

**NEWSFEED**

## Condolences for victims of the Martin Place siege

A condolence book for the victims of the December 15 Sydney siege was placed in the Parliament House Marble Foyer paying tribute to the victims of the Martin Place siege, in which three people died, including the hostage-taker. Fifteen other hostages survived the ordeal.

The flag atop Parliament House in Canberra flew at half-mast as a sign of respect for the victims.

As a result of the tragedy, Prime Minister Tony Abbott and the Premier of NSW, Mike Baird, established a review.

Prime Minister Abbott said that following the tragic loss of innocent lives, we must learn what we can from this incident and implement any changes necessary at the state and federal level.

“The Commonwealth and New South Wales governments will urgently conduct a review into the Martin Place siege and what lessons can be learned from the events leading up to and surrounding the siege. As our State and Commonwealth law enforcement and security agencies work together to keep Australia safe, the review will identify important lessons for the future.”

“The review will take account of the parallel investigations into the incident including by the NSW State Coroner, NSW Police and Australian Federal Police,” the Prime Minister said.

(Editor’s Note: The review has now been completed and the governments’ response to the report is expected in coming weeks.) ■



## Life experience required when handling tax disputes

### Commonwealth Ombudsman calls for a triage system when handling complaints



**SENIOR TAX OFFICERS:** The ATO is trying to boost taxpayer trust.

**S**enior tax officers with greater life experience need to pay more attention to dealing with complaints from the public, a parliamentary inquiry has been told.

The Tax and Revenue Committee is investigating disputes between taxpayers and the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), in particular in relation to collecting revenue; fair treatment and respect of taxpayers; and efficiency, effectiveness and transparency from the perspective of both taxpayers and the ATO.

The Commonwealth Ombudsman, Colin Neave AM, told the committee that life experience is vital for the proper handling of disputes.


“You really have to have that triage system in place. The most experienced people in an organisation are often the people who should be involved in dealing with complaints, but quite often it is the most junior people who are involved in complaints.


“There are all sorts of problems with things like pay rates, levels and all the rest of it in both the public sector and the private sector. You have very fine young people with terrific education and all the rest of it, but, unless they have seen both sides of the real world, they come up with a slant on something which is not particularly helpful for either party—the complainant or the institution,” said Mr Neave.

Committee Chair, John Alexander (Bennelong, NSW), said, “Through the Committee’s work which will contribute to the Government’s broader agenda on tax reform, the ATO has made clear its efforts to promote taxpayer confidence and trust in the system.” ■

**LINKS**

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