



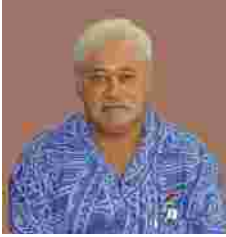
Government of Samoa

OFFICE OF THE ELECTORAL  
COMMISSIONER

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2007-2012



## **FOREWORD**



Tanuvasa Meleisea Isitolo Lemiso

***Electoral Commissioner***

This Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 is the first Plan for the Office of the Electoral Commissioner since its establishment under the Electoral Amendment Act 2005.

The purpose of this plan is to provide a guide to this Office's contribution to the achievement of the government's vision in its SDS for 'Improved quality of life for all'

The four main goals for the five years of this plan emphasises the need to improve the provision of its core functions using research, awareness and educational programs, improvement of support service while ensuring the progressive evolution of the electoral system and administration.

Organizational structure adjustments will be made from year to year when required to support effective and efficient reporting and management.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Lemisio'.

Tanuvasa Meleisea I Lemisio

**Electoral Commissioner**

Office of the Electoral Commissioner

**Strategic Plan**  
2007 – 2012

November 2007

# *Strategic Plan 2007 –2012*

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## Overview

This document constitutes the **Strategic Plan** of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner for the period 2007 – 2012.

The Office of the Electoral Commissioner (OEC) is a public sector agency set up to administer the Samoa *Electoral Act*. The *Act* is the principal legislation that controls and regulates the procedures and processes by which the people of Samoa choose and select their representatives to the Legislative Assembly and Parliament<sup>1</sup>. The Electoral Commissioner (EC) is appointed by the Head of State on the advice of Cabinet. The EC is assisted in the discharge of his statutory functions by officers appointed under the Public Service Act 2004.

By means of this Strategic Plan, the OEC will undergo a transformation to upgrade its capacity, both institutional and in terms of human capability, in order to give the best possible practical expression to the purpose and intent of the *Electoral Act*. This includes not only ensuring the efficient and effective execution of the electoral system and processes, but also the diligent monitoring and evaluation of the outcomes with a view to improving the processes, and to ensuring alignment with the *Constitution* and compliance with the Strategy for the Development of Samoa (SDS) as well as with established democratic principles.

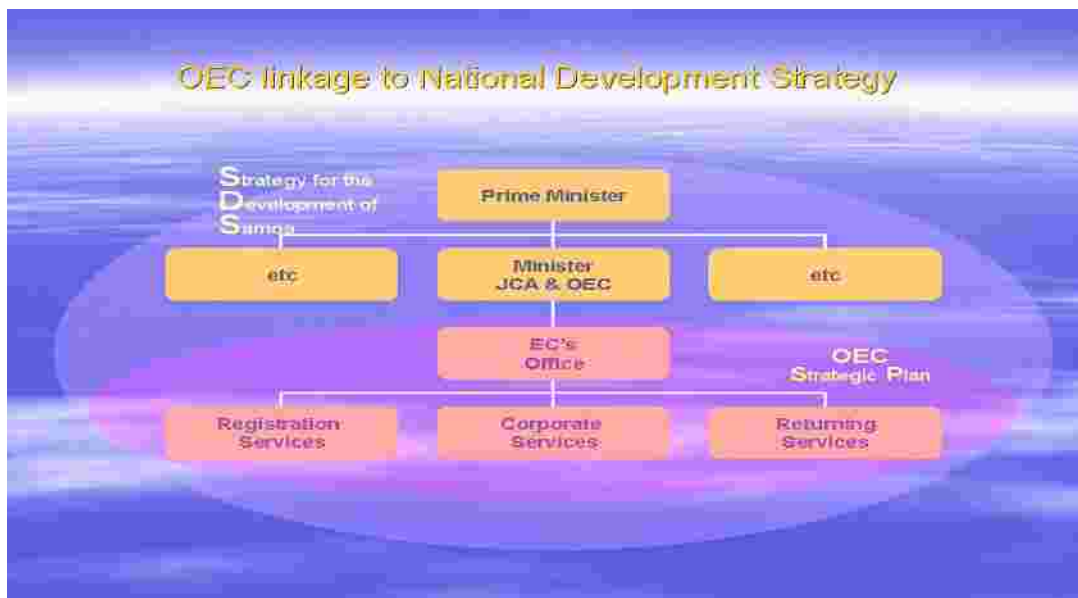


Diagram depicting the relationship between the OEC Strategic Plan and the SDS

In formulating our Strategic Plan, we were able to involve our own staff at all levels, working with a team of advisers through a series of workshops, to assess our current situation and to map out the way ahead. In this way, we have gained the benefit of

<sup>1</sup> Samoa follows the Westminster system of legislature with a single house of representatives called the Legislative Assembly (LA). The LA elects one of its members to hold the office of Prime Minister (PM) and to head a Cabinet consisting of 12 Ministers appointed by the PM. The normal term of the Legislative Assembly is five years. The LA also elects the Head of State who holds office for five years and may be re-elected. The Legislative Assembly together with the Office of the Head of State constitutes the Parliament of Samoa.

knowing about what to expect in relation to the future direction of the Office, and a clear sense that ownership of the Strategic Plan rests with all the staff of OEC.

## Operating Environment

### *External Factors*

#### **Structure of Electoral Administration:**

The current structure relating to the number of Commissioners is considered adequate. The Commission of Inquiry into the 2006 General Elections recommended that the present structure of a single Commissioner be changed to a six-person Commission.

#### **The levels of political participation:**

Fewer people registered during the 2006 general elections compared to the 2001 elections<sup>2</sup>. In particular young people appear to have lower levels of engagement. Demographic trends indicate that these groups are becoming a larger proportion of the population. There would appear to be a more urgent need to encourage the young peoples' appreciation of their obligations and rights under the law and their role in Samoa's system of government, before we attempt to interest them in information and education about how the electoral system works.

#### **Key stakeholders:**

We provide a range of services to the general public, political parties, Parliament and other Government agencies. In planning we have to balance the various needs of these stakeholders and be aware of changing practices such as the use of new technologies.

#### **Funding:**

The annual *tala* (\$) amount provided by government has not changed significantly since the Office of Electoral Commissioner was created in 2005. To minimise the impact of declining buying power we have to be vigilant in ensuring efficient spending, making savings and raising revenue wherever possible and take every opportunity to seek and justify an increase in funding.

### *Internal Factors*

#### **Size:**

Like all newly established organisations we face issues of capacity in covering the range of activities that are carried out in order to meet our strategic goals. With a small staff everyone needs to be able to undertake a number of different roles. Staff training and development is therefore an important factor in fulfilling our mission.

#### **Resources:**

Our resources, both staff and money, are limited and will continue to be. Decisions over use of resources must be prioritized with the strategic directions and goals firmly in mind.

#### **Organizational culture:**

Our culture needs to be aligned with our strategic direction and we need to operate a professional organisation with a positive, user focused approach. We need to be aware of our prevailing culture, assess its fit with our goals and take actions to change the culture when that becomes necessary. It is easy to become complacent about processes and approach, and to assume that existing systems are working. We need to be continually self aware with evaluation and review of our processes and operations.

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<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the 2001 roll count was overstated.

**Systems and processes:**

The routine parts of the work need to be carried out efficiently and effectively. Improved and streamlined processes will free resources for other activities. We also need to be mindful that all of our actions are open to public scrutiny.

**Embracing electronic technology:**

Changing usage of technology/internet by people seeking information from us will lead to changes in the ways in which we interact with people and deliver information. We need to be aware of changing usage amongst the diversity of our stakeholders and adjust our delivery accordingly.

**Change:**

Given the range and impact of internal and external factors, change will be an inevitable component in the coming years for the Office of the Electoral Commissioner. We will initiate change as well as react to outside drivers of change. We must be open to change and embrace the opportunities that it brings while also being aware that people differ in how they perceive and react to change and that change needs to be managed

.

**Our Vision:**

*Samoa's electoral system is embraced by the people and its processes easily understood, trusted and accepted.*

## Our Mission:

*To enhance Samoa's system of government through the efficient and effective execution of its electoral system and processes, and by the provision of effective electoral services to enable people to exercise their rights and responsibilities under the Constitution.*

## Guiding Principles of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner

*We will be guided by the following principles and values in addition to the Public Service Code of Conduct:*

### Independent

- Ø maintain the confidence of electors/voters, candidates, political parties and Parliament in the integrity of the electoral process by being legally and in practice independent of all political parties and interest groups; and
- Ø are individually and collectively subject to the Electoral Act in carrying out our statutory functions.

### Neutral

- Ø carry out our statutory functions in a politically neutral and non-partisan manner; and
- Ø treat all voters, candidates and political parties fairly and impartially and in accordance with the law.

### Professional

- Ø provide electoral services to voters, candidates and political parties in ways which are easily understood as simple as possible, consistent with the law and minimise compliance costs;
- Ø ensure that all sections of the community have ready access to the electoral process in accordance with their needs;
- Ø provide an effective service to electors and voters;
- Ø make information on our activities readily available to the public and the media;
- Ø have transparent and fair procedures in place to deal promptly with complaints of impropriety;
- Ø maintain a commitment to ensuring the integrity of the electoral process in accordance with the law;
- Ø carry out our statutory functions in a fair, accurate, secure and timely manner;
- Ø ensure that our employees behave in their public and private lives in ways which are consistent with the highest standards of independence and political neutrality;
- Ø keep electoral legislation under review and report to Parliament through the responsible Minister on desirable changes to electoral legislation;
- Ø continually evaluate our provision of electoral services and internal and external procedures to ensure they are in accordance with the law, are meeting users' needs, are as simple, efficient and effective as possible, and use appropriate information technology; and
- Ø keep up to date with best international democratic electoral practice.

## Transparent and Accountable

- Ø make efficient and effective use of financial and other resources to carry out our, statutory functions;
- Ø have clear financial and operational responsibilities and accountabilities under appropriate governance structures;
- Ø set budgets according to objectives and regularly measure performance against objectives;
- Ø are prudent with the use of public money;
- Ø undertake regular independent auditing of financial and operational performance; and
- Ø provide Parliament with comprehensive, accurate and timely reports on our activities, including our capacity to conduct electoral events.

## Creative

- Ø are innovative and open to ideas;
- Ø share ideas for improvement; and
- Ø ask "why" we do things the way we do.

## Ethic of Care

- Ø show respect for individual uniqueness, diversity and privacy.

## Responsive

- Ø respond promptly and accurately to requests for information about electoral matters;
- Ø are responsive to those who use our services;
- Ø are open to different perspectives;
- Ø are open to change; and
- Ø provide public information without judging the person asking for it.

## Outcome focused

- Ø care primarily about outcomes being achieved, not who does the work;
- Ø will work with others and share ideas; and
- Ø are pragmatic in prioritizing projects and use of resources.

## Organisation Profile

### ***Office of the Electoral Commissioner***

The Office of the Electoral Commissioner (OEC) was established as a distinct organisation in 2005 following passage of *The Electoral Amendment Act 2005*. Prior to that the administration of the *Electoral Act* was split between the Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration (until 2003 called the Justice Department) and the Legislative Department.

Since the inception of what used to be called the Electoral Office set up under the *Electoral Act 1963*, the function of 'Returning Services' had always remained under the administration of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. The 'Registration Services' function, on the other hand, was administered by the Justice Department until 1990, when universal suffrage supplanted the *matai* suffrage as a result of a Plebiscite (national referendum) conducted that year. From 1990 'Registration Services' moved under the charge of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly; and in 2000 it went back to the Justice Department.

The OEC in its administrative role has a responsibility to the community to ensure that all qualified electors and voters are registered and aware of their rights and responsibilities under the Act.

The Office of the Electoral Commissioner is funded through the Annual Budget Estimates.

The responsible minister is the Minister of Justice. The relationship between the OEC and the Minister of Justice is governed under the *Electoral Act 1963* and the 2005 Amendment.

The Commissioner, who is also the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Office, is appointed under the terms of Section 3 of the *Electoral Amendment Act 2005*. The senior management staff group at present consists of:

Electoral Commissioner:

*Tanuvasa Meleisea Isitolo Lemisio*

Assistant Electoral Commissioner:

*Simea Avei-Fata*

Deputy Registrar

*Pualele Atoa*

Deputy Returning Officer

*Savaiinaea Ieremia Laalaai*

Principal Accountant and Administration:

*Hilda Fidow-Leilua*

The present organisation chart of the Office is included in the body of the *Review Report*.

The office premises of the Electoral Commissioner are located at Lalovaea in the old Telecommunication building. There is a need to secure more suitable accommodation at a central location to minimise inconvenience for people who use our services.

## Key Strategic Issues

Based on the analysis of our environment, we have identified the following key strategic issues and associated risks that we need to address in our plan

### **Independence:**

Our work has to be, and be perceived to be, independent of political control. The ways in which independence is understood and guaranteed has a significant impact on how we operate. We need to have the capacity to work towards ensuring the independence of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner in every sense of the word.

### **Legislative framework:**

Legislation prescribes our role and details of how we perform certain tasks. There are a number of areas where we may want to suggest change. We need to ensure that we have the capacity to effect this in a useful and effective manner.

### **Relationship management:**

We need to establish and effectively manage a range of relationships with the other government agencies, and with our other stakeholders. Poor or ineffective relationships with any of these entities can severely hamper us in meeting our goals.

### **Resources:**

Staff, time and *money* are all finite and: the resources that we have need to be managed as efficiently as possible to meet our overall goals.

### **Capacity to respond to diverse needs:**

As a small organisation with a broad role and an effective five year operational cycle, we need to ensure that we have the capacity amongst our staff to deal flexibly with the full range of work that we cover.

### **Identifying other target audiences:**

We do not have good information on the level of society who need our services most and thus we need research before we can design projects.

### **Knowledge base:**

There is little good, research: based information available on reasons for non registration of qualified electoral /voters and reasons why registration is low during non election years. There is also little research based information on voters' understanding and attitudes towards Samoa's system of government. We need this information to confidently design and deliver effective education campaigns.

### **Credibility:**

We need to ensure that our education role is widely understood and accepted and the output well received. We want to be the first port of call for information on electoral matters.

## Our Strategic Goals

In order to live up to our values and progress towards our mission and address our strategic issues, we have identified four broad goals to guide our annual planning over the next five years. The goals provide the planning framework. Resources will be focused on projects which help us to meet these goals. Risks to meeting these goals will be assessed and managed.

**Goal 1 – An enhanced Registration Services based on reliable information and research.**

**Goal 2 – An enhanced Returning Services based on reliable information and research**

**Goal 3 – To provide adequate and quality support to the administration of the electoral system and execution of the electoral process**

**Goal 4 – To ensure the progressive evolution of the electoral system and its administration.**

The following table shows the performance indicators and where the activities will be undertaken in implementing the strategies under each goal.

Goal 1: An enhanced Registration Services based on reliable information and research.		
Strategy	Performance Indicator	Responsibility
Research, review, streamline and strengthen Registration procedures and systems.	Manual to guide Registration process. Registration process evenly spread out. Bottlenecks in registration process ironed out.	Registration
Train and develop staff	Level of stakeholder confidence in registration service enhanced Appropriate staff in place	
Establish and manage partnerships with relevant overseas and local agencies	Best practice information available and implemented Best IT practice in voter registration implemented Village council and community organisations engaged in enhancing registration process	Registration, CSD Registration, CSD, Registration
Develop and implement voter education and awareness strategy	Ongoing education and awareness programmes focusing on Registration	EC, Registration, Advisor

Goal 2: An enhanced Returning Services based on reliable Information and Research		
Strategy	Performance Indicator	Responsibility
Research, review, streamline and strengthen Returning procedures and systems.	Master Guide for conduct of elections available and used.	Returning
	Polling Day results and feedback system reflect enhanced system	Returning
	Stakeholder confidence in Returning systems enhanced.	Returning
Train and develop staff	Level of stakeholder confidence in Returning services enhanced Appropriate staff in place	Returning Returning and CSD
Establish and manage relationships with overseas and local agencies	Best practice on polling/voting available and implemented where appropriate	Returning
	Use of IT in Returning investigated and applied as appropriate	CSD, Returning
	Community organisations and village councils engaged to enhance polling/voting practices and behaviour	Returning
Develop and implement strategy regarding voter education on Samoa's electoral process and system of government, and referenda.	Ongoing education programme in line with agreed strategy. Level of understanding and appreciation of Samoa's electoral process and system of government enhanced.	AEC, Returning, Technical Advisor
Goal 3: To provide adequate and quality support to the administration of the electoral system and execution of the electoral process.		
Strategy	Performance Indicator	Responsibility
We will aggressively move to make administration smarter and sharper so as to release resources for core activities:		
Review and develop structures (functional organisation, lines of responsibility, pay and award systems) to promote a career pathway to attract and retain staff	Recruit appropriate qualified level of staff in Registration, Returning, Strategic Planning, Records, Research, IT and Staff Development services	CSD
Develop staff recruitment, succession and technical training plans, and manage staff performance	Staff appraisal and capability development systems promoted by PSC implemented Performance Management System developed and implemented	AEC, CSD
Develop IT and automated support to facilitate the execution and administration of the electoral process.	OEC has a clear policy for the computerisation of the registration and voting processes.	EC, AEC, CSD

Goal 4: To ensure the progressive evolution of the electoral system and its administration.		
Strategy	Performance Indicator	Responsibility
In advocating for our roles and the concept of independence in electoral administration, we will:		
Ensure alignment of our duties and responsibilities with our legal mandate.	EC duty statement reconciled with Electoral Amendment Act 2005 Role and status of OEC reconciled with s.3A(f) of the Act.	EC
Engage in debate over issues relating to the electoral system and its administration	Studies undertake to elicit voter/elector views on aspects of the electoral system and process, and findings analysed in consultation with stakeholders  The conducting of general elections and by-elections monitored and documented and findings analysed in consultation with stakeholders	AEC  AEC
Proactively rationalise the electoral process and the administrative structures for the conducting of general elections	Research undertaken into ways of simplifying the electoral process and making the polling day administrative structures more efficient.  Section 5(5)(b) of the Act amended as recommended by past commissions of inquiry into the general elections..  Arrangements entered into with the Registrar(s) of Births, Deaths and Marriages to facilitate relevant provisions of the Act.	AEC  EC  EC
Maintain a capacity to be informed of and to comment on international electoral administration practices, debates and research	EC and/or OEC become a member/associate/affiliate of relevant Commonwealth or other recognised international bodies.  Management understand regional electoral administration practices for update and ongoing improvement of electoral service.	EC  EC, AEC, Returning, Registration and CSD
Advise Government and Parliament on appropriate and necessary legislative changes towards meeting this goal	Appropriate amendments to legislation and regulations in place for a seamless electoral service.	EC