



Australia Asia Pacific Media Initiative (AAPMI)

Submission to the

Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade

Inquiry into supporting democracy in our region

The Australia Asia Pacific Media Initiative would like to thank the committee for the invitation to make this submission.

Who is AAPMI?

AAPMI is an expert group that came together in the national interest in 2018 to address the lack of policy focus on the role of Australian public interest media in our region.

Members include media executives, journalists and technologists with decades of experience in Asia and the Pacific as well as other experts, academics and members of Australia's Pacific and Asian diaspora communities. Media industry members have worked at the highest level in Australia and the region in commercial and public roles. AAPMI has supporters in most Australian states and territories and in 10 countries including Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea and many others in the Pacific.

Our immediate aim is to build a bi-partisan and cross-media-industry consensus on the need for a significant step-up in Australian media in the Pacific and Asia, utilising innovative partnerships with regional media and the latest technology. We are agnostic about media companies, platforms and technologies, preferring that decisions be based on the national interest.

We welcome the Albanese government's announcement of its Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy and the former Morrison government's recognition of the importance of broadcasting as part of Australia's Pacific Step Up.

***Disclosure:** Members of AAPMI including but not limited to signatories to this document work across the Pacific media landscape including with commercial, public and community organisations.*

Executive summary

This submission recommends the rebuilding of Australia's media voice in the Pacific and Asia using television, radio and digital platforms with a significant injection of funds into Australia's media development work to ensure public interest media in our region survive the digital disruption and are able to play their important accountability role.

We welcome the government's Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy as an excellent first step. However, given the rapidly increasing challenge from autocratic regimes, the crisis for public interest media in many countries and the proliferation of mis- and dis-information in our region, we believe the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy will require urgent additional resources.

We make two specific recommendations based on research by AAPMI experts:

1. ***The allocation of a total of \$55-75 million per year to ensure Australia has a fit-for-purpose multi-platform media voice in the Asia Pacific region.*** This is one of 3 options discussed below. It would provide full television, radio and digital services across a geographic area stretching from India in the west to French Polynesia in the east and include rebroadcasts by partner stations. Australia's media in the region, especially the ABC, is acknowledged as a vital role-model and actor in supporting democracy.

Quality, public interest media is an essential but neglected pillar of democracy. It can amplify and sustain the impact of every aspect of Australia's engagement and partnerships in the region and has unparalleled reach, including to those sceptical of the Australian government. It is impactful and cost-effective 'soft power'. It is separate and different to government communications programs, with its 'soft power' being born out of its independence from government or business interests. Australia has existing assets of trusted media that can easily be ramped up to make a significant difference.

To ensure that any re-invigorated international media initiatives respect our neighbours' sovereignty and avoid perceived paternalism, AAPMI believes new funding for content should focus on partnerships and co-productions with media professionals in our region. This would generate a conversation that talks 'with' and not 'to' our neighbours. Increased involvement of Australia's Pacific and Asian diaspora communities and Australian South Sea Islanders and First nations would demonstrate Australia as the sophisticated 21st Century nation it is.

While news and current affairs would be at the heart of the service, the offering needs, to go well beyond that to sport, culture, science, business, drama, music, children's programs and more - proving that Australia's connections are deep and broad and not just about our immediate strategic interests.

2. ***An increase in Australia's development assistance to build the capacity of Pacific and Asian public interest media*** to at least 0.6% of the development assistance budget. Media development support is essential if public interest media is to survive in the Pacific. With a total Australian aid budget of \$4.549 billion in 2022-23 the media development component should amount to \$27.294 million annually.

Current and recent programs such as the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS), the Media Development Initiative in PNG and Women in News and Sport in Asia and the Pacific provide excellent but tightly focused and limited support.

Without substantial additional funding these and other programs will not achieve new wider goals set for them let alone meet the requirements of the new more complex information environment.

The context - the importance of stability, democracy and good governance in our region

Quality, public interest media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Public interest media provides an independent, fact-checked, impartial watchdog on those in power, a source of vital information for citizen's wishing to make decisions, a platform to give voice to the voiceless, an antidote to mis- and dis-information and a 'town square' for debate about the issues confronting people and nations. But it is more than that. Through content beyond news, current affairs and investigative journalism, such as documentaries, drama, sport, entertainment and more, media plays a role in creating understanding and emotional connections between cultures and communities, and in forming values, including democratic values.

It can also play an important part in shaping national and regional identities. The World Bank highlighted the unique and central role that media can play as an agent of democratic accountability and good governance in its 2017 World Development [Report](#) (esp pp 252-255). As it noted: "By publicizing information that is reliable and salient for citizens, the media can change the incentives of elites by increasing the costs of certain behaviour or policy decisions, reshape preferences and beliefs, and make the policy arena more contestable". The media also has the potential to have a positive impact on civil society reshaping preferences and social norms within societies to support democracy and inclusion.

As social media becomes more ubiquitous and the spread of disinformation more widespread, the role of quality, fact-checked public interest media becomes ever more essential.

The fast-changing current environment in our region - Australia's interest in supporting our neighbours' sovereignty and independence

Australia's contribution to free and independent media both through its own media and support for Pacific and Asian media demonstrates Australia's values and is cost-effective 'soft power.'

Australia's support for free media demonstrates and amplifies discussion of the full gamut of Australian democratic values. Public interest media has the potential to explore and explain issues that go to the heart of regional stability, good governance and democracy, improving accountability and protecting https://www.cna.org/archive/CNA_Files/pdf/irm-2019-u-019755-final.pdf democratic institutions, the role of civil society and the issues that bear on nations ability to assert their sovereignty and independence be they cultural, political or international.

Two landmark Lowy Institute reports ([here](#) and [here](#)) on international public broadcasting highlight the unique value of international broadcasting to Australia's public diplomacy and conclude that independent public interest media is a highly effective form of soft power that has been under-appreciated and significantly under-resourced by Australia.

A recent [report](#) on the information environment in the Pacific by US Naval think-tank CNA concludes: “As traditional partners for many of the PICs (Pacific Island countries), Australia and New Zealand occupy positions of privilege in the media. However, their positions are less secure than they once were.” It suggests Australia and New Zealand have a crucial role in assisting Pacific nations to build their resilience against unsanctioned interference or influence by foreign actors and makes recommendations on how Australia could do this. Media independence from government and business is an essential element of international broadcasting – one that demonstrates Australia’s values in action.

At the same time, media in our region face existential challenges including:

- **Geopolitical, especially the growing influence of the China on the region’s media.** Media in both Asia and the Pacific are being courted by China in an unprecedented campaign described by respected academic researchers as no less than a plan for ‘[global media dominance](#)’.

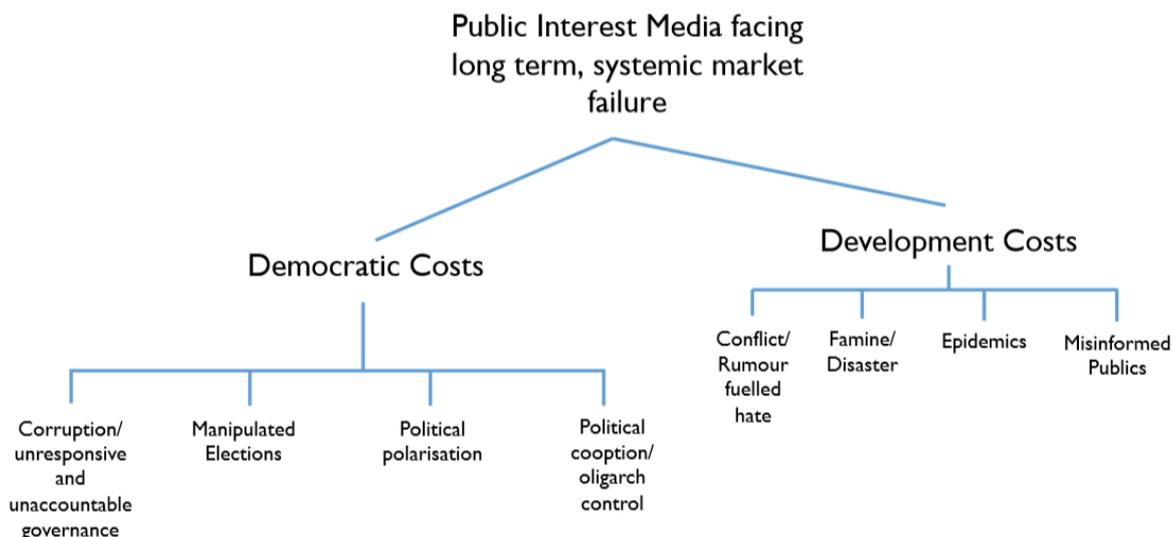
The sophisticated and multi-layered approach China takes to influencing the world’s media is documented in [this](#) report from the International Federation of Journalists. In the Pacific, journalism academics have [expressed](#) concern about the creeping influence of China on media freedom. A mix of ‘no strings attached’ financial aid, ‘look and learn’ tours of China for journalists, increased broadcasts by Chinese media, money for co-productions with Chinese state-run media (with editorial veto), paid advertorial inserts, the demonstration-effect on governments of an autocratic media model and more, have respected commentators seeing China [winning](#) the information war in the Pacific.

In February this year ABC managing director David Anderson [told a Senate hearing](#) ‘The single biggest piece of information that comes back to us from the public broadcasters (in the Pacific) is concern over the pressure the Chinese government put on them to carry content’.

Additional concerns include:

- the large number of Chinese state-controlled English language services in television radio and online
 - a push by Chinese state-owned media to sign additional broadcast MOU’s with Pacific media companies.
 - an expanded Pacific-based network of Chinese correspondents (e.g. Xinhua has a Suva correspondent while there are no Australian correspondents anywhere in the Pacific other than the ABC’s Port Moresby correspondent)
 - a comprehensive Chinese government visits program for Pacific journalists and strong attendance by Chinese representatives at key regional media events
 - Chinese state-owned media has assumed control of Radio Australia’s former Pacific shortwave frequencies
 - advertising and placement of sponsored Chinese state-controlled content in English language newspapers in the Pacific
 - Expanding Chinese language media in the Pacific, again with locally-based staff
- **Financial challenges for regional media caused by digital disruption and exacerbated by COVID** – It has been widely acknowledged that business models available to public interest media across the world are disappearing as advertising revenue flees to digital platforms that do

not pay for the journalistic product they publish. As the Global Forum for Media Development [notes](#) ‘The consequences of this decline for the prospects for democracy, development and good governance are dire’. See diagram below.



Source: Global Forum for Media Development

Public interest media in our region are as severely impacted as any.

In the Pacific quality media is facing an immediate threat, with many on the verge of bankruptcy and at least one having slipped into receivership in the past 12 months. The full impact of digital disruption is yet to be felt in the Pacific, but it will be particularly dire. Since the COVID pandemic, advertising revenue has dropped dramatically and has not recovered in line with other sectors, as borders re-opened. This situation makes it almost impossible for Pacific media to play its role as the fourth estate without significant support from development partners.

- **Mis- information, dis-information and information warfare.** Misinformation and dis-information, (particularly that circulated on social media) are rife in the Pacific and Asia creating a significant challenge to democracy and stability.

Political disinformation directed at issues ranging from the local to international level, [COVID](#) and other health misinformation, trolling of individuals as well as financial scams is commonplace. Mis and disinformation campaigns are increasing fear in the community and promoting lack of trust, including trust in a range of essential democratic institutions.

A December 2021 [report](#) for USAID focusing on our region, notes that democracy has been in decline across Asia and the Pacific for over 10 years’ and that ‘information disorder, (has created) an environment in which distorted and manipulated information is ubiquitous has been said to play an important role in affirming authoritarianism and destabilizing democracy across the region’.

Sources of mis- and disinformation include state and non-state, local and external actors. Quality independent media has an important role to play as an antidote to misinformation. Fact-checking, news investigations, public awareness campaigns and media/social media literacy

initiatives are key roles of media, but these require significant additional support especially in the Pacific, where these are beyond the current resources of media.

The need for Australia to explain itself to the region has been identified by regional leaders over many decades and has become more urgent as threat of mis- and dis-information intensifies.

- **Media Freedom environment** - Media Freedom in the Pacific and Asia is under increasing challenge. The Reporters Sans Frontier 2022 Media Freedom Index [says](#) “Press freedom has deteriorated dramatically” in the Asia Pacific region, with many countries ranking poorly and dropping places in the index.

In South-East Asia, journalism organisations and media unions independent of the authoritarian state are struggling to survive as governments have used the pandemic as reasons to crack down on dissent and exposure. Public interest media has had a chequered if brief history in the region after the so-called democracy wave of the 1980s and 1990s, with the recent decade more notable for reversals in media freedoms, as documented by RSF (Reporters Without Borders) reports. An insightful example of how public interest media is curbed can be found in the International Federation of Journalists' [report](#) on the COVID crackdown in Malaysia.

Journalists across the region are subjected to threats and challenges to their personal safety. Specific concerns in the Pacific were outlined in a [statement](#) from the Melanesian Media Freedom Forum 2019.

Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis there has been an increase in threats to media, including more [censorship](#).

Governments are increasingly copying China’s state-controlled media model, taking greater control of their public broadcasters (most recently in Solomon Islands).

Australian media, the ABC in particular, have for decades supported Pacific media and journalists by breaking important stories [passed on](#) to them by Pacific media and whistleblowers unable to publish due to censorship or bans on reporting.

The state of Australian media and Australian media development in our region

Australia’s media in the region

Three years ago Australia’s media voice in the region was at its lowest ebb since World War II. Budget cuts in 2014 saw the ABC’s international service lose 60 per cent its funding and many of its essential services to the region.

Since then, Australian governments and the ABC have recognised the need to do more in the Asia Pacific region. The Morrison government provided \$17.1 million to FreeTV Australia (an alliance of commercial television stations) to provide 1000 hours of television a year to Pacific nations over three years, an initiative which has been extended for another 12 months as part of the Albanese governments Indo-Pacific Broadcasting strategy. The ABC which has introduced a raft of new content specifically

for the Pacific audience In the small Pacific market, the ABC has regained its place as the leading international broadcaster.

AAPMI is pleased to see the October 2022 budget allocation of \$32 million to ABC International (over 4 years) and the ABC's announcement that the additional funding will be used to install more FM transmitters in the region, produce content and employ more full-time journalists to file for Pacific and Australia audiences.

AAPMI welcomes these moves however, they still leave Australia's media voice in the region as little more than a whisper and do not meet a minimum requirement of talking 'with' and not 'to' the region. If Australia is to demonstrate that it is listening to regional voices and respecting their sovereignty, that it understands the complex and sophisticated requirements of culturally diverse audiences and has left behind a paternalistic past, it needs to do more to share our democratic values and protect democratic institutions.

In particular, it needs to support co-productions between Australian and Asian and Pacific media and ensure that Australia's Asia-Pacific diaspora, Australian South Sea Islander and First nations voices are involved in these initiatives.

In the multi-platform world of the 21st Century media, impact and success relies on tailor-made content and meeting audience needs on their terms and in the language of their choice.

In Asia, the ABC's bespoke programming is primarily online and barely visible. In the Pacific, which has been the focus of the ABC and the government's recent media initiatives, there are still 10 Pacific Island Forum states that no longer receive the ABC's flagship Pacific current affairs program (Pacific Beat). No media is bringing all Pacific Islands Forum nations together to debate public policy issues – a shocking blind spot, given the obvious need in the current information environment.

On television, both the PacificAusTV (the name of the initiative funded through FreeTV Australia) and the ABC rely primarily on rebroadcast of content made for Australian audiences. While this is welcomed by broadcasters with airtime to fill, it is not what they have asked for. Numerous submissions from Pacific leaders, media and citizens to Australian inquiries in Australia have called for high quality, public interest content using Pacific voices. They see this as important to reach into Australia, as well as across the region.

Australia's media development in the region

Australia is highly valued for its reputation as the Pacific's main provider of support for capacity development for public interest media and in Asia when it is able to make a contribution.

At present however, Australia's media development in the region has been reduced to a shoestring program in the Pacific and PNG and an almost non-existent contribution in Asia. In the Pacific, the funding for the flagship Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) during Phase 3 (April 2017 to June 2021) amounted to just \$11.39 million (or approx. \$2.8 million per year). It was not able to cater to all Pacific Island Forum countries.

While funding has been increased towards the later part of Phase 3, it still only provides for a narrow range of activities and countries. The smaller Media Development Initiative (MDI) in PNG seeks to support an even more challenged media covering a larger population. Additional programs such as Women in News and Sport assisted media in countries in both Asia and the Pacific (Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Philippines).

These are valuable programs but insufficient to the task presented by able to advocate for the democratic role of media. It was beyond the scope of any Australian program to assist media management and businesses to navigate the digital transition and establish business viability and to support national and regional media organisations at a level which would make it possible for them to share their much-needed expertise in their own countries on issues such as online safety and misinformation, to consult properly with their national governments, regional organisations and development partners or to defend journalists and media houses facing challenges to media freedom.

As discussed above, quality public interest media is an essential pillar of democracy and has a crucial role to play in explaining issues to the public in difficult times. Media development support needs to be funded sufficiently to make a contribution to sustainable quality journalism and other content, to support media businesses to make the transition to digital, to support media industry organizations and to support civil society to have its say.

It is welcome that in Phase IV, PACMAS will have an appropriately wider brief. However, if it does not receive significantly increased funding it will be unable to meet the objectives set for it.

In South-East Asia Australia needs to be able to provide country specific programs in key south East Asian nations.

Conclusion: It is urgent that Australia steps up as both a media player and as a development partner supporting the capacity of quality, independent media in the Pacific and Asia as per the recommendations above. While respecting the independence of media, the two elements of Australian policy can work together.

The way forward for Australia’s media voice in the region - supporting democracy in our region

AAPMI recommends a recapitalised Australian media presence in the region with clear purpose based on an overarching policy in the national interest. The measures contained in the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy are an excellent first step on this path. Those measures now need to be set within an articulated strategy and integrated into the overarching foreign policy framework.

Multi-platform international broadcasting for the world’s most diverse region is a complex enterprise. To assist in achieving a comprehensive policy to support the specific announcements already made as a part of the Indo-Pacific broadcasting strategy, AAPMI has developed a document called ‘Guiding Principles for an Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy in the new Communications era’. See Annex 1.

Detailed guidance can also be found in:

- AAPMI’s 57-page submission to the Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific (under its former name *Supporters of Australian Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific*) and
- A landmark Lowy Institute [report](#) on the role of international broadcasting (including Australian international broadcasting) in public diplomacy and its [update](#).

AAPMI suggests a model based around partnerships and co-productions with media in Asia and the Pacific. These would ensure Australia's talks 'with and not 'to' the region and that Australian media supports rather than competes with financially fragile public interest media in the Pacific and Asia. The new perspectives and fresh dialogue created by co-productions would have an added benefit of providing Australians with a better understanding of our region and assist in lifting Asia Pacific literacy.

We also believe harnessing stories, community connections and the creative talent of Australia's Pacific diaspora, the Australian South Sea Islander (SSI) community and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is an essential part of having a multi-layered conversation with the region. At present Australia's Pacific diaspora is underutilised by Australia's media. For the purposes of this inquiry South Sea Islanders should be considered part of the Pacific diaspora. As Australian descendants of Pacific Islanders from more than 80 Pacific islands who were kidnapped or recruited in the 19th century for work as labourers in Australia, South Sea Islanders have strong and growing links with their homelands which can be better leveraged to add depth to Australia's relations with the region. South Sea Islanders have family connections in Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG, New Caledonia, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Within the region there is also a keen interest in stronger links with Australia's indigenous communities including through media and stories told by media.

Funding and recommended options for rebuilding Australia's media voice in the Pacific and Asia

Research into Australia's media voice in the region has shown it to be dramatically under-funded and that where criticisms have been made of it in the past, this has often been a result of inadequate resourcing. As challenges to democracy in our region increased over the past decade, funding for Australia's international broadcasting has been found to have failed to keep pace even with its own standards.

In 2023, even after the welcome boost of additional funding contained in the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy, Australia will spend just \$24.7 million on international broadcasting. Of this, the ABC will spend \$19 million a year. An additional \$5.7 million will provide rebroadcasts of commercial programs in the Pacific via FreeTV Australia.

Three options are suggested to provide sufficient funding to enable the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy to respond appropriately to the challenges Australia faces.

These range from a full international broadcasting and digital service across the Pacific and Asia (option 1) to a small project for enhanced service only to PNG, the Pacific, Timor-Leste and Indonesia (option 3). **Option 1 is recommended, in conjunction with additional development assistance for regional media.**

Funding proposals for the three options have been developed by AAPMI experts based on published research, our experience as media industry insiders and consultation with current and former media executives from international broadcasting corporations (both commercial and publicly-funded). Given the lack of available open-source information they are ballpark estimates.

Each option recognises that the markets in Asia and the Pacific are very different with each requiring separate, bespoke content and mix of delivery platforms. The Pacific would be the first priority as services step-up.

The options are:

- 1) **Full Asia-Pacific television, radio and digital services** \$55-\$75 million per annum (including current funding). This option would significantly enhance services in the Pacific, Timor-Leste and Indonesia, near-neighbours among the developing nations of ASEAN and Mandarin-speakers globally, including in Australia. At its most effective (with a budget around \$75 million), this option could include tailor-made services for audiences in India. This option would include a wide range of programs made specifically for Asia-Pacific audiences, in their language of choice and would include English language-learning programs and children’s programs (as Australia is a known source of existing expertise in these genres). In any of these options news and current affairs would meet all the ABC’s rigorous guidelines for independence. This option would enable the rebuilding of audiences in Asia and the Pacific and see Australia achieve its soft power goals by re-establishing a significant voice in the region.
- 2) **Budget Asia-Pacific television radio and digital services** \$40-\$55 million This option would enhance services in the Pacific, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. Services for near-neighbour developing nations of ASEAN would be enhanced but without as much bespoke programming for audiences in each country as noted in option 1. Bespoke services for India would be beyond the financial resources of this option.
- 3) **Television, radio and digital in Papua New Guinea, the Pacific, Timor-Leste and Indonesia** \$35-\$50 million per annum. This option would provide for significantly enhanced radio and television content and access to digital platforms and transmission in Australia’s very closest neighbouring countries (identified as priorities in the 2016 Defence White Paper i.e. PNG, the Pacific, Timor-Leste and Indonesia). At its upper funding-level this option would provide services of a standard similar to Option 1 (above) but over a more limited geographic area. At its lower funding-level it would provide services at slightly lower level to Option 2. Funding for this option recognises that establishment costs do not scale proportionately with the geography covered by the service as maintaining services in the Pacific is comparatively costly.

The future - ways in which Australia can assist our neighbours

In the Pacific, Australia has been and is looked to, as the main provider of capacity-building for public interest journalism development – in many cases the only significant source of capacity-building. In Asia, Australia has a long traditional of involvement in media development and respected for its that work. Since the completion of the highly effective Cambodia Communications Assistance Project in 2018 Australia has not had any country-specific media development project in Asia – on governance and democracy or any other issue.

The Indo-Pacific is the epicentre of the geo-political contest of ideas and the region in which Australia has most to lose from the challenge to democratic values and rules-based global governance.

As a result, AAPMI believes Australia should set an immediate *target to allocate 0.6% of its development budget to support for media and communications development.*

With a total Australian aid budget of \$4.549 billion in 2022-23 the media development component would amount to \$27.294 million annually.

AAPMI experts stand ready to assist or meet with the Committee to discuss any of the issues above.

In recent years we have made submissions to other inquiries that may be of interest to the Committee.

Its submission to the 2018 Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific, (under AAPMI's former name *Supporters of Australian Broadcasting in Asia and the Pacific*) has been cited above.

Additional AAPMI submissions that may be of interest to the Committee include contributions to:

- the Parliamentary joint Committee on Intelligence and Security inquiry into the exercise of Law Enforcement and Intelligence Powers on the Freedom of the Press (submission 51)
- this Committee's inquiries (2020-2022) into Strengthening Australia's relationships in the Pacific and into activating greater trade and investment with Pacific Island countries (submission 55).

Signed on behalf of AAPMI

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Prof Rodney Tiffen, Emeritus Professor in Government and International Relations at the University of Sydney, specialising in media. Panel member for reviews of ABC Radio Australia (1989, 1995, 1997), and contributor to Finkelstein inquiry into the media (2011-12).

Prof Jioji Ravulo, Professor of Social Work and Policy Studies, University of Sydney with wide interests incl Aust diaspora communities, Asia Pacific projects and LGBTIQ+, TEDx speaker and media contributor, former actor and comedian

Loau Donina Va'a Founder and Chair, Pacific Women's Professional Business Network, Strategy Lead for the CORE Pacific Collective, a network formed in mid-2021 to support Pacific COVID-19 response in collaboration with the NSW Government.

Emelda Davis, President Australian South Sea Islanders (Port Jackson), Producer (Film & television), Councillor Sydney City Council

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ANNEXURE 1



Australia Asia Pacific Media Initiative (AAPMI)

Guiding principles for the implementation of an Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy in the new communications era

1. A New Era

In the current digital era, media has rapidly moved to a multi-platform configuration; blending one-to-many, one-to-one, and integrated/collaborative and interactive services.

In the Indo-Pacific, independent public interest media face disproportionate challenges from dis- and mis-information, a deteriorating media freedom environment and existential financial pressures created by digital transition.

These trends, and the lack of a coherent, strong, confident and accessible Australian voice are increasingly damaging to Australia's interests and values in the region, especially as other nations fill the media void.

To be effective a renewed Australian media presence in the Indo-Pacific will need be:

- **governed by an overarching policy based in the national interest.** This policy would articulate the purpose of the Indo-Pacific Broadcasting Strategy and any subsequent or related activities. It would guide all Australian Government-funded or supported broadcast initiatives (or media services) and media development activities.
- **address trends in the information environment and technological context by:**
 - designing multi-platform services tailored for the interests and needs of each region, including in appropriate languages
 - reflecting Asian and Pacific voices in conversation with Australians and each other
 - producing content in partnership with regional media organisations wherever possible
 - being involved in two-way skills training, education and development initiatives
 - consulting with Australia's Asia Pacific diaspora groups and with Australian South Sea Islander and First Nations communities on content and services
 - consulting, in our region, with audiences and public interest media organisations on content and services
 - supporting media freedom in the Indo-Pacific
 - designing services capable of reaching target audiences at times when local communications are disrupted, including as a result of political interventions or natural disasters.

2. Australia's media service

To be credible; to build on the reputation of Australia's public media services in the past; and, to ensure the richest possible content creation, the renewed Australian media service should:

- provide content and services coordinated through a coherent Australia brand that can be trusted and consistent across platforms
- in fulfilling its purpose be editorially independent of government and business
- place high priority on original, accurate and high-quality public interest journalism and media content
- offer opportunities to involve all Australian media sectors in production, appropriate to the audiences being served
- apply contestable content acquisition policies
- benefit from stable institutional arrangements, and long-term funding
- reflect Australia's 21st Century diversity by drawing on managerial, content-creation and development talent within Australia's Asia Pacific, Australian South Sea Islander and First nations communities

3. Australia's media development in the Indo-Pacific

Australia is the leading source of capacity development and other assistance to media practitioners and organisations in the Pacific; it has also long been a valued actor in Asia. However, the scale of these programs is insufficient in the increasingly challenging regional environment.

To be effective Australian media development needs to recognise the immediate threat to the future of public interest journalism, especially in the Pacific where Australia is the primary actor.

As well as scaling up activities, Australia's media development would:

- maintain a focus on developing independent, quality, public interest media
- consult widely and recognise the best media development is partner-led
- support development of all aspects of media including content-creation, media management and business models, digital transition, and media partnerships with Australian and other Indo-Pacific media organisations.
- offer stable and long-term funding including multi-year programs and partnerships with specific media houses. These could include contestable content funds including for non-news initiatives such as children's programs.
- have a capacity for rapid-response projects in case of emergencies and unpredictable events
- support media industry bodies including national media associations to improve the quality of the media and represent their industry and its workers at a national and regional level on a wide range of issues (from advocating for the role of public interest media or commenting on digital safety or policy issues to tackling workplace discrimination or media workers safety issues)
- facilitate donor co-ordination led by recipient partners.

AAPMI October 2022