies. I was assured that the Report would be looked into and act on recommendations to see that they are carried out.

PART 5: ACTIONS TAKEN BY AGENCIES IN RESPONSE TO OMBUDSMAN'S RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to my Recommendations, Solomon Islands Electricity Authority, Solomon Islands Water Authority and Solomon Islands Postal Corporation responded highlighting actions to be taken in response to my Recommendations. Listed below are the actions to be taken as reported in the Agency Responses:

1. SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

Recommendations 1 to 3

- 1.1 **Improvement of Power Supply** – Taking several steps to overcome the difficulties which include:
- Improving the cooling for the existing generators to provide more output.
 - Replacing one of the major 33 KV cables between Lunga and Ranadi that has been prone to failures.
 - Replacing the 11 KV switchboards in Honiara Station that are old and unreliable.
 - Seeking finance to enable the Authority to purchase new generators.
- 2.1 **Cashpower and Bill Paying Outlet** – A new and more convenient ‘shop’ was opened in the Hyundai Mall to make it easier for customers to pay Cashpower and Electrify Bills.
- 2.2 **Meter Reading and Bill Paying** – Meter Reading and Billing area is under review and a full audit has recently been carried out throughout the city. This should result in more accurate and timely bills. In addition a new bill is to be released that will make it easier for customers to track their expenditures.
- 2.3 **“One-Stop shop” Concept** – SIEA and SIWA are situated in one Shop in the Hyundai Mall which makes it more convenient for their customers to pay their Electricity and Water Bills in one location.
- 3.1 **SIG Policy** – SIEA cannot comment on SIG’s Policy but would support any move to introduce competitions in the energy sector.

Miscellaneous

- **Staff Behaviour** – Aware of unscrupulous behaviour from Authority’s staff. Anyone caught doing such deeds is subject to instant dismissal, though the Authority faces problems of gaining evidences of actions reported. Customers are keen to point out these misdeeds but are reluctant to provide evidences.
- **Customer Relations** – To improve Customer Relations a Customer Service Division was established to focus on giving better customer service.
- **Information to Customers** – The Authority has improved the information to customers through radio, brochures and press releases.
- **Staff Training** – The Authority is continuously engaging in giving more training to its staff to improve their attitude and skills.

- Improved Revenue Collection – Trying to improve revenue collection process and performances. If could collect a large part of the over 100 million dollars currently owed to the Authority, could be able to purchase a new generator which is its first priority.

2. SOLOMON ISLANDS WATER AUTHORITY

Recommendations 4 to 7

4.1 Available options for improving Water Supply

AusAID agreed to fund the costs of the urgent recovery starting in September 2011 and JICA has promoted a project, The Medium Term Water Supply Improvement Strategy. Total investments from the two Agencies amounted to 28 million Solomon Dollars.

5.1 Consider expanding Cashier Opening Hours

Arrangement in place to open long hours as a means to improve the provision of customer service, billing and revenue collection from customers.

5.2 Option to establish system like the Mobile and Phone “Top-up” facility

Not under consideration yet.

5.3 “One stop Shop” Concept

For Bill paying services to improve revenue generation and lower processing costs, SIWA has opened an Outlet at the Hyundai Mall, which is co-shared with SIEA.

6.1 Revision of Organisation Structure and process to improve water supply and customer service.

- To increase the volume of water available to legal paying customers.
- To improve the reliability of the service and reduce failures in supply due to mechanical and electrical breakdown.
- To minimise the periods of water supply cut-off by eliminating the need for water rationing.
- To provide a much improved customer services.

7.1 SIG to consider as a matter of Policy, options for greater competition in the water sector as a means of improving supply and service

Not evident yet. SIWA still monopolise the provision of water. The current level Tariff rate is still affordable by customers.

3. SOLOMON ISLANDS POSTAL CORPORATION

Recommendations 8 to 11

8.1 Internal Review and Quality Assurance Processes

- Has been working on rebuilding the image of the Corporation, especially to rebuild public trust and confidence in the services provided. In doing so, those employees found tempering with mails, cash, registered articles and parcels, etc have been dealt with accordingly and some have been terminated from the services of the Corporation.
- Carried out some improvements to the main GPO Mail Monitoring Centre.
- Computerising of the Mail Processing System so as to track mails and parcels.
- Working on a plan to improve the Corporation's mail drop off and pick up service to customers starting with bulk mail clients.
- Seriously looking into stream-lining the processes of obtaining Postal Boxes and has increased the number of Boxes, building Stand alone Boxes within the GPO area.
- Seriously looking into reactivating the Postal Agency Services in the Provinces.

9.1 'One-Stop Shop' Concept

The Corporation's future plan is to create a One Stop Shop' Centre both in Honiara and the Provinces. Current problems are that the Corporation does not have proper infrastructure (Post office Buildings) and facilities to enable it to provide all the various services at one central location especially in the Provinces. The Corporation is trying to pursue this with the government if it can assist especially in renovating or improving the existing Provincial Post offices and facilities including those in the Provinces.

10.1 Customer Service

Corporation is trying to improve Customer service by training its staff in the area of Customer Services as expected by the Public.

11.1 Provincial Services

Corporation is starting to work with Agencies to go into Agencies Agreements or MOU's. So far MOU signed with the Ombudsman for the Aerogram Complaint Submission Process. To reactivate the Provincial Postal Agencies.

4. INLAND REVENUE DIVISION, MOFT AND MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Recommendations: 12 – 14

It is very disappointing to note that no responses were named from the following:

- (i) Ministry of Finance and Treasury and the Commissioner of Income Tax
- (ii) Ministry of Infrastructure Development.

Faced with the situation, the Recommendations 12 to 14 were not attended to.

Refer to ANNEX. 8 for the full Text of the Letter of Responses from the Agencies which responded.

PART 6: CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this Investigation Report No: 01 of 2010 under cover of Special Report No: 04 of 2011 is the Final Report of my Investigation into the Provision of some Municipal Services in Honiara.

Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman of Solomon Islands.

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ANNEX. "1" (A)

Pacific Architects Ltd v Commissioner of Lands [1997] SBHC 10; HC-CC 175 of 1995 (14 March 1997)

Solomon Islands - Pacific Architects Ltd v Commissioner of Lands - Pacific
Law Materials

HIGH COURT OF THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Civil Case No. 175 of 1995

PACIFIC ARCHITECTS LTD

v

COMMISSIONER OF LANDS

Before: Lungole-Awich, J

Hearing: Wednesday 26th February 1997 - Judgment: Friday 14th March 1997

Counsel: A Radclyffe for the Plaintiff - P Afeau for the Defendant

JUDGMENT

LUNGOLE-AWICH, J:

In January 1993, the plaintiff, Pacific Architects Limited, a company registered in Solomon Islands conceived a business plan to acquire land in Honiara and develop it by building residential houses. It was mindful to action its plan in legitimate and correct way. It enquired from the Commissioner of Lands about what would be required of it to obtain land. Acting upon the advice of the Commissioner the plaintiff obtained the necessary recommendation of the Ministry of Housing and Government Services. It applied to the Commissioner for allocation to it, of land parcel No 191-008 at Ngosi Honiara. With its application, the plaintiff forwarded the recommendation of the

Ministry of Housing and Government Services and its own development proposal. The application was not successful, but the plaintiff was advised that it could appeal to the Minister responsible for land. It did and got the backing of the Minister who wrote a letter, exhibit A, to Land Tender Board. On 25.4.1994 the Commissioner, through its alter ego, wrote to the plaintiff, a letter, exhibit B, informing it that the Land Tender Board, in its meeting on the 25.4.1994 - 6.4.1994 (sic) had reconsidered the plaintiff's application and approved it. I set out the letter in full here:

"Exhibit B"

*Ministry of Lands and Housing
P O Box G38
Honiara
Solomon Islands*

Your Ref.: Our Ref.: LAP5/H

Date: 25.4.94

*The Manager
Pacific Architects Limited
P O Box 421
Honiara*

Dear Sir

LAND ALLOCATION PACIFIC ARCHITECT LIMITED - NGOSSI RIDGE

I am pleased to inform you that the Land Tender Board in its sitting on the 25/4/94 - 6/4/94 has re-considered your application and has approved your application for the site applied for at Ngossi as recommended by the Physical Planning Division.

The Board further suggested that the Houses built on the site will not be owned by the company but are to be sold.

Please call in this office to sign an I To S Form.





Formal offer will be given upon completion of survey work and registration of subdivision.

Yours faithfully;

(Signed) N. Maelanga

*for: Commissioner of Lands
Ministry of Lands and Housing*

The plaintiff signed the necessary form requesting survey of the land and drew up its business plans.

Later the plaintiff received a letter dated 2.3.1995, written for the Commissioner of Lands to the Manager of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, and copied to the plaintiff. The letter informed the manager that the Minister had made direct allocation to several other applicants and the Commissioner decided to suspend allocation of the land. The plaintiff lodged complaint to the  **Ombudsman** , and  **Ombudsman**  upheld his complaint. Despite that, the Commissioner has now decided to offer the land to the public on tender.

It is now known that the three to whom allocation has subsequently been made of the same parcel 191-008 are, the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, K.P.F Agency represented by a Mr. Sethuel Kelly and Fletcher Kwaimani, a business entity. Learned Honourable Attorney General, P. Afeau who represented the Commissioner of Lands informed the court that the last named was no longer interested in the land. Application letter or any other document of application by the Central Bank was not included in the case papers. K P E's application was by a letter dated 9.2.1994, exhibit C signed by Mr. Sethuel Kelly, but not addressed to anybody, although it was replied by Francis Orodani, Minister for Lands and Housing, on 21.2.1994, just 12 days after.

Submissions

Learned counsel Mr. Radclyffe for the plaintiff submitted that the plaintiff has "some right" that entitles it to allocation now. His reason was that the plaintiff has already acted on the letter of offer, by signing a form requesting survey and has drawn up some plans, it would be unfair not to proceed with allocation to the plaintiff. But Mr. Radclyffe told court that the plaintiff's claim was not grounded in contract. Counsel did not identify any principle of law upon which the claim is to be upheld and a declaration made in favour of the plaintiff, and did not refer to any statutory provision to back the claim. That sort of submission leaves court unassisted.

Honourable Attorney General seized the opportunity to point out that for a declaration of right to be made by court, a claim must be successful, and for a claim to succeed, the head of law in which the claim is grounded must be set out.

Decision

I totally agree with the Attorney General and I need not explain that further. For a moment I thought about a claim in contract although counsel for plaintiff told court that the plaintiff did not rely on contract. I considered whether the letter dated 25.4.1994, Exhibit B, written on behalf of the Commissioner could amount to firm offer leading to a contract, and which could be withdrawn only at the Commissioner's own peril. I

concluded that there was no firm offer. The land had not been sufficiently identified, it was still to be surveyed, consideration or price had not been decided upon and requested from the plaintiff, and other terms that are usually imposed by the Commissioner had not been mentioned. A comparable case is *Storer -v- Manchester City Council* [1974] 1 WLR 1403. In that English case, a new city council refused to proceed with the sale of a dwelling and premises to a sitting tenant, the plaintiff. The sale had been arranged by the previous council. The plaintiff had signed the form sent to him by the council and only the date when lease would be regarded as having ceased and mortgage payments would commence was left open on the form. Court decided that intention to bind was there, filling in the date was a mere administrative formality; a firm offer was there. That decision was confirmed on appeal. In this case many details were lacking. A firm offer in the law of contract is an expression to another of terms upon which one is willing and intends to enter contract with another, as soon as the other accepts the expression. It is an expression of willingness with the intention to enter contract. If some further act of the one offering is still to come or necessary the offer is not yet firm and cannot lead to a contract. Academics have recently advanced the definition of an offer as an act whereby one person confers upon another the power to create contractual relations between them. See *Cases and Materials on Contract* Third Edition at pages 24-25, by R.E. McGarvie, C.L. Panman and P.J. Hooker. I do not think it is a useful definition because it does not make the meaning any clearer especially to ordinary people who come to court.

I also considered a claim by writ of certiorari, grounded in claim in Administrative Law. I decided it would be unfair to consider such a ground which was never raised by plaintiff's counsel so that the Attorney General would have considered it, and the matter fully addressed in court. Often attorneys general are not litigious. When sufficient notice is given, and the law upon which the claim is based is adequately identified, attorneys general consider settlement. In this case it would be unfair to include in the judgment a head of legal point such as opportunity to be heard when authorities considered allocation to the three subsequent applicants, because the defendant was not made aware of that ground. In any case, it was up to counsel for the plaintiff to raise that ground.

In the end I must dismiss the plaintiff's claim because counsel did not show that the claim is grounded in any principle of law or on statute. In the circumstances of the facts I shall excuse the plaintiff from paying costs to the defendant.

Comments

The circumstances which have led me to deny to Attorney General costs despite him having successfully defended the claim, requires comment. The plaintiff has shown here that it is a business that believes in doing its business legally and above board. It applied for land, following requirements and advices. In the end its application was

successful. Then a surprise cancellation came. The circumstances of the cancellation are suspicious. Still the plaintiff pursued proper and legal procedure to raise its complaint which eventually was upheld by the **Ombudsman**. Despite all that the Commissioner of Lands does not take heed. What else which is not corruption is the plaintiff to do?

The success of the plaintiff's application, being only so far to the point that the Land Tender Board accepted his application, has not reached the stage where a claim in court can be successful. The Commissioner's refusal to accept the recommendation of the **Ombudsman** tends to encourage two destructive things. First it tends to encourage a belief on the part of upright business people that graft, that is, corruption works better. That may lead to perpetuating that vice. Secondly it establishes example that authority of the **Ombudsman**, a constitutional institution, can always be ignored with impunity. What is now left, it seems, is for the **Ombudsman** to report to parliament in terms of section 16 of the **Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act**, 19&0. I think that public servants in particular, have a duty not to undermine authority of governmental institutions and departments. Recommendations of the **Ombudsman** made under Section 16 is a serious matter which should be acted upon unless there is exceptionally good reason not to such as legal advice from the Attorney General that the Ombudsman's interpretation of the law on the subject matter is erroneous. Even so, the **Ombudsman** must be afforded the courtesy of Prompt reply and clear explanation

Dated this 14th day of March 1997

At the High Court, Honiara

ANNEX. "1" (B)

Maesimae v Trade Disputes Panel [1998] SBHC 51; HC-CC 281 of 1997 (27 March 1998)

HIGH COURT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS
Civil Case No. 281 of 1997

MARK MAESIMAE

v

TRADE DISPUTE PANEL

High Court of Solomon Islands
Before: Lungole-Awich, J
Civil Case No. 281 of 1997

Hearing: 17th March 1998
Judgment: 27th March 1998

Counsel: S. Manetoali for the Applicant

JUDGMENT

(LUNGOLE-AWICH, J): Application for Mandamus: The facts in this case, Mark Maesimae and Trade Dispute Panel (the Panel), are very similar to those in another, George Kuper and the Trade Dispute Panel (HC-CC257/97). In both the applicants alleged that the respondent, Trade Dispute Panel, failed to deliver its decision in trade dispute case referred to it. In this case, the applicant, Mark Maesimae, claimed that he was unfairly dismissed by his employer, Sylvania Products Limited. He instructed a solicitor who had his case referred to the Panel to inquire into and make award or dismiss as the Panel would deem the results of its inquiry would warrant. The Panel heard the case on 11.12.1996, and reserved its decision to 18.12.1996. That was the start of a long and torturous effort to get the Panel to pronounce its decision, but up to the date of hearing this application, 17.3.1998, last week, the Panel had not pronounced its decision.

The Facts

Mr. Maesimae seemed to have been convinced that he would never get the Panel to pronounce its decision unless some other authority took up the matter; he made complaint to the **Ombudsman** who took up the complaint. The **Ombudsman** wrote more than 4 letters to the chairperson of the Panel, the earliest seemed to have been on 16.12.1996 and the latest on 22.10.1997. Regrettably, the well meant effort of the **Ombudsman** , did not produce any result, in fact the Panel did not even respond to the letters of the **Ombudsman** ; that defies the most elementary rule of courtesy expected in the Public Service. Mr. Maesimae has now come to court seeking order for mandamus to issue. He applied for leave before Palmer J. on 13.11.97 and was granted. This application was then heard last week on 17.3.1998.

The Law

I would like to mention here that there should be no illusion that the panel is a court or that the chairman is a judicial officer. That has been decided long ago by the High Court in the case of *Peter Waetoli v Public Service Commission* 1988/89 SILR 25. Section 2 (7) of the Trade Dispute Act, No 3 of 1981, provides that the office of the chairman is a public office. In my view, the Panel itself is in the nature of a “public agency”, the term used in section 97(3) of the Constitution. The Panel’s decision is quasi judicial, but its non-action is administrative and in my view, the **Ombudsman** can inquire into the latter, but not the former.

I have already said in the case of Kuper, which judgment in I have just read, that there must be public duty which has not been carried out, for the court to consider ordering mandamus. In this case there is such a duty required of the Panel under section 6 of the Trade Dispute Act. Mr. Maesimae has filed affidavit stating failure of the Panel to carry out its duties. The Panel has not responded. There are affidavits of service which in my view confirm that case papers have been served on the Panel. If there is any suggestion of defect in service, the court condones the defects because from the case file, there is no doubt that the chairperson was made aware of this case and of the hearing date. The court must accept the facts as stated in the affidavit of Mr. Maesimae as the facts of the case. The Trade Dispute Panel has failed to carry out its public duty under section 6 of the Trade Dispute Act.

Mandamus Granted

For the above reasons, the court orders that order of mandamus issue, compelling Trade Dispute Panel to pronounce its decision in the trade dispute case of Mark Maesimae and Sylvania Products Limited heard on 4th and 11th of December 1996, within 21 days of today’s date. If the Panel fails, the chairperson will be required to attend court to

answer personally, charge of contempt for which she may be personally penalised. She is the officer charged with the responsibility to convene the Panel and must bear responsibility. Costs of the application is awarded to Mr. Maesimae against the Panel. It is a pity that at this stage, the court should order costs paid by the Panel in a matter which has arisen because of neglect of duty by a public officer.

Delivered and Dated this 27th day of March 1998

Sam Lungole-Awich
JUDGE

ANNEX. "2"

Honiara City Services Own Motion

Agencies for investigation/survey

1. Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA)
 2. Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA)
 3. Solomon Islands Postal Corporation (SIPC)
 4. Solomon Islands Works Department
-

Preliminary Identification of Potential Problems

SIWA

1. Meter readings
2. Connections – delay
3. Reliability of services
4. Lack of access to services
 - a. No sub-offices for making account payments etc.
 - b. Accounts office closed at lunch-time.

SIEA

1. Meter readings
2. Connections – delay
3. Reliability of services
4. Lack of access to services
 - a. No sub-offices for making accounts payments etc – not relevant as have eg:SIPC sub-office.
 - b. Accounts office closed at lunch-time – not relevant as Accounts Office is open at lunchtime and on Saturday mornings.

Media Strategy

Because this own motion will be a mixture of complaints related research, own motion inquiries and will employ a survey style methodology, any media strategy will be up to the Ombudsman to determine as suitable and appropriate.

Issues to be considered include putting a notice in the paper requesting that SI residents contact the OOSI to outline concerns they may have with various agencies. This can be done after we have notified the relevant agencies under section 9 of the Ombudsman (FP) Act.

Once the report is completed and has been tabled before Parliament and is in the public domain, the Ombudsman might consider seeing if local newspapers will publish an abridged report in one of their editions.

Research Proposal

For primary research OOSI staff might visit the offices of various SI newspapers to analyse those editions which contain small surveys of SI residents in relation to the services provided by the target agencies. This would provide a brief outline of topical concerns of SI residents.

This aspect of the research could also involve IT searches of the Solomon Star website.

Additional primary research might include the preparation of a short survey which would be used to solicit responses from agency clients by way of a short questionnaire to be posed to clients and customers. The proposal would involve conducting street level interviews with customers and clients of the target agencies.

ANNEX. "3"

MEDIA RELEASE

Ombudsman's Office investigates Honiara Municipal Services

The Ombudsman's Office has commenced an investigation into the accessibility and efficiency of Honiara Municipal services and utilities, and invites members of public to come forward and provide information on their experiences.

The Ombudsman, Joe Poraiwai said, "the investigation will involve an analysis of complaints about organisations that provide services and utilities to Honiara residents, along with a survey of customers and clients of various service providers. The services we will be investigating include SIEA, SIWA, SIPC, Inland Revenue and the Department of Works. The information we collect about these services, will provide the Ombudsman's Office with an understanding of the concerns and problems experienced by Honiara residents".

He added "our intention in conducting this investigation is to examine and review the provision of municipal services and utilities to Honiara residents with a view to making remedial recommendations, where necessary, to improve processes and practices. The implementation of the Ombudsman's office recommendations would lead to improvements in service delivery to the benefit of Honiara residents".

"If you would like to participate in the Ombudsman's Office survey, look out for the Ombudsman's Office investigators on the streets or call in to the office, located on the first floor of the General Post Office building" the Ombudsman said.

The Ombudsman emphasised that all information provided to the office will remain strictly confidential, "no names would ever be released, as it is strictly confidential. The Ombudsman's Office is also an independent office, and does not take sides".

Under the Ombudsman's Act, the Ombudsman conducts investigations in order to assist in the improvement of practices and procedures of public bodies, to ensure that government decisions are proper and just, and to improve government administration overall.

ANNEX. "4"

Newspaper Notes

Extracts from letters written by citizens in Honiara to Newsletter outlets, expressing their concern about the quality of services delivered by SIEA and SIWA

7/12/10 Solomon Star SIEA News Release

Sorry for the power outages. SIEA has been in a difficult financial position for some time and essential maintenance, servicing and upgrading has not taken place.

Organisational improvements and outside assistance have been achieved.

One of SIEA's major generators has been shut down for an overhaul, we have no extra capacity and have had to reduce loads by disconnecting some customers.

On Friday we lost both of our high voltage lines into Honiara.

High summer use of power has lead to generator shutdowns to prevent them from overheating.

Installing more generators is costly and time consuming – around SBD\$50 million each.

Help SIEA by:

- reducing air conditioner thermostats;
- using energy efficient light bulbs;
- using refrigerators carefully; and
- not using electric appliance unnecessarily.

We will soon be opening a new front office in the new shopping mall, so people wil not have to travel to Ranadi.

We are looking at options for re-charging your meters.

We are conscious of our responsibilities to the provinces.

- New generators for Gizo and Auki have just arrived.

19/11/10 Solomon Star Letters

SIWA thanks people for reporting leakages and illegal connections. This will mean 5% more water is available to SIWA customers.

SIWA has appointed a new senior civil engineer to head up the customer service section in the head office to improve customer service and respond more quickly to accounts inquiries and customer concerns.

SIWA's board is working with external partners to address many long-standing problems within the next 6-18 months.

SIWA is investigating several new water sources and is introducing a customer awareness program.

SIWA executive has undertaken training on their financial, administrative and managerial responsibilities.

SIEA will soon be in a position to accept payments on behalf of SIWA once their bill paying centre is open in the new Hyundai Mall. Customers will be able to pay both SIEA and SIWEA accounts at the one time. The service should be available in early 2011.

15/11/10

Island Sun

Letters

While all consumers have a responsibility to pay SIWA, SIWA has the ultimate responsibility to ensure a safe and adequate supply of this vital commodity.

SIWA needs to:

- engage with the public and inform them of what is happening, it needs to
- take action against SIWA staff who are behind illegal connections
- inform customers how they can assist in controlling illegal connections, and
- be proactive.

SIWA needs to engage in a weekly information sharing program with the public.

8/11/10

Solomon Star

Letters

SIWA has many problems including illegal connections, unpaid bills, massive electricity charges and more. Its water supplies have been held ransom by landowners, threatening supply.

Millions of dollars have been paid over the landowners over the years, to people who do not actually own what they are purporting to sell. SIWA should only pay landowners only reasonable access fees and rents.

If landowners resist, SIG should acquire the relevant land on a compulsory basis.

5/11/10

Island Sun

Article

RSIPF is supporting SIWA over its concerns about illegal connections by attending to SIWA disconnections of illegal connections.

SIWA have complained that the courts are not imposing sufficiently strong penalties for convictions of connecting water pipes illegally – courts are fining people \$400 instead of the maximum allowable fine of \$10000 or imprisonment.

4/11/10

Island Sun

Letters

SIWA is laughable because it does not use a top-up service like for mobile phones.

SIWA complained about unpaid bills, but does not think about improving customer access and services. SIWA needs to take its services to the people by:

- Decentralising billing systems and put billing agents at every corner of town.
- Investigate options for a top-up like system
- Stop its staff from doing illegal connections
- Get tough on people who tamper with supply
- Cart water to the residence where you can't supply it normally.

Simply put, if you want customers to pay, provide the water.

SIEA has a dud executive. Its Chairman is ineffective and SIEA incompetent. The problem lies with the administration and management. Nothing has changed in a long time. Management does not think of the people – only of themselves, their O2s and Solbrew.

4/11/10

Solomon Star

Street Talk

- SIWA water shortages cause domestic problems with meals. SIG needs to take action. (Tuvaru)
- Even washing has become a problem. SIWA and SIG need to resolve the problems so that anyone willing to pay for water can have access to it. (Ranadi)
- SIWA and SIG should build a new water supply system that can hold sufficient water and distribute it evenly. (Vura)
- This is an ongoing problem that defies sense and should have been resolved ages ago. Extra supplies would be appropriate. (Gilbert Camp)
- SIG should address the problem (Borderline)

3/11/10

Solomon Star

Article

SIWA admits that for the last 9 years it has been rationing water supplies. Ms Kapini said water is so unreliable that people dig their own bore holes and wells or use streams and creeks, borrow from relatives or pay for tankers to top up their supplies.

SIWA faces problems caused by illegal connections, 80% of which are done by SIWA staff, and 90% of which leak.

SIWA lacks the financial resources to carry out vital operations such as maintenance and infrastructure and policing.

SIWA does not properly:

- Replace aging infrastructure
- Detect and fix leaks
- Remove corrupt staff or manage incompetent staff
- Police illegal connections
- Promote water awareness and conservation
- Revise its operational policies
- Install cost saving technologies, or reduce spending.

5/10/10

Solomon Star

Street Talk

- Water supply is irregular, interrupting house work and the children (Mbokonavera).
- I only experience water shortages usually for an hour at a time and less than a day (Tandai).
- Water supply is a big problem. SIWA should treat the problem more seriously. We pay money for our water bill, but still receive irregular supplies. SIWA cuts off supply to houses when bills are not paid, but can't solve irregular supply. (Town Ground)
- Irregular water supply and over-sharing of single pipes is a problem. It can take months or longer for a stand pipe to be installed after applying and paying for it (White River).
- We experience water shortages, affecting our household chores. We depend on rain water. SIWA and SIG need to take the problem seriously and resolve it (Tasahe).

SIWA plans new water scheduling to improve access to most affected areas. SIWA has a power problem and depends on SIEA as it does not have standby generators at its pumping stations.

ANNEX "5"

Speaking Points – Honiara Services Own Motion

The primary purpose of this own motion is to obtain from the residents of Honiara, their views about the provision of essential and important services, so that the office can formally make practical recommendations to the service providers about how they can improve their practices and procedures and service delivery.

This is consistent with my office's constitutional mandate, as per section 97(1) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands.

Another important purpose underling this investigation is that the my office has a key role in fostering accountability and transparency in Solomon Islands, but not all Solomon Islanders are aware of what the office does and how it can assist them.

Therefore, it is very important that Solomon Islanders know and understand that if they have problems with the decision, actions or conduct of public officials, they can come to the office and make a complaint or seek our assistance.

Further, unlike many Ombudsman around the world, the my office has the jurisdiction to look into the delivery of services. Often the focus of my office in the past has been on the actions and conduct of officers in government ministries and department. It worth remembering that for many Solomon Islanders, service providers are the public authorities that they have the most dealings with.

Thus, it is very important that Honiara residents know that they can contact my office about any problems they may be having with the public bodies.

One of the reasons that the office has decided to conduct this own motion by going out into the public and asking questions, is that many Solomon Islanders are reluctant to come forward and make a complaint.

We are going out to the public and inviting them to give us information so that my office can get the widest possible range of views from the broadest range of Honiara residents.

My officers will be asking interested people a series of questions and also will be giving them the opportunity to put forward their views and tell us about their concerns and issues. The information given to us will be treated in confidence and we will not give their names to anyone else.

We will use the information provided to us to try to identify problem areas and make recommendations on how service delivery can be improved.

We will try to be careful and creative, making practical recommendations that service authorities can implement without incurring costs. In fact, we hope to be able to make recommendations which will both improve services and save the authorities money – that is we will try to improve their productivity if at all possible.

ANNEX. "6 - Standard section 10 Letter issued to Authorities to be investigated.



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref:

Your ref:

To: **Whom it may Concern**

Dear Sir

**NOTIFICATION OF INTENTION TO CONDUCT AN OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO THE PROVISION OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES AND UTILITIES WITHIN HONIARA
CITY**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to notify you of my intention to conduct an investigation, on my own motion, into the provision of municipal services and utilities to residents of Honiara.

Under section 5(1)(c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority in the exercise of the administrative functions of that officer or authority in any case in which I consider it desirable to do so of my own motion.

One of the functions of my office, as provided for by section 97(1)(b) of the Constitution of Solomon Islands, is to assist in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies. My intention in conducting this own motion investigation is to examine and review the provision of municipal services and utilities to Honiara residents with a view to making remedial recommendations - where necessary - to improve relevant processes and practices. I

hope that my investigation will result in recommendations that, if implemented, will have practical value for your organisation, and that their implementation will lead to improvements in service delivery to the benefit of Honiara residents.

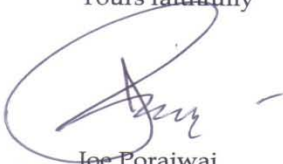
At this stage, my investigation will involve an analysis of complaints to my office about organisations that provide services and utilities to Honiara residents, along with a survey of customers and clients of various service providers. Together, these will provide my office with an understanding of the concerns and problems experienced by Honiara residents.

In accordance with sections 10 and 16 of the Ombudsman Act, I will provide you with a draft of my investigation report for your consideration and comment before I finalise my report.

I thank you in advance for your understanding and cooperation.

Should you or a representative from your organisation wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', is written over a large, loopy circular mark.

Joe Poraiwai
Ombudsman

ANNEX. "7 (A)" - Letter to Permanent secretary/MID



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09
2011

Date: 01st August

Your ref:

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Infrastructure Development,
P.O. Box. G8,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or

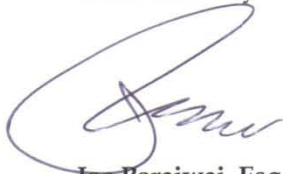
authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Mechanical Division in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Director of Mechanical Department (who is provided by a copy of the Report) and his staff; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration, especially the Mechanical Department may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of Ministry by 31st August 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully



Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman

cc: Director ,
Mechanical Department,

ANNEX. "7 (B)" - Letter to Director/Mechanical Section



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

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PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 01st

August 2011

Your ref:

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Infrastructure Development,
P.O. Box. G8,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or

authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Mechanical Division in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Director of Mechanical Department (who is provided by a copy of the Report) and his staff; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration, especially the Mechanical Department may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of Ministry by 31st August 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', enclosed within a large, loopy oval shape.

Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman

cc: Director,
Mechanical Department,

ANNEX. "7 (C)" - Letter to Manager/SIEA



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
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PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 29th July 2011

Your ref:

The General Manager,
Solomon Islands Electricity Authority,
P.O. Box. 6,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 (1) and (3) of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or

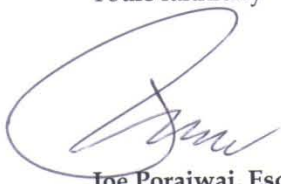
recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Solomon Islands Electricity Authority (SIEA) in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Board, Management and officers of SIEA; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of the Board, Management and its officers by 29th August 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully



Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman

ANNEX. "7 (D)" - Letter to Manager/SIPC



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

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OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

PO Box 535
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Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 29th July 2011

Your ref:

The General Manager,
Solomon Islands Postal Corporation,
P.O. Box. 1930,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara which I conducted in accordance with powers vested in me under section 5 (1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act.

Under section 97 (1) and (3) of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of

the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation (SIPC) in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Board, Management and officers of SIEA; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of the Board, Management and its officers by 29th August 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', with a large, loopy initial 'J'.

**Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman**

ANNEX. "7 (E)" - Letter to Manager/SIWA



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

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Solomon Islands

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Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 29th July 2011

Your ref:

The General Manager,
Solomon Islands Electricity Authority,
P.O. Box. 6,,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or

authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Board, Management and officers of SIWA; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of the Board, Management and its officers by 29th August 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman

ANNEX. "7 (F)" - Letter to PS/MOFT



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

**OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 29th August 2011

Your ref:

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Finance and Treasury,
P.O. Box. 26,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

**INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION
INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.**

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard

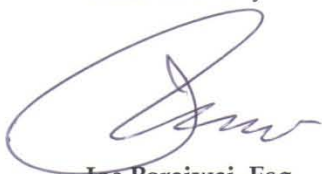
before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Inland Revenue Division in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Commissioner of Inland Revenue (who is provided by a copy of the Report) and his staff; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration, especially the Inland Revenue Division may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of Ministry by 30th September 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman

cc: Commissioner of Inland Revenue,
Inland Revenue Division,

ANNEX. "7 (G)" - Letter Commissioner of Income Tax



SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

OMBUDSMAN

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OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

Tel: (677) 28625
Fax: (677) 28626

Email: j_poraka@yahoo.com.au

Email: ombudsman@solomon.com.sb

Our ref: CN: 199/10/09

Date: 29th August 2011

Your ref:

Permanent Secretary,
Ministry of Finance and Treasury,
P.O. Box. 26,
Honiara

Dear Sir,

INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 - REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.

I am writing pursuant to section 9 of the *Ombudsman (Further Provisions) Act 1980* ('the Ombudsman Act') to draw your attention to my draft Report on my office's Own Motion Investigation into the provision of Municipal Services in Honiara.

Under section 97 of the *Constitution of Solomon Islands*, I can enquire into the conduct of any person in the exercise of his or her office or authority within my jurisdiction with the purpose of assisting in the improvement of the practices and procedures of public bodies and eliminating arbitrary and unfair decisions. Further, under section 5(1) (c) of the Ombudsman Act, I am able to investigate any action taken by any officer or authority exercising administrative functions where I consider it desirable to do so. As such pursuant to section 10 of the same act, following my findings, where it appears to me that there may be grounds for any person, officer or authority to be adversely affected by the contents of my reports or recommendations, I am required to give that person, officer or authority an opportunity to comment and be heard

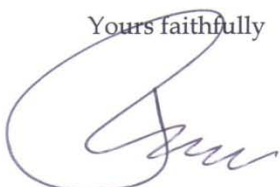
before I forward the relevant report and recommendations to Parliament, a Minister or to an agency or authority.

My Report into the provision of the services provided by the Inland Revenue Division in Honiara may contain matters capable of adversely affecting the Commissioner of Inland Revenue (who is provided by a copy of the Report) and his staff; I seek any comment that you or your officials from within your administration, especially the Inland Revenue Division may have. I would be grateful if you could provide a response in writing on behalf of Ministry by 30th September 2011.

I will give any response that you choose to make careful consideration and if I determine it is appropriate to do so, amend my report accordingly.

Should you or a representative from your Administration wish to meet or discuss the above matters, please do not hesitate to contact me at my office to arrange a suitable time.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Joe Poraiwai', is written over the closing 'Yours faithfully'.

**Joe Poraiwai, Esq
Ombudsman**

**cc: Commissioner of Inland Revenue,
Inland Revenue Division,**

ANNEX. "8 (A)" - Letter from Manager, SIEA



RANADI ROAD
HONIARA

SOLOMON ISLANDS ELECTRICITY AUTHORITY

PO BOX 6, HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS
Telephone: (677) 30495
Facsimile: (677) 39472
E-mail: norman.nicholls@siea.com.sb
Your Ref:
Our Ref:

All correspondence should
be addressed to the General Manager.

The Ombudsman,
Mr. Joe Poraiwai,
P O Box 535,
Honiara.

9.8.11

Dear Sir,

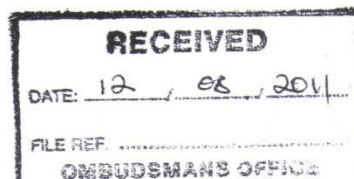
Re: Investigation Report No. 1/10 – Report on Own Motion Investigation into some Municipal Services in Honiara.

Thank you for your Report and for meeting with us to discuss it.

In response to the issues you raised about SIEA: in general we agree with your findings. We are very conscious of our shortcomings and we are working hard to overcome them.

In respect of your Conclusions and Recommendations, I respond as follows:

- 1.1 'Keeping the lights on' in Honiara is our top priority, but it is a struggle as we do not have adequate reserve capacity. When one of our major generators fails, or has to be shut down for an overhaul, as is happening now, we have to go into load shedding. We try to minimize the inconvenience to customers by cycling the outages around the city and advertising when they will occur. Undoubtedly we need more capacity, especially now that the city is growing. A new generator should have been purchased two years ago but, due to lack of money, it was not. A new generator costs over \$60m and therefore it is very difficult to fund. In addition we have weaknesses in our network that give rise to unexpected outages. In the meantime we are taking several steps to try to overcome our difficulties, including:
- Improving the cooling for our existing generators to provide more output
 - Replacing one of the major 33KV cables between Lungga and Ranadi that has been prone to failures
 - Replacing the 11KV switchboards in Honiara Station that are old and unreliable
 - Seeking finance to enable us to purchase new generators.



2.1 Since you carried out your survey we have opened a new and more convenient 'shop' in the Hyundai Mall to make it easier for customers to pay and obtain Cash Power vouchers. We are also negotiating with a vendor to provide a 24/7 outlet for Cash Power in the city. In addition, we are negotiating with a vendor to provide Cash Power 'top ups' from mobile phones that will benefit customers in the Provincial centres as well as in Honiara.

2.2 The meter reading and billing area is under review and a full meter audit has recently been carried out throughout the city. This should result in more accurate and timely bills. In addition a new bill is to be released that will make it easier for customers to track their expenditure.

2.3 SIWA is now also situated in our shop in the Hyundai Mall to make it more convenient for their customers.


3.1 SIEA cannot comment on SIG's policy for this industry, but we would support any moves to introduce competition in the energy sector.

In addition to the above we also wish to comment on other issues in your report, in particular:

- We are aware of unscrupulous behavior from some of SIEA's staff. Anyone that we catch doing such deeds is subject to instant dismissal. Our major problem is gaining evidence. Customers are keen to point out these misdeeds, but are reluctant to provide evidence.
- To improve customer relations we have established a Customer Service Division to focus on giving better customer service
- We have also improved our information to customers through the media using radio, brochures and press releases.
- We are engaged in giving more training to our staff to improve their attitude and skills. This is an on-going process.
- We are endeavouring to improve our collection processes and performance. Currently we are owed over \$100m. If we could collect a large part of what is owing to us, the purchase of a new generator would be our first priority.

I trust the above re-assures you that we are doing all we can to improve SIEA and the services we provide to our customers both, here in Honiara, as well as the Provinces.

Yours sincerely,



Norman Nicholls
General Manager.

ANNEX. "8 (B)" - Letter from Manager, SIWA



Solomon Islands Water Authority
P. O. Box 1407, Honiara
Solomon Islands
Telephone: 23985
Facsimile : 20723

Mr J Poraiwai
Ombudsman
PO Box 535
Honiara
Solomon Islands

31 August 2011

Your Ref: CN: 199/10/09

Dear Sir

Subject: Investigation Report No. 1/10 – Report on Own Motion Investigation into Some Municipal Services in Honiara

Thank you for your letter of 1 August 2011 and the enclosed report titled "Hemi No Waka Gud". The Management and Board have reviewed the contents of your report and we express our appreciation for the information contained therein and for suggestions for improvement which you propose.

I wish to emphasise that we in SIWA are always open to dialogue aimed at improving the standard of the service which we provide and I welcome the opportunity to respond to the findings and conclusions of the report as they apply to SIWA. Of course, we can only comment on the references to SIWA.

Firstly, I note that the research on which the report is based was conducted in late 2009 and the report prepared between January and June 2010. During this time the performance of SIWA was declining due to deficient corporate management and a deteriorating financial situation. In late 2010 the Board of SIWA was replaced with a new Board who were tasked with the responsibility of halting this decline and bringing the financial management of SIWA under control. There are many challenges for us to address, not least the current trading losses being made in SIWA's operations.

The current Board has made significant improvements to the financial position of SIWA and to the operational management of the organisation. In April 2011 a new management team was brought in funded through the Pacific Region Infrastructure Fund. As a matter of urgency, the management team prepared an "Urgent Recovery and Action Plan" (The RAP) which identified many actions and investments required to turn the organisation around and accelerate the process of improving the quality of service provided by SIWA.

The RAP identified all of the issues that are highlighted in your Report as well as many other issues which require immediate attention. The management issues underlying the poor performance have been addressed immediately and significant progress has been made in implementing change. The organisation has been restructured to provide a much greater focus on providing a much improved customer service and also ensure focus on the vital areas of operational and financial management. I believe the benefit of these wide-ranging changes will become increasingly apparent over the next months as we develop the new systems and procedures and the new culture of SIWA.

WATER IS LIFE

Many of the service improvements necessary require significant capital investment in new infrastructure and management support and this expenditure was identified in the RAP. In response to a request from the Minister of Finance, AusAID have generously agreed to fund the costs of the urgent recovery strategy (RAP) and funds will start flowing in September 2011. In addition, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has promoted a project – The Medium Term Water Supply Improvement Strategy and this project is due to start very soon after unfortunate long delays caused by land acquisition disputes. The total investment available for SIWA from these two agencies amounts to approximately USD 28 million.

The focus of the investment combined with the continued improvement in management and the reorientation of SIWA to become a service providing organisation are:

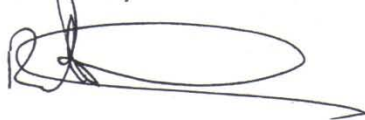
- To increase the volume of water available to legal paying customers;
- To improve the reliability of the service and reduce failures in supply resulting from mechanical and electrical breakdown;
- To minimise the periods during which water supply is cut-off – i.e. to eliminate the need for water rationing;
- To improve the quality of water supplied;
- To improve our provision of customer service, billing and revenue collection from customers;
- To offer greater convenience to our customers and provide a much improved customer experience;
- To manage the finances of SIWA to ensure that we are financially secure and operate a business which is sustainable over the long-term.

Of course, we will require that the citizens of Honiara play a full part in supporting SIWA. To this end we have increased our attention in the disconnection of water connections which are illegal as it is only fair that ALL consumers pay for the water that they use.

These developments and improvement cannot be afforded under the current water service tariff charges which have not been revised for three years and we will be studying the level of tariff required to sustain an efficient, modern and well managed water business. Proposals on our tariff levels will be submitted to the relevant Ministries at the appropriate time.

I hope that my comments address the issues raised in your report and give you confidence that the provision of water and wastewater services in Honiara, Auki, Tulagi and Noro are improving now and will continue to improve in the future. By 2014 the quality of water supply services will very much improved but there will still be work to do. For wastewater services, plans will be developed to address the significant challenges posed.

Yours faithfully



Richard Austin
General Manager
Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA)

ANNEX. "8 (C)" - Letter from Manager, SIPC



Solomon Post

GENERAL POST OFFICE, P.O. BOX 1930
HONIARA, SOLOMON ISLANDS

PHONE: 00 (677) 21821
TELEFAX: 00 (677) 20440

8th September, 2011

Ref: PC/MA/ 1/05/5

The Ombudsman
Office of the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands
P.O. Box 535
Honiara

Dear Sir

RE: INVESTIGATION REPORT NO: 1/10 – REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA.

I on behalf of the Board and Management of the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your office for the very pro-active initiative taken in undertaking or carrying out the "Own Motion Investigation" into some Municipal Services in Honiara including the services provided by the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation.

For the Solomon Post Sir, the outcome of the investigation as stated in Part 2.3 of the report is very important and useful for us because we can use it as a tool to measure how the people (general public) especially our customers feel about the effectiveness and quality of the services we provide. From the comments made by the people will help us see our weaknesses and strengths and make improvements where required.

Please find enclosed is our brief response to the issues raised in the report. We generally agree with the comments made and given the financial situation the Corporation is currently in we cannot tackle some of the issues raised on our own but we would need the support of all the stakeholders especially the Government to address them. In view of that we continue to have dialogue with the Government to see if they can assist.

In the meantime, I would like to once again thank you for the great initiative taken and also for sending us a copy of the report. Based on the MOU we entered into in relation to your Aerogram Complaint Submission Process or System, we are confident that we can improve further to cover other areas in the future.

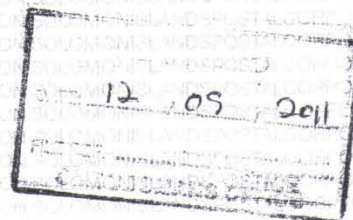
Thank you

Yours faithfully


Allan Ara'oa

Chief Executive Officer
S.I Postal Corporation

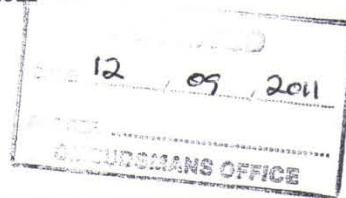
Bridging You and You



**SOLOMON ISLANDS POSTAL
CORPORATION**

**RESPONSE TO OMBUDSMAN'S OWN MOTION INVESTMENT
INTO MUNICIPAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE SOLOMON
ISLANDS POSTAL CORPORATION**

9/6/2011



SOLOMON ISLANDS POSTAL CORPORATION

RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN PART 2.3 OF THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE REPORT ON OWN MOTION INVESTIGATION INTO SOME MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN HONIARA

Stated below are the Management's response to the many important issues raised and recommendations made in the above report.

Introduction:

First of all, the Management would like to convey its gratitude for the initiative taken by the Ombudsman's Office in undertaking the Own Motion investigation into some municipal services in Honiara including the services provided by the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation. This great initiative has given the opportunity for the members of the general public who are the users of the services to make comments on whether they are satisfied with the level and quality of services provided to them or not. Based on the comments and suggestions made the authorities or organizations concerned may be able to see and consider ways to improve the level and quality of their services to the general public including the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation.

Solomon Islands Postal Corporation:

The Solomon Islands Postal Corporation was established in 1997 under the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation Act 1996 (No. 2 of 1996) and charged with the responsibility to:

- (a) Provide Postal Services within Solomon Islands and other countries.
- (b) Carry on any business or activity relating to Postal Services.
- (c) Carry on any business or activity which is incidental to those mentioned in paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

Under the SOE Act 2007, the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation as any other State Owned Enterprises is required to operate successfully and profitably as comparable businesses that are not owned by the crown or Government. It is also required to operate as a good employer and as an organization that exhibits a sense of social responsibility by having regard to the interests of the Community in which it operates.

Objectives:

The main aims and objectives of the Corporation are to:

- (a) Provide accessible, affordable, reliable and quality Postal services to the people in Solomon Islands and abroad.

- (b) Provide other related postal services and incidental services to the people in the country.

Problem areas:

Whilst the Government and the people of this country and other countries (General Public) have very high expectation for the Corporation to provide its services at the level and quality expected of it, the Corporation found it very difficult to do so due to a number of reasons including the followings:

- a) The Corporation had not been adequately resourced when it was established in 1997.
- b) The Corporation has been incurring huge losses and debts over the years due to its very narrow and weak revenue base as opposed to its unsustainable operational costs.
- c) The Corporation's postal network is so widespread due to the geographical setting of the country and makes it so costly to operate.
- d) The Corporation appeared to be mismanaged by previous managements in the areas of cost control and non compliance to staff Policies, Practices and Procedures etc.

Planned actions:

Despite the long standing financial problems the Corporation has been faced with over the years, when the new Executive Management was appointed by the Board in June 2009, the Corporation has gone through some changes and organizational restructuring with the aim to improve the operations of the Corporation to address the areas highlighted in the report. In line with that, the following areas have been worked on since June 2009:

- (a) The Executive Management has been working on rebuilding the image of the Solomon Islands Postal Corporation especially to rebuild the public's trust and confidence in the services provided. In doing so those officers/employees who have been found tampering with mails, cash, registered articles and parcels etc have been dealt with accordingly and some have to be terminated from their employment with the Corporation.
- (b) Carried out some face-lift activities to the main General Post Office building and the Ranadi Post Office.
- (c) Carried out some improvements to the main GPO Mail Monitoring Centre.
- (d) Carried out the revision of the Corporation Staff Policies, Practices and Procedures so as to be compatible with the operations of the Corporation.

-
- (e) Carried out the revision of the Corporation's Finance and Accounting Policies, Practices, Procedures and Processes so as to be in line with the accepted International Accounting Principles and Practices.
 - (f) Pot-hole filling of the SIPC's car park area has been done to provide comfortable parking for customers.
 - (g) The Corporation is working on computerizing the Mail Processing System so as to track and trace mails and parcels etc.
 - (h) The Corporation is working towards setting up its own Internet Service Provider System so as to provide better internet services to its customers both here in Honiara and in the Provinces. A VSAT System has already been set up but due to lack of adequate funds expansion to the Provinces would take time. But the plan is for such communication network to reach the people in the rural areas.
 - (i) The Management is now working on a plan to improve the Corporation's mail drop off and pick-up service to our customers starting with our bulk-mail clients.
 - (j) We do agree with the report that our customer service is not up to the standard expected by the general public. Our staff do need training in customer service and as everyone knows all these need money. However, the Management is trying all it can to address the issue.
 - (k) The Management's future plan is to create a one-stop-shop centre both in Honiara and the Provinces. The current problem is that the Corporation does not have proper infrastructure (Post Office building) and facilities to enable it to provide all the various services at one Central Location especially in the Provinces. This is what the Corporation is trying to pursue with the Government if they can assist especially in renovating or improving the existing Provincial Post Offices and facilities including those in the Provinces.
 - (l) The Management is now seriously looking into stream-lining the processes of obtaining Postal Boxes and also look at increasing the number of Boxes if required.
 - (m) The Management is now seriously looking into reactivating the Postal Agency Services in the Provinces.

Conclusion:

The new Executive Management Team upon assuming office in June, 2009 has appreciated fully that the task that has been ahead is not easy given the long standing financial problems the Corporation has been faced with over the years since its inception in 1997. Despite of the situation, the Management has been working on a number of Policy changes with the aim to improve the services provided by the Corporation.

Please note that to make any significant changes and improvements would need money and time. In view of that what has been described in the document is what the Management and the Board can be able to do and plan to do given the current difficult financial situation they are faced with.

But all in all the main aim of the Board and Management is to see that the people of Solomon Islands have access to better and quality postal services and other incidental services. However, this would need the cooperation of all the stakeholders including the Solomon Islands Government.

Prepared by:


Allan Afafoa

**Chief Executive Officer
S.I Postal Corporation**