

Information Access and Recordkeeping in the Pacific: The Work of PARBICA

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I am delighted to be here with you today and delighted that you have found time in your packed program of deliberations to hear from an archivist about the importance of recordkeeping and what is being done across the region to address the issue.

I want to spend some time this afternoon outlining for you how archives and records contribute to good governance. I would then like to describe for you a project in the Pacific to which the National Archives of Australia is contributing.

We believe this project will help governments throughout the Pacific to improve their recordkeeping and through this assist in delivering good governance outcomes.

Some of you here today may be wondering why I am here – an archivist – talking to you about recordkeeping and good governance. You may be thinking that you know what archives do, they look after old records – historical manuscripts - and so be wondering what we have to do with current public administration in the Pacific.

Archives certainly do have a significant and continuing role in protecting the documentary heritage of the countries they serve. This traditional view of the work of archives is still valid, archives do manage and preserve ancient manuscripts that tell the stories of older civilisations.

However, increasingly during the twentieth century, archives took on the role of records managers as well as records keepers and most modern legislation for national archives is framed in those broader terms.

One of the more recent of the 'modern' type of national archives legislation is the New Zealand *Public Records Act 2005* that requires all public offices to 'create and maintain full and accurate records' and has as its primary objective 'to promote accountability between the Crown, the public, and Government agencies.'

National archives and the professional staff who work in them are more and more often using their skills to guide their governments in better current recordkeeping, and so assist them in meeting their accountability and governance responsibilities.

To be a good archivist you need to understand how records are created. Archivists make decisions about which records should be kept for historical research, but to do this they need to understand the business that the records document and the processes used to create them.

Archivists use their skills in these areas to help governments create better records in the first place – because they understand what systems create good records.

In the words of the International Council on Archives:

“... archives support administration and underlie the rights of individuals, organisations and states... archives are fundamental to democracy, accountability and good governance.”¹

In Australia, our professional association's description of the role of the archivist is to:

“ensure that records which have value as authentic evidence of administrative, corporate, cultural and intellectual activity are made, kept and used.”²

¹ International Council on Archives, *Welcome to ICA*, available at <http://www.ica.org/en/about>, accessed 25 May 2007

Many of these terms, such as evidence and accountability, will be familiar to you as leaders in your respective countries responsible for promoting good public service practices.

They are also terms known at the World Bank when it distributes money to assist development. For the World Bank the importance of records in public administration is described thus:

“Records document the decisions and activities of governments and private institutions, and serve as a benchmark by which future activities and decisions are measured. They document fundamental rights and obligations, and differentiate the rule of law from the actions of arbitrary states. Without records there can be no rule of law and no accountability.

Without good records, officials are forced to take decisions on an ad hoc basis without the benefit of an institutional memory. Fraud cannot be proven, meaningful audits cannot be carried out, and government actions are not open to review.”³

Good governance, then, requires good recordkeeping. Public officials need to account for their decisions and activities with reference to accurate, reliable and accessible evidence of public administration. Inadequacies in governance almost always feature inadequacies in recordkeeping. Sometimes these issues are the result of deliberate subversion of systems and processes.

More commonly, though, they are the result of many years of erosion of recordkeeping capability, corporate culture and infrastructure within administrations. Good recordkeeping

² Australian Society of Archivists, *The Archivists' Mission*, available at <http://www.archivists.org.au> accessed 25 May 2007

³ World Bank, “Why Records Management: Records Management as a Key Support for Development Effectiveness” available at <http://go.worldbank.org/889BWHZPL0>, accessed 22 June 2007

needs to be re-established as a natural and organic component of the way public administration is conducted.

Many national archives throughout the Pacific have a mandate to assist with government recordkeeping. And many Pacific countries have legislation setting up their national archives. At the very least these laws usually make it illegal for government records to be destroyed without the authorisation of the national archivist.

This gives archivists an important role in ensuring that governments retain the records that they need to do their work efficiently and to account for their decisions and actions.

Archives New Zealand, for example, has extensive powers to issue standards for government recordkeeping. It also has the power to monitor and report on the compliance of government agencies with the Public Records Act.

Australia's Defence Minister, Senator John Faulkner (who until recently as Cabinet Secretary was also the Minister responsible for the National Archives), said in the Senate in 2008 that:

I could put a strong case that the National Archives of Australia are the ultimate accountability function and agency of government.

At around the same time, in reviewing some highly-publicised difficulties in our Immigration Department, the Australian Government Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan, issued a statement of the ten most important lessons learnt from the Immigration Department's experience. The number one lesson on Professor McMillan's list was the need to make and keep good records of government decisions and activities!

National archives, then, are key players on the good governance playing field. We see ourselves as your allies in helping government bodies to be efficient, transparent and accountable in all of their activities.

Archives are increasingly seeking to work with auditors, public service and anti-corruption commissions, and ombudsmen. We want to work with you to develop the strong government recordkeeping systems that make openness, efficiency, accountability, and coherent decision-making possible.

Auditors- General

In Australia, archives are increasingly working with Auditors-General to assess the state of government recordkeeping. Staff from the National Archives have been seconded to the Audit Office to assist in several reviews of government recordkeeping systems.

The aim of the National Archives of Australia's alliance with the Australian National Audit Office is to help ensure that Australian government records are well kept. While we at the Archives are able to provide advice to departments on how to keep their records, we rely on the Auditor-General to review their and our performance.

Records don't just manage themselves, though. Like any other type of work, we need to allocate money, hire staff, keep them trained, develop procedures and monitor progress to make sure the job gets done. Perhaps more importantly, good recordkeeping has to be part of the organisational culture if the staff are to take the issue seriously. This requires strong leadership and the setting of good examples from the very top of organisations.

Governments around the world have sometimes forgotten to do the things they need to do to ensure that this important work is done. As a result, in some countries at least, things have deteriorated so that records are barely managed at all.

e-Government

At the same time, information technology – which should be and is making it easier to create, keep and use information – is now making it more challenging to keep good records because of the speed and volume of information now being created. How many decisions do you make by email?

Do you put copies of those emails on a file? How much information do you keep on computers? Have you ever had a computer stop working so that you couldn't retrieve the information it contained?

We often think that computers will make managing information easier, and in many aspects they do. At the same time, it may be harder to make sure that you are keeping good records. Electronic information can be easily changed, so that it is no longer accurate.

It can be easily lost, so that you cannot find it when you need it. In this e-government environment, using computers to do our work means that we need to pay more attention to records management, not less. If an organisation is not managing its paper files well, those problems are likely to be magnified in the e-government environment. Records are often harder to find and harder to preserve on computers than they are on paper.

There is a need for assistance in the rebuilding of recordkeeping capabilities, cultures and infrastructures in some Pacific Island governments. To do that archivists, records managers and government officials require tools and guidelines that reflect the needs and circumstances of Pacific Island governments in the 21st Century.

There is a strong need for practical tools that are appropriate to the circumstances of Pacific Island governments. These tools must be able to help government officials, archivists and records managers to deliver good recordkeeping outcomes to citizens.

PARBICA

The Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives – known as PARBICA – has begun to address this need. It is developing tools that will help archivists and record managers support Pacific Island governments' efforts to achieve good governance.

PARBICA was established in 1981. It is a professional organization that comprises government archives, non-government archival institutions and associations, and individual members.

These members represent more than twenty nations, states and territories in the North and South Pacific, including Tuvalu and Australia, the Cook Islands and New Zealand. The current President of PARBICA is Setareki Tale, the National Archivist of Fiji.

Two of PARBICA's more important goals are to:

- establish, maintain and strengthen relations between archivists in the region and between institutions and professional organizations concerned with the custody and administration of archives;
- provide and assist with formal and informal professional training; and

PARBICA is one of thirteen branches of the International Council on Archives, covering the most diverse and largest geographic area.

PARBICA publishes a regular newsletter called *Panorama*, some copies of which I have brought with me today. It has commissioned reports on significant issues for archives throughout the Pacific including reports on education and training and on low-cost storage options for archives and records.

Perhaps PARBICA's most significant achievement has been its programme of regular biennial conferences. Beginning in Fiji in 1981, PARBICA has held 13 conferences. Conferences in the past have tackled such themes as planning, digitisation of archival collections, and archival legislation.

PARBICA - Nadi, Fiji 2005

A landmark PARBICA conference was held in Nadi, Fiji, in 2005. It had the theme *Reinventing Archives - Supporting Recordkeeping for Good Governance*. This theme recognised the importance

of well managed recordkeeping systems as a fundamental pillar for good governance. It also acknowledged that the creation and management of records as evidence of decisions and actions is essential to accountability, transparency and efficiency.

The Conference heard from speakers from the International Records Management Trust, Transparency International, the Fiji Human Rights Commission, the Fijian Auditor-General, and national archivists from around the Pacific. Many of these speakers emphasised the importance of records in ensuring the accountability of governments and other organisations.

Of particular note, the Deputy Auditor-General of Fiji, Mr Kaveni Takalevu, had the following to say about the importance of recordkeeping to his work:

“Authentic and trustworthy records – and convenient access to them – provide the fundamental means by which the transparency, accountability and effectiveness of government ... can be accomplished, demonstrated and measured. Governments keep records as a fundamental basis for conducting business, serving the public, measuring progress and outcomes and protecting their own and others’ rights.”⁴

Mr Takalevu went on to describe a few of the 289 instances of poor recordkeeping that his office had reported on in the previous five years. These included occasions where documents had been removed from files to hide fraudulent behaviour.

There had also been a case where the accounting records of an office were kept on a computer system which the Auditor labelled as “hopelessly inadequate.” The Auditor found that this system could not “be relied upon to protect the integrity or the accuracy of data and records of funds entrusted to the Office.”⁵

⁴ Kaveni Takalevu, “Key Issues for Recordkeeping in Good Governance – Presentation on Assessing the State of Recordkeeping: Measuring Progress Towards Better Systems”, paper presented at the 11th Conference of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, Nadi, Fiji, 19 – 23 September 2005, p6.

⁵ Ibid, p10.

At the Nadi Conference members accepted that the recordkeeping systems in some Pacific countries were inadequate. They requested PARBICA develop basic templates, guidelines and tools for recordkeeping in Pacific organisations.

These tools should cover recordkeeping capacity assessment, benchmarks, basic manuals for recordkeeping, and training packages and modules.⁶

Pacific Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit

This resolution is what prompted the project I particularly want to talk about today – the Pacific Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit. I am proud to say that the National Archives of Australia is taking a role in facilitating the development of this Toolkit. It has been supported by generous funding from AusAID, the Australian Government’s overseas aid program and also from NZ Aid.

The objective of the Toolkit is to provide a suite of practical tools that can be used by Pacific Island governments to improve the state of recordkeeping in their administrations. This in turn will help to underpin public sector efficiency and accountability. It will also assist Pacific Island governments to ensure that they meet their legal obligations, and protect the rights and entitlements of their citizens.

AusAID has provided funding for the Toolkit through its Pacific Governance Support Program (PGSP). The objective of PGSP is to improve governance in the Pacific by encouraging cooperative solutions to governance issues across the region.

The PGSP program emphasises the Pacific Island Forum Pacific Plan’s goal of enhancing good governance through regionalism – “countries working together for their joint and individual benefit.”⁷

⁶ Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, *Resolutions of PARBICA’s 11th General Conference, 2005*. Available at <http://www.parbica.org/conf11>, accessed 28 May 2007.

The fact that AusAID has funded work on the Toolkit is an indication of the importance of good recordkeeping for achieving good governance. AusAID also asked us to work with the Australian Public Service Commission through its network of Pacific Public Service Commissioners as we develop the Toolkit. In 2007 my Director-General, Ross Gibbs, addressed the Conference of Pacific Public Service Commissioners in Samoa about the PARBICA Toolkit, seeking their support for our efforts. This led to the formation of a strong alliance with that group. Mr Gibbs has been asked to provide the Pacific Public Service Commissioners with an update on the work of the project at their 2010 Conference in Vanuatu. From working with public service commissioners it is a short and logical step to also seek to work with ombudsmen – hence my presence here today.

The Toolkit includes printed and web-based material that highlights for government officials the importance of good recordkeeping and their recordkeeping responsibilities. It includes guidelines for Pacific Island archivists and records managers on how to identify, document, communicate and fulfil public sector recordkeeping requirements in government agencies.

To date the Toolkit has grown to include a brochure (copies of which are available here today), an Introductory booklet and eleven separate guidelines:

- 1: Recordkeeping Capacity Checklist
- 2: Identifying Recordkeeping Requirements
- 3: Model Recordkeeping Policy
- 4: Administrative Record Plan
- 5: Adapting and Implementing the PARBICA Administrative Record
- 6: Developing and Implementing Record Plans for Core Business Functions

⁷ Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, *The Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration*, November 2006, p3, available at http://www.forumsec.org/_resources/article/files/The%20Pacific%20Plan,%20updated%20Dec%202006.pdf, accessed 21 June 2007.

7: Disposal Schedule for Common Administrative

8: Implementing the Disposal Schedule for Common Administrative Functions

9: Adapting the Disposal Schedule for Common Administrative Functions

10: Starting an Appraisal Programme to appraise the closed records of core functions.

11: Training Pacific Island Government Official in Using PARBICA's Toolkit - *Train the Trainer*

The process for developing the Toolkit has been highly consultative. It had its origins in the discussions of the representatives of PARBICA members from 13 countries around the Pacific. The broad outline of the Toolkit was devised in these discussions.

The first products in the Toolkit have been developed through consultation with a Reference Group. This group is made up of PARBICA members including Mr Tale from Fiji and Mr Jacob Hevelawa from Papua New Guinea. They are joined by Mere Veitayaki, Opeta Alefaio and Semiti Ravatu from Fiji, Tukul Kaiku from Papua New Guinea, Amela Silipa and Vavao Toa from Samoa, Cheryl Stanborough from Yap, Mila Tuilimanu from Tuvalu, Janine Daniel from the Cook Islands Ombudsman Office, and Naomi Ngirakamerang from Palau.

This working group provides comments, feedback and suggestions on the drafts of the Toolkit, and they are a significant guiding force in its development.

The need for promotional materials was highlighted by the Fijian National Archivist and PARBICA President Setareki Tale in his paper at the Australian Society of Archivists' Conference in 2006. At the Conference Seta said:

“... many problems that affect recordkeeping in Fiji and the Pacific such as limited resources, lack of training, tendency of staff to leave after training etc are related to the lack of recognition of the profession... Vigorous awareness and marketing

programmes properly planned for specific target audiences are avenues that can be utilised to address these issues and to propel the profession forward”.⁸

PARBICA TOOLKIT : ‘Good Records Good Governance’ Brochure

The PARBICA Toolkit responded to this need with the first of its main products, a brochure that explains to senior government officers how good records management can help them to meet standards for good governance. The Brochure emphasises three key concepts:

- records can help you to be efficient;
- records can protect the government’s interests; and
- records can protect the community’s interests.

Keeping good records means that you can quickly and easily find the information you need to do your job efficiently and make the right decisions. Using information is cyclical:

- you need accurate information to help you to make good decisions
- once you have made a decision you can take the right action
- information about the action you have taken is important to help you make your next decision
- if you cannot find information about your previous decisions and actions, your next decision could be the wrong one – you might be acting on incomplete, inaccurate or out-of-date information
- even if you have all of the right information, this won’t be very useful if you can’t find it when you need it
- keeping good records helps you to organise the information you have about your actions and decisions

⁸ Setareki Tale, “Canoeing in Cyberspace: Recordkeeping in the Pacific – A Fiji Case Study”, paper presented on 21 October at *Connections and Conversations: Archives At Work – 2006 Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists*, available at http://www.archivists.org.au/sem/conf2006/Tale_ASAConference2006.pdf, accessed 22 June 2007.

- this can make it easier to find the information you need when you need it, which will help you to work more efficiently.

Keeping good records means keeping information about all of your organisation's activities so that you can prove what you decided, said or did. Government officials are responsible for protecting the government's interests. Having good records can help to do this by *proving that you have taken a certain action or complied with a particular law*. For example:

- Bills and Accounts:
 - If you cannot prove your department has paid a bill, you may have to pay it again.
- Land Ownership:
 - If you cannot prove that the government owns some land or a building, you may not be able to stop someone else from claiming they own it.
- Expenditure:
 - If you cannot prove that your department has spent its money fairly and wisely, donors may be reluctant to provide further funds.
- Contracts:
 - If you cannot prove what you agreed to do in a contract, you may be accused of not doing what you promised to do.

Keeping good records helps to protect the government by proving what action it has taken. If you do not have records to back up what you say happened, other people – including a court or an auditor – may not believe you if someone else claims that something different happened.

Keeping good records also means safeguarding information provided to government officers by organisations and citizens, to protect their rights and entitlements. Records should document the government's dealings with external parties, such as individuals, community organisations, contractors and other governments.

Government officers have a responsibility to protect the interests of these individuals and groups by keeping good records. *Failing to keep good records can have a serious impact on others.* For example:

- Hospitals:
 - If a hospital can't find a patient's records in an emergency they could receive the wrong treatment – they could even die.
- Invoices:
 - If you lose an invoice from a supplier and don't pay your bills, the supplier might go bankrupt, or refuse to deal with you in the future.
- Land Sales:
 - If you don't keep records of land sales, developers might make agreements with people who do not own the land.

Keeping good records helps to protect the whole community by protecting the information that the government has about other people. Governments should always act for the benefit of their citizens, but if they do not keep and use information carefully, they can actually cause harm to the people they are supposed to help.

The brochure explains these concepts, and encourages government officials to take responsibility for records management within their agencies.

It also encourages them to seek help. Most importantly, the brochure has space to provide contact details for the national archives – or its equivalent – in each country, so that government officers can get local information and advice.

One of the key things that PARBICA members have discovered while developing the brochure is the importance of talking to people about governance issues. It is not enough to just give someone a brochure and hope that they read it.

PARBICA members throughout the Pacific want to be able to talk to senior government officers and explain to them about how records management can help them in their work. Some PARBICA members are already doing this:

In Papua New Guinea the National Archivist, Jacob Hevelawa, has been directly involved in developing recordkeeping training for public servants together with his colleague Tukul Kaiku from the University of Papua New Guinea.

In the Solomon Islands there are close links between records management procedures developed at the Archives, lead by Ms Julian Chonigolo, and the recordkeeping training delivered by the government's Institute for Public Administration and Management, headed by Walter Ramo.

Because of this need to speak directly to government officials about the brochure, the Toolkit includes PowerPoint slides. PARBICA members can use these to develop their own information sessions that explain the message of good records and good governance. A poster has been developed that gives similar messages to those in the brochure.

PARBICA TOOLKIT: Recordkeeping Capacity Checklist

The second of the products in the PARBICA Toolkit is the *Recordkeeping Capacity Checklist*. This Checklist can be used by anyone who wants to see if their organisation has in place the procedures it needs to manage records well. People who could use the Checklist include:

- senior managers who want to review their current arrangements and set priorities for making improvements;
- archivists/records management staff who want to make an unbiased measurement of how well they are managing records and where they could do better; or
- auditors and other review bodies who want to review an organisation's arrangements and make recommendations for change.

This last group could include you, Ombudsmen, as key overseers of the performance and behaviour of public officers.

An organisation's recordkeeping capacity is the ability of its structures, processes, staff, resources and rules to work together to manage its records well. Usually, an organisation needs a little of all of these things to manage its records at all.

There is no point in having well trained records management staff if they do not have clear procedures to use to do their work. There is not much benefit in having clear records management policies and procedures if there are not the staff to carry them out.

In order to have a basic recordkeeping capacity, organisations need to have in place the right people, resources, policies and processes to make sure that they can:

- create the records they need;
- find the records they need when they need them;
- preserve their records for as long as they are needed; and
- make accountable decisions about which records are no longer needed.

The checklist contains a set of ten simple questions that can help an agency decide whether they it has all the things it needs to manage its records well. Perhaps as I give you a few examples you could think about whether most government organisations in your country would answer yes or no:

- Does the organisation have a Records Management Policy?
- Do the senior managers of the organisation support good records management?
- Do the organisation's records management staff have sufficient training to do their jobs?
- Can the organisation find the records it needs when it needs them?

These are only a few examples of the ten questions in the *Checklist*. If an organisation cannot answer 'yes' to all of the questions in the *Checklist*, it may not have the ability to meet its basic recordkeeping requirements.

It should begin to make improvements. The *Checklist* also provides suggestions on how to improve, and information on where to get help.

TOOLKIT: Guidelines on How to Identify Recordkeeping Requirements

Government agencies need to understand what records they should be creating to provide evidence of their actions. This leads me to the third product which PARBICA developed, guidelines on how to identify recordkeeping requirements.

To make sure that they can work efficiently and be accountable, agencies need to identify their recordkeeping requirements. That means understanding:

- what files or other records they should be making;
- how long they should keep the records that they need;
- who should and should not have access to the records; and
- what format the records need to be in.

A recordkeeping requirement is a need to keep evidence of the agency's actions and decisions. Recordkeeping requirements are usually documented in rules, procedures or other guidelines that show that an agency might need to create, keep, provide access to, or deal in some special way with a file or other type of record.

The PARBICA Guidelines can to be used by anyone who wants decide what records a government department needs to create and keep to do its job well. There are three main steps in identifying an agency's recordkeeping requirements. These are:

- collecting possible sources of information about recordkeeping requirements;
- identifying the recordkeeping requirements in those sources; and

- documenting the recordkeeping requirements found there.

Anything that tells the agency how it should carry out its work can be a source of recordkeeping requirements. These sources can include laws and regulations, policies and procedures, and reports by review bodies such as auditors, ombudsmen, or public service commissioners.

Once an agency knows what records it needs to have to do its work and to meet its obligations, it can take steps to make sure that those records are being created, and that they are being managed properly.

PARBICA TOOLKIT: Recent Products

PARBICA members have consistently asked for practical tools that will have immediate benefits for the way records are managed in their countries. The first phase of the Toolkit set the groundwork for improvement by helping archivists and records managers to identify and communicate to government agencies their specific records management needs.

Subsequent phases developed practical tools that allow them to start to address those needs.

Having a clear system for titling files within an office is an important way of making sure that records are accessible when they are needed. Organisations need to decide how staff will create titles for their files so that everyone can understand what each file is about. Good *file titling* makes it easier for staff to see if there is already a file on the subject they need.

If everyone understands the file's title it is easier to make sure that staff don't create new files when the right file is already available. It is also easier to make sure that all of the information about a topic is in the one place, so that you have the whole history of the process on one file.

Record Plans

One way of titling files is to use a Record Plan. Record Plans describe the functions and activities of an organisation and the types of records that might be created while these functions and activities are being carried out. A Record Plan gives part of the title of each file, and it lets staff, in consultation with the records management staff, choose file titles that suit the topic of the file.

This should mean that staff don't need to put lots of unrelated material on the same file. Instead, they can create a file that is more specifically about the work that they are doing.

While governments around the Pacific are different, and come from different administrative traditions, there are some functions that are fairly common to all governments. Every government manages staff, money information, and other resources.

The second phase of the Toolkit project developed a model Record Plan that describes these common functions. This gives governments across the Pacific access to a ready-made system for giving titles to files that document those functions.

Records Management Policy

Alongside the Record Plan, phase two of the Toolkit included a model Records Management Policy that Pacific Islands governments can consider and adapt for their own use.

Having a Records Management Policy helps staff to understand the importance of managing records well, and sets the broad standards that staff should follow to achieve good records management. Implementing a Records Management Policy is a simple and efficient means for Pacific Islands governments to begin to comply with international records management standards.

The Record Plan and model Policy were developed through a series of workshops involving Pacific-based archivists, records managers and other relevant administrators. At the

workshops archivists and record managers developed skills in business analysis that can help them to develop similar plans for core government functions.

More recent phases of the Toolkit project focused on developing a model disposal schedule for administrative records around the Pacific and providing other practical advice on appraising and disposing of public records. This work was lead by Archives New Zealand using funding from NZ-AID.

Other Exciting Developments

It has always been the intention that the PARBICA Toolkit would be a model or set of templates that would be adapted and revised in each Pacific Islands nation to reflect the particular circumstances and issues of each nation. I am pleased to report that this process has already commenced with the development of Fijian, Samoan and Palauan versions/translations of the Toolkit. In addition, Papua New Guinea has developed an entire new records management training program based on the PARBICA Toolkit. This is where the future of the Toolkit lies, in embedding itself in the psyche and administrative cultures of the various nations in our region. In effect, for it to have a sustainable future the PARBICA Toolkit needs to 'go native'.

I am also delighted to report that other branches of the International Council on Archives have been paying close attention to the PARBICA Toolkit. Many of our global colleagues see the Toolkit as a strategic solution to common records management problems around the world. Our French speaking colleagues have translated the Toolkit into French for use in francophone territories in Africa and the Caribbean. Truly the Pacific leads the world in the field of recordkeeping for good governance!

Closer to home, PARBICA has been delighted to work with the United National Development Program to promote the message that effective freedom of information regimes can only work if government departments can be relied upon to make and keep good records.

The UNDP has recently funded PARBICA representatives to attend and speak at FOI workshops in the Solomon Islands, Palau and Nauru.

Perhaps most significant and exciting of all for PARBICA, good recordkeeping has been cited as a priority in the Pacific Plan Action Agenda and in the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Communique that was issued after the Forum Leaders meeting in Cairns last year. PARBICA is now working with the Forum Secretariat to explore the availability of funding for the development of permanent records management training courses either through the University of the South Pacific or in-country through the Public Service Commissions of Forum member states.

Training and In-Country Workshops

To date, training in the use of the PARBICA Toolkit has been provided at PARBICA Biennial Conferences in New Caledonia in 2007 and Brisbane in 2009. In addition there have been in-country training courses run in Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Palau, Fiji and Vanuatu. With the funding for phase 5 of the Toolkit that has recently been confirmed by AusAID (this phase will address issues associated with electronic records), PARBICA intends to run more in-country training in territories such as the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands.

While using AusAID money to fly trainers from Australia around the Pacific is very useful, PARBICA is of the view that the Toolkit can only be sustained if each member country develops its own training courses and the internal capacity to deliver those training courses. To that end Guideline 11 of the Toolkit is important, as it is a Train the Trainer guide for PARBICA members and others wishing to develop and deliver their own in-country training courses on the Toolkit.

On the subject of training, there are an increasing number of options for obtaining professional training for records managers in the Pacific.

The University of Papua New Guinea teaches a records management unit in its School of Information and Communication Science. There is a Diploma in Records and Information Management available by distance education through New Zealand's *Open Polytechnic*.

Victoria University in New Zealand also offers a distance education Certificate in Archives and Records.

Australia's *Edith Cowan University* also offers a course via distance education, and the International Records Management Trust has a range of course materials on its website that students can use to learn at their own pace at home.

What Ombudsmen can do to help

By now you may be thinking that no one has the staff and money to do all of the things that need to be done to manage records well. This is not necessarily the case. While I have said that governments need to allocate resources to ensure that records are being managed, this doesn't mean that the work requires lots of money or large numbers of staff.

PARBICA is committed to assisting governments around the Pacific by developing practical tools that can make good records management easier. What is most required to make these tools work is a commitment from the senior leaders in each organisation.

One of the key drivers for change in any area of government business is good leadership. Senior officials who have influence and control over how government administration takes place can lead improvements in records management.

The International Records Management Trust has identified "a lack of awareness of the significance of records for governance; and a lack of political will to protect evidence"⁹ as contributors to poor recordkeeping in many governments.

⁹ Anne Thurston, "Repositioning Archives to Support Record Keeping for Good Governance", unpublished paper presented at the 11th Conference of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, Nadi, Fiji, 19 - 23 September 2005, p1

PARBICA can develop many different tools to assist archivists and records managers in Pacific Islands national archives, but those archivists and records managers will not be able to make any significant changes unless they are allowed to do so.

Many of you here today have key responsibilities for monitoring and improving the performance of the public service and its leaders. Many of you have powers to set down rules and procedures for the administration of basic agency functions. You are in a position to be important champions for change in the area of records management and good governance.

I urge you to make full use of the Recordkeeping Toolkit products when they are available, and to encourage your colleagues at home to do the same. There are some things you may be able to do immediately to begin to make improvements in your records management arrangements.

- Spread the word about how records can protect the interests of the government and the community, and can help officials to be more efficient.
- Make sure that someone is taking responsibility for managing records in each government department.
- Support the work of your National Archives, particularly in territories where the National Archives is struggling financially or in terms of its ability to influence the behaviour of government departments.
- Find out what training the records management staff need in each department, and help them to get it.
- Assign someone to develop records management procedures.
- Make sure that departments have tools such as file registers and record plans that can keep track of their records and make them accessible.
- Find out if there are rules for deciding which records can be destroyed, and penalise public servants who do not follow them.
- Provide a secure place for storing government records.

And finally:

- Set performance measures for records management within government departments, and make sure each department reports on whether or not they are meeting those measures.

Thank you for the kind invitation to be with you today. The national archivists of the Pacific nations and the other members of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives - PARBICA - look forward to working with you in the future.