



Institute for Governance and Policy Studies

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Ombudsmen around the world:

“Same but different”?

4-6 pm Friday, 16 November 2012.
Railway Station room 501
RSVP to igps@vuw.ac.nz

This year, New Zealand celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Ombudsman Act 1962. New Zealand was the first country outside Sweden to establish an Ombudsman in that name. Since then, many other countries have established a public office with the functions of an Ombudsman. With the spread of the institution has come a diversification of roles from the original function of investigating administrative complaints into freedom of information, human rights and anti-corruption activity. Furthermore the role of Ombudsmen and similar offices in different jurisdictions has been significantly affected by differences in political and administrative systems, particularly as Ombudsmen-like institutions have spread beyond the purely Parliamentary systems where they first took root. What lessons are there from the experience of this diverse range of organisations and different governance arrangements for individual governments developing their own Ombudsmen functions?

On the occasion of the 10th International Ombudsmen's Conference in Wellington, and with the support of the New Zealand Ombudsmen, the Institute of Governance and Policy Studies at Victoria University of Wellington has invited speakers at the Conference to participate in a discussion that will explore some of these issues. In particular:

- What is the range of functions and powers of Ombudsmen organisations?
- How do different political and administrative systems (Westminster, Continental, and Nordic) affect an Ombudsman's functions and powers?
- What makes an Ombudsman institution effective, beyond different governance systems?

The following have already confirmed participation. We will keep you posted of further participants as they respond.

Dr Richard Kirkham

University of Sheffield. Dr Richard Kirkham has been researching the ombudsman institution for almost ten years and has written extensively on the subject. In 2011 his book *The Ombudsman Enterprise and Administrative Justice* (co-authors T.Buck and B.Thompson - Farnham: Ashgate) was published which analysed the constitutional role of the ombudsman in the 21st century. Dr Kirkham's current research is centred on exploring the different means by which the ombudsman institution can demonstrate its impact, as well as the effectiveness of the various ways by which the ombudsman's work can be called to account

Linda Reif

Professor Linda Reif, Faculty of Law, University of Alberta. Professor Linda Reif is the CN Professor of International Trade and from 2009 to 2011 she served as Associate Dean (Graduate Studies). She was I.O.I. Editor of Publications from 1989 to 2009. Professor Reif has published widely on the ombudsman and national human rights institutions. Her publications include her 2004 book *The Ombudsman, Good Governance and the International Human Rights System* (Martinus Nijhoff Pub., 2004), and articles and book chapters, including in the *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, *Boston College Third World Law Journal*, *Alberta Law Review*, *Asia Pacific Law Review*, and I.O.I. publications. Professor Reif has provided consulting services and academic support on NHRIs to the Commonwealth Secretariat. In 1991 she was Director of Legal Services, Office of the Alberta Ombudsman.

Professor Alasdair Roberts

Alasdair Roberts is the Jerome L. Rappaport Professor of Law and Public Policy at Suffolk University Law School, and Faculty Director of the Rappaport Center for Law and Public Service. Professor Roberts writes extensively on problems of governance, law and public policy. His most recent book, *The Logic of Discipline: Global Capitalism and the Architecture of Government*, was published by Oxford University Press in March 2010. An earlier book, *Blacked Out: Government Secrecy in the Information Age*, received the 2006 Brownlow Book Award from the US National Academy of Public Administration, and three other academic book awards. Professor Roberts was elected as a fellow of the US National Academy of Public Administration in 2007. He was appointed as a public member of the Administrative Conference of the United States in 2010. He is also an Honorary Senior Research Fellow of the School of Public Policy, University College London. He is co-editor of the journal *Governance* and serves on the editorial boards of several other journals in the field of public administration.

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