

TRAINING REPORT ON ADVANCED ELECTRONIC FILING



(Attendees and the Keynote Speaker, Mr Matt sitting in the front row third from right)

NAME: HILKKA MODDRIA KALONIKARA

DEPARTMENT: OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SOLICITOR

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Acting Public Solicitor from the Office of the Public Solicitor for approving my participation in this valuable training. I am equally thankful to the Vanuatu Australian Police and Justice Program for their generous financial support in fully funding the trip. A special word of thanks also goes to our Advisor, Mr. Phillip Smith, for his dedicated efforts in ensuring the smooth and successful coordination of my travel and participation.

The primary objective of this training was to support organizations—including the Office of the Public Solicitor—in transitioning from paper-based records to digital filing systems. The program equipped participants with a comprehensive understanding of electronic filing, document scanning, operational efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

Held over two days at the Tanoa Grand Plaza in Suva, Fiji, from 16th to 17th September 2025, the training aimed to empower attendees with the skills to design and implement digital filing systems, digitize paper records, enhance document retrieval processes, and maintain compliance standards.

The keynote speaker for the event was Mr. Matt O'Mara, who shared valuable insights and practical strategies throughout the sessions.

The modules that were covered throughout those 2 days were:

- **Foundations of Electronic Filing & Records Management**

During this module, we explored strategies for transitioning from a paper-based records system to an electronic filing (E-Filing) system. Currently, the Office of the Public Solicitor operates under a Hybrid Filing System, which incorporates both physical files and electronic records via the LCMS platform. To successfully implement a full transition to digital filing, the Office requires a clearly defined Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and comprehensive guidelines—resources that are presently lacking.

- **Scanning and Digitization of paper records**

In this module, the keynote speaker introduced us to effective techniques for scanning documents. I discovered that the Clerical team at the Office of the Public Solicitor (OPS) has not been utilizing the Optical Character Recognition (OCR) feature, despite it being available on our existing printer and scanner equipment. I have since shared this information with our Paralegal Officer. Using OCR is crucial, as it enables word-for-word scanning—making it significantly easier to retrieve specific terms from lengthy documents, such as those spanning 75 pages.

- **Digital Storage, Access and retrieval**

In this module, the speaker provided an overview of digital storage systems. As is widely known, the Office of the Public Solicitor (OPS) currently utilizes two digital storage platforms: the Shared Drive, which is managed by the OGCI team, and the Legal Case Management System (LCMS), an outsourced E-Filing system administered by a contracted service provider.

- **Compliance, Risk & Security in Digital Filing**

During this module, the speaker emphasized the importance of having a formal document retention and disposal policy. It was noted that the Office of the Public Solicitor (OPS) currently lacks such a policy. Implementing one would be a cost-effective measure, enabling more efficient document management and reducing unnecessary expenditure on storage. A well-defined policy would also help establish clear guidelines for the lifespan and storage requirements of all documents handled by the Office.

The speaker also highlighted the importance of maintaining data security and implementing proper access controls. At present, the Office of the Public Solicitor (OPS) uses hole punching as a method to indicate that documents have been scanned. However, adopting an official stamp would be a more appropriate and professional approach to mark scanned documents and confirm their authenticity as digital copies of original records. From a security standpoint, it is essential that any reproduced scanned documents are clearly identifiable as such, ensuring users understand they are not handling original physical documents.

- **AI, Automation & Future Trends in Records Management**
- **Practical Implementation & Case Studies**

In the final two modules, the speaker highlighted both the advantages and potential drawbacks of integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into workplace systems. The Office of the Public Solicitor (OPS) is gradually adopting AI technologies; however, awareness among staff remains limited. The session concluded with insightful discussions on real-world case studies showcasing successful transitions to electronic filing systems.

The training which I have attended was very informative and has showed the importance of having an SOP. Therefore I intend to begin drafting a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) along with clear guidelines for the filing of all documents managed by this office, with a particular focus on the clerical team. This initiative will be a collaborative effort involving the clerical staff, our Office Manager, and our Advisor, Mr. Phillip, to ensure the SOP is properly developed and effectively implemented.

Establishing this SOP will facilitate a smooth transition from the current hybrid filing system to a fully electronic filing (E-Filing) system. The shift will bring numerous benefits to the office, including cost and space savings, faster document retrieval, improved operational efficiency, enhanced accessibility and security, better organization and searchability of records, and a more environmentally sustainable approach to document management.

The only challenge I encountered during my trip was related to the coordination and booking of my flight tickets. I would recommend that the organizing team conduct thorough checks and reviews of all flight arrangements in future. Aside from this minor issue, the entire training trip proceeded smoothly without any complications.

I would like to propose the following recommendations for consideration by the Office:

- Begin by implementing a comprehensive Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) along with clear guidelines for document filing.
- Introduce the use of an official stamp to properly identify scanned documents and confirm their authenticity.
- Encourage the clerical team to utilize Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology when scanning documents to enhance searchability and efficiency.
- Establish a dedicated filing or storage facility within the Office, rather than relying solely on the National Archive.
- Develop and enforce a standardized document retention policy to clearly define the shelf-life of all records.
- Consider acquiring an internally managed Legal Case Management System to replace the outsourced platform, allowing the clerical team greater flexibility and control over system updates and modifications

In closing, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who supported me throughout this training and helped make my participation possible.

Below are some pictures taken throughout the training:

