

International Broadcasting Research Group

Submission to the Review of Australian Broadcasting Services in the Asia Pacific

3 August 2018

'The time has come to speak for ourselves.'

Robert Menzies, Prime Minister of Australia, speaking on air at the launch of the first shortwave radio service by the Australian government.

Gary Dickson – Researcher, Monash University
Heather Jarvis – Senior lecturer, Monash University
Louisa Lim – Senior lecturer, Melbourne University
Associate Prof Colleen Murrell – Head of Journalism, Swinburne University
Dr Alexandra Wake – Senior lecturer, RMIT University

Background

This is a submission from the IBRG to The Department of Communications and the Arts and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade as part of the review into the reach of Australian broadcasting services in the Asia Pacific region, which includes an examination of whether shortwave radio technology should be used.

The IBRG is a collective of academics based in Australia who research and teach broadcasting. We have worked for or researched, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) ITV, NPR, Associated Press, SBS as well as various divisions of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) including ABC International/Radio Australia.

We are all members of the Journalism Education & Research Association of Australia (JERAA) and members of Australia's Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA). Murrell and Wake serve on the executive of the JERAA. A brief biographical statement on each author is included as part of this submission.

Overview

The International Broadcasting Research Group is making strong recommendations for the restoration of English-language radio and television channels featuring region-specific tailored content to Asia and the Pacific region. The cutbacks to the ABC diminish Australia's ability to "speak for ourselves" on the international stage, while depriving the region of independent news coverage at a moment when media freedom is increasingly under attack. The massive expansion of the Chinese state-run press as a tool of influence projection poses new threats to the independent media, especially in developing countries. In this context, the group is also recommending boosting journalism training and media literacy schemes, as well as the restoration of shortwave services, both for emergency communication and to bypass censorship.

Our Recommendations

Our recommendations include suggestions for the Pacific and Asia, recognizing the very different needs of the region.

Asia and Pacific

1. Restoration of English-language, public interest journalism radio and television channels (including mobile) that are produced specifically from an Australia perspective for an international and regional audience across the Asia Pacific, featuring reports by Australian and local reporters based in the region.
2. An ongoing training and education budget for local journalists in both the Pacific and South East Asia, to continue to build capacity for free and fair journalism in these countries.
3. Scholarships for students from Pacific island states and South East Asian countries wishing to study journalism in Australia.
4. Long-term funding assurance for Communication Assistance Projects, modeled on the one in Cambodia.
5. Support for media literacy campaigns produced via the ABC in local languages to assist in hoax busting and verification skills in the general public.
6. Funding for ongoing research into media changes in the region, with specific attention paid to media startups and other innovations such as AI and blockchain technologies.

Pacific

7. Restoration of shortwave services to the Pacific region with immediate attention given to the restoration of signals to parts of Melanesia which no longer receive news services from Australia, apart from China Radio International.
8. Increased resources for the ABC Radio Australia's English-language regional current affairs program, Pacific Beat. This should include the hiring of staff with specialist Pacific knowledge and funding for local stringers across the region.
9. A boost in staff and resources for ABC Radio Australia's Tok Pisin service, which has only two staff and covers important target audiences in Papua New Guinea, as well as Solomon Islands and Vanuatu.

10. A resource boost for ABC Radio Australia's Pacific Mornings program, to allow it to provide more comprehensive coverage of important regional issues such as health and education, as well as arts and culture.
11. The re-introduction of other ABC Radio Australia Pacific island-based music and magazine-style programs.
12. The production/commissioning of one or more (ABC or Independent) Pacific Islands-focused podcast series, produced in conjunction with people in the region.

Asia

13. Re-establishment of targeted English-language news and information programming for South East Asia (mobile, digital) produced specifically for our neighbours from an Australian perspective.
14. Resumption of local language news and current affairs production (mobile, digital) for countries with struggling or restricted media systems, including the hiring of staff with specialist Asia knowledge and funding for local stringers across the region.
15. A boost in staff and resources for the Chinese and Indonesia services, and a resumption of targeted language services for priority countries including Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia.

Australian broadcasting in the Asia Pacific

In the early 1930s, Australia recognized its need to directly influence populations during periods of war and conflict and began to broadcast to its neighbours, via ABC Radio Australia (Hodge 1995). Over the course of 70 years, Radio Australia expanded from shortwave transmissions to include high-quality radio signals and digital technologies. The addition of television services increased the broadcaster's reach, culminating in the ABC Australia Network. In 2008 the APNC (Asia-Pacific News Centre) was established to produce news and information programming for Radio Australia and Australia Network under one Editor, Kate Torney (Wake 2010). The Australia Network was funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Radio and online services were also created by specialist journalists and broadcasters in local languages including Mandarin, Bahasa Indonesia, Khmer, Burmese, Vietnamese, French and Tok Pisin. At other times over its history, Radio Australia featured other languages including for a time Japanese. The decision to cease funding the Australia Network in 2014 resulted in mass layoffs of specialist staff and a drastic reduction in English-language and special languages services ('Up to 80 positions at the ABC will be lost due to cancellation of Australia Network contract'). This review has been prompted by the later ABC management decision in 2017 to turn off the shortwave transmitters (*ABC exits shortwave radio transmission* 2016) and the take-up of those transmissions by China. It allows an opportunity to argue for a resumption of broadcast services, a boosting of funding, and an opportunity for the government to provide a commitment to international media development in the region.

Although many of the journalists who worked at ABC Radio Australia reject the notion, the broadcaster was considered as an agent of soft power in the Cold War era (Kurlantzick 2013). Even in the new millennium, ABC management clearly identified the ABC's international operations as a tool for soft diplomacy. Then managing director Mark Scott explained the ABC was the right organization to fulfill this role:

'We cannot abdicate our role as an independent credible voice in the region. Reflecting Australia to the world, without conflicting commercial objectives, requires credibility, a track record of effective engagement, and an ability to be diplomatically deft, without sacrificing key attributes and values of quality journalism'. (Scott 2009)

Australian officials have long held that it is in our interest to help set the agenda in the Pacific, at least, to ensure that other governments and forces do not unduly influence our neighbours or use them to hurt our national interests. The importance of broadcasting to Australia's diplomatic efforts has also always been clear. For decades, the ABC's role of broadcasting into the region had focused on modeling fair and fearless reporting to our neighbours with a strong emphasis on emergency broadcasts. Interestingly, Australia's 2017 Foreign White Paper does not make any reference to geostrategic risks posed by China, and there was also no mention of traditional broadcasting. It is only now that China is publicly stepping into the role (Wyeth 2018) that this review has been called.

Why broadcast from Australia

A free press can provide the vigorous and independent journalism required by citizens to make appropriate decisions about who to choose as our elected representatives, however many of Australia's neighbours in the Asia Pacific either do not have access to strong public interest journalism or they have governments that specifically block such journalism.

In the latest press freedom rankings from Reporters without Borders, both Tonga and Papua New Guinea have dropped two places to 51st and 53rd respectively (*Press censorship clouds the Asia-Pacific* 2018). Media freedom in Fiji is also highly restricted due to 2010 Media Industry Development Decree, which gives the Fiji Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA) the power to enforce and investigate possible violations by local media outlets (*Media freedom in the Pacific: Policing of journalists an ongoing problem in Fiji* 2018; Simmons 2018).

South East Asia similarly has major issues with press freedom (Wake 2018). News organisations are struggling with tightened government regulations and new laws, some of which are specifically aimed at “fake news”. Individual journalists have found themselves targeted. News outlets are increasingly censored through website blocking, arrests, cyber-attacks, and other violations, and public broadcasters have become easy targets because they rely upon governments for financial support.

In recent times Australia has been increasingly concerned not to treat its neighbours in the Asia Pacific as a colonial overlord, but to be a partner in their development. Therefore, broadcasting to our neighbours is exceedingly complex. There are different audiences, as well as specific language, cultural, and political issues. Broadcasters require a high-level of expertise to create work that is meaningful and appropriate for these audiences, and therefore repackaging work for a domestic audience is often not appropriate.

1. *Pacific islands states*. These Small island states (often with large fishing rights and/or sea mining wealth) have various colonial histories and links to France, Portugal, the UK, the US and Australia. Some have strong locally owned and operated newspapers and radio stations but many do not have the resources to provide the high-level public interest journalism required for the transnational stories that show issues that can impact on their nations. Most small island states have a number of educated leaders, although the general populations may have had little or limited schooling, limited access to media, and even less access to social media or television. In the very remotest of places such as outer islands or the highlands, people may only have access to shortwave signals.
2. *Undemocratic/Developing countries*. Many of Australia’s near Asian neighbours are divided between undemocratic or developing nations. Like the small island states, these countries often have a small number educated leaders. The general populations may have had little or limited schooling, often limited access to media, and even less access to social media or television. There are particular concerns about the quality and quantity of news available to people in Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, China and North Korea. In addition, there is a need to support the still developing media systems of PNG, Timor Leste, and the Solomon Islands. In a 2018 study Reporters Without Borders indicated a concern that some states, particularly Vietnam and Cambodia, were adopting a ‘Chinese model’ of state-controlled news media (*RSF Index 2018: Asia-Pacific democracies threatened by China’s media control model* 2018)¹.
3. *Democratic neighbours*. Japan and Indonesia are bright spots for public interest journalism in the region (despite recent concerns about Fake News laws), however there is increasing concern

about press freedom in Thailand, and the Philippines remains a difficult place for journalists with the well documented extra-judicial killings of reporters. Fiji, while now featuring a democratic government, continues to have draconian media laws. Some of the concerns about Malaysia are likely to be addressed by the new government, and Singapore has long exhibited strong control over its media sector.

China concern

Both diplomats and broadcasters remain concerned about the impact of China on the region. China's media strategy is driven by its desire to increase its *huayuquan* or 'discourse power' (Xiao Yang 2018, p. 79) on the global stage, to contest what it sees as the hegemony of the Western media. President Xi Jinping summed up its aims in 2014, by saying, "We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative and better communicate China's message to the world" (Biswas & Tortajada 2018). To this end, a key moment was the announcement in March 2018 of the creation of the Voice of China, which will bring into being the world's biggest broadcaster, merging the national broadcaster (CCTV), China Radio International (CRI) and China National Radio (Feng 2018b). Beijing's multipronged strategy in the Asia Pacific region includes increasing the reach of its state-run media, investing in new local partners and training individual journalists, bringing them to China for education and to attend media conferences. State-run Chinese radio stations have snapped up as many as 10 of the frequencies formerly used by Radio Australia to broadcast into the South Pacific (Riordan 2018). China Radio International's guiding strategy, as characterized by its President Wang Gengnian, is "borrowing boats to go out to sea" (Jichang 2015), or using overseas 'partner stations' to produce and deliver media content to local audiences. CRI broadcasts in 65 languages (Huang 2018, p. 142), more than any other international broadcaster.

At the end of 2015, CRI had 130 overseas radio stations, and cooperation agreements with 160 radio channels globally (Huang 2018, p. 144). Reuters has also reported on the existence of a covert global network of 33 radio stations that are local Chinese-owned companies with often undisclosed partnerships with CRI. These include four radio stations in Australia, two in New Zealand, and one each in Bangkok and Kathmandu (Qing 2015). These stations act as CRI surrogates, outwardly appearing independent, though in some cases running up to 18 hours a day of CRI material in local languages (Jichang 2015).

China is also extending its reach beyond traditional platforms to new media outlets. One salutary case is in Cambodia, where Hun Sen's government has a pro-China position, and independent news outlets have recently been under attack as evinced by the recent closure of *The Cambodia Daily* (Krisher-Steele 2017) and turmoil at the *Phnom Penh Post* ('Phnom Penh Post: firings and resignations after sale of Cambodian Daily' 2018) and the revocation of licences from more than 15 radio stations (Vanderklippe 2017). In recent years, China has supported several new players, including the website Fresh News, which started in 2014 and delivers news through a smartphone app (Meyn 2017). It relies on Xinhua coverage for foreign affairs, has a Chinese-language website and offers trips to China for its staff ('Over 40 Chinese-ASEAN journalists visit northern China's Anhui Province' 2018). The NICE television station is also Chinese-affiliated, set up by Cambodia's Interior Ministry in partnership with a Chinese company, and one employee recently summed up its mission in the following way, "We will strive to tell Chinese stories and promote Chinese culture" (Vanderklippe 2017). It also has a radio licence, and has built a fibre-optic system in Cambodia. In this way, Chinese money is reshaping the local news landscape, neutering independent coverage, subsidizing pro-China players, as well as laying the groundwork for

digital infrastructure which will underpin Beijing's plans for a "Digital Silk Road" ('China Talks of Building a Digital Silk Road' 2018).

Globally China has also stepped up its influence projection efforts through inserts in local newspapers, and through providing content to local Chinese-language newspapers (Feng 2018a). Research by the *Financial Times* shows that the biggest target of this effort in the Asia Pacific region is Japan, where 51 such content partnerships are in place, followed by South Korea's nine and Thailand's eight. In these partnerships, publishers are offered free content from the China News Service, a state-run news wire, thus allowing the publication of party-approved content under the masthead of other news outlets.

China has targeted both news consumers and news producers, offering heavily subsidized trips to China to international journalists, sometimes subsidized by the 'All China Journalists Association,' as well as hosting numerous industry fora in China. Southeast Asian journalists are hosted at the 'China-ASEAN Center for Training' (Yuan Zhou 2016) or can apply to enrol in fully subsidized programmes at the School of Journalism and Communication at Renmin University and the Communication University of China, which trains an estimated 100 foreign journalists a year. A report in the *China Daily* underlines the ideological nature of the training, which it says emphasizes the primacy of the "Chinese conceptual system." A lecturer on the course, Hu Zhengrong, says, "I avoid using Western concepts like liberal or conservative because they are loaded with implications and stereotypes that may not reflect China's true conditions" (Yuan Zhou 2016).

In conclusion, Beijing sees the media as an ideological battleground, with the concept of discourse power being addressed in Chinese writing on information warfare (Hoffman interview in Smith & Lim 2018). Some analysts posit that it views language as a "'non-traditional' state-security issue" (Hoffman 2018) in its ability to influence others. Viewed in this light, China's moves to increase its discourse power in the Asia Pacific must be seen as part of a larger battle to expand, and even impose, China's narrative control in the region.

The role of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

As the nation's public sector broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Charter requires it to:

'transmit to countries outside Australia broadcasting programs of news, current affairs, entertainment and cultural enrichment that will: encourage awareness of Australia and an international understanding of Australian attitudes on world affairs and enable Australian citizens living or travelling outside Australia to obtain information about Australian affairs and Australian attitudes on world affairs'.

(About the ABC: Legislative framework)

In its 2007 submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Nature and Conduct of Australia's Public Diplomacy, the ABC claimed that Radio Australia (RA) sought to position itself as, "The international broadcaster in Asia and the Pacific most valued for its role in the everyday lives of audiences across the region (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2007)". Its stated mission was to:

- (i) Provide trusted news coverage, expert analysis and Australian perspectives to international audiences, and,
- (ii) Connect audiences in Asia and the Pacific through programs that complement and enrich their lives and foster an informed dialogue.

These aims are as important now as they were ten years ago - arguably even more so at a time when China is asserting growing power and influence in the region, and local media outlets in a number of Pacific Island countries and South East Asian nations continue to face censorship and control from national governments.

The 2017 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index, noted that in the age of post-truth, propaganda, and suppression of freedoms, the authoritarian strongman model has triumphed: “the bad news is that media freedom is in the worst state we have ever seen” (Hunt 2017). All countries in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations fell into the bottom third of the Freedom Index, including countries once lauded as having the freest presses in the region, such as Thailand and the Philippines.

Independent, factual and robust international broadcasting has a vital role to play in this context, and Australia should still be at the forefront in providing it. However, the 2014 funding cuts slashed the number of hours of Radio Australia’s purpose-made English and Tok Pisin content to the region and replaced much of it with uncontextualized content made for Australian audiences.

The highly respected Pacific current affairs program Pacific Beat remains, albeit in a shorter format, and the new daily Pacific magazine program is arguably hugely under-resourced. Now Australia lags behind Radio New Zealand International in terms of Pacific coverage, at the same time as other international broadcasters, particularly China, are stepping up their coverage in and of the region. Radio Australia has gone from being the “most valued” radio broadcaster to an also-ran. And in a region where radio is “a key way the Pacific talks to itself”(Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2017b), continued cost-cutting is an expensive folly.

Shortwave

Further to the 2014 cuts, in 2017, the ABC announced its intention to close down shortwave services to the region, arguing that shortwave ‘serves a very limited audience’ although it did not release survey data:

‘The ABC believes that technological advancement has improved accessibility of FM services, in particular via mobile phone receivers negating the impact of no longer offering shortwave services.’ (*ABC exits shortwave radio transmission* 2016)

This ‘efficiency’ move was based on no real evidence of shortwave listenership and was met with wide condemnation from governments, organisations and ordinary citizens in the Pacific region. In its submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Australian Broadcasting Corporation Amendment (Restoring Shortwave Radio) Bill 2017, the Pacific Freedom Forum argued that:

‘ABC shortwave is a life-saving and cost-effective service which benefits Australia’s relations with the region as much as it benefits its tens of thousands of listeners in the Pacific Islands who depend on it for news and emergency warnings.’

(Miller et al. 2017)

In his submission to the Inquiry, former Radio Australia transmission manager Nigel Holmes argued that many of the FM transmitters that ABC management spoke of had been out of action due to lack of maintenance etc. He also summed up the power and importance of HF (shortwave) radio:

‘Across the Pacific cyclones routinely bowl satellite dishes into the ocean, drop local broadcast towers and devastate communities. Political upheavals leave local media under real threat.’

Local infrastructure such as an electricity plant is often out of action for hours or days for lack of maintenance or funds. In these situations, battery-powered HF receivers are lifesavers.' (Holmes 2017)

Journalism fellow at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Graeme Dobell, also condemned the move, noting that while Australia wants a leadership role in the South Pacific, the continued cuts to Radio Australia and the shutdown of shortwave services actually harm Australian interests:

'An independent media is an essential element in Australia's overarching interest in South Pacific states that are free, democratic and growing. Yet, to save \$2-3 million, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in January closed down shortwave broadcasts to the South Pacific, killing off a service with a 75-year history of impartial reporting on the region.'

(Dobell 2017)

Value of Shortwave

No one will suggest that shortwave is the first choice of audiences for the receipt of news and information, however the value of the technology remains for audiences isolated geographically or isolated, due to state control. PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu use shortwave for domestic broadcasting to reach out the hundreds of kilometres necessary to cover their islands. Shortwave services are vital for remote communities in the Pacific, and the ABC should be servicing listeners in these areas as well – particularly, but not just in times of natural disasters like cyclones and floods.

Shortwave remains important for reaching past censors and authoritarian governments. Regarding Indonesian efforts to suppress reporting of electoral fraud, oppression and the movement for East Timorese independence, Alison Broinowski wrote (1991) that "print journalists can be denied entry, expelled, their papers banned... but Radio Australia cannot be silenced". The same was observed in Fiji, with one study finding that in the press blackout following the 1987 coup, "Radio Australia became the only reliable source of news as to what was happening" (Ogden & Hailey 1988). Again in 2009, it was a matter of national pride at the time for the ABC to be providing independent information for Fijians via shortwave. A text message sent from inside Fiji to the ABC at the time read: "We are trying to listen to you online but are having difficulty. Please keep broadcasting. You are all we have". In Burma, in 2009, Aung San Suu Kyi called on Australia to provide shortwave broadcasts for her country. At the time the ABC's Director of International, said the move reflected the ABC's ongoing commitment to serving people in those parts of Asia and the Pacific who live without press freedom (in Wake 2016).

Other international broadcasters continue to see the value in the use of shortwave transmitters. RNZI continues to broadcast to the Pacific via shortwave. The BBC has boosted its international radio service to the Asia-Pacific (albeit with a focus on Asia, not the Pacific) and has undertaken a £20 million refurbishment to the key HF broadcast site on Ascension Island. Deutsche Welle, NHK (Japan), and the Voice of America all continue to broadcast in shortwave (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2017b).

China Radio International has now taken over as many of 10 of the frequencies once used by the ABC in the Pacific region, including those that reach Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia (Bainbridge, Graue & Zhou 2018; Chan 2018). Radio New Zealand Pacific Technical Manager, Adrian Sainsbury believes that this is a deliberate strategy:

'By starting to use RA's frequencies, they inherit an audience in the sense that people over time have got used to RA being on those frequencies and if suddenly another English language station starts up on it, they'll listen, say they could be RA. It's only after listening for a while you realise,

hello, this is not Radio Australia, this is a station that's talking about China quite a bit, and that's what's happening.' (Sainsbury 2018)

TV Broadcasting into the Asia Pacific region

The ABC was uniquely placed to provide quality programming for the Asia Pacific region via the Australia Network television station before it ceased operation in 2014. Although ABC broadcasting is relatively poorly funded in comparison to other international broadcasters (Murrell 2013, 2016) the Australian Network was able to draw upon a wealth of Asia Pacific experts from ABC International in Melbourne and from staff around the country and within the region itself ('Jim Middleton, veteran ABC journalist, signs off for the last time' 2014). Australia Network developed English language television programming and related digital and mobile news stories specifically targeted for different audience communities throughout the Indo-Pacific. Since the cessation of the Australia Network contract, the recently re-branded multimedia television service, 'ABC Australia' (formerly Australia Plus Television), puts out only limited rebroadcasts of domestic content created by a small number of staff, many of whom do not have the depth of knowledge of Asia or the Pacific, in contrast to previous ABC employees. ABC video content is also sent out to the region 'via partnerships and agreements with in-country television networks, websites, and mobile and social media services.' (Australian Broadcasting Corporation 2017a). The ABC has put a special emphasis on sharing available content to international audiences by removing geo-blocking access to its streaming domestic news channel and via social media channels and YouTube, but developing targeted Pacific or Asian video content is no longer the corporation's focus.

TV Competitors in the Region

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) continues to place great emphasis on its role as the leading global international broadcaster although its emphasis in this region is clearly on Asia, rather than the Pacific. In its 2017-18 annual report (British Broadcasting Corporation) it argues that the corporation 'has an essential role to play for the UK in carrying the distinctive culture, voice, and values of this country to the world.' It notes the importance of its role, given that the media are less free in some parts of the globe than was the case 10 years ago. It also alludes to the continued growth of rival television networks such as Al Jazeera, China Central Television (CCTV) and RT (formerly Russia today). The BBC makes a strong case for the continued role of soft diplomacy, stressing the difference between these state-sponsored broadcasters as opposed to 'the value to democracy and liberty of the BBC's global reach.' (British Broadcasting Corporation 2018).

The 'BBC World' television news station continues to flourish in the wider Asia region, broadcasting daily and live from Singapore as well as from London and Washington. It produces targeted programming, such as the 'Asia Business Report' and 'Newsday' from Singapore but is otherwise broadcasting general BBC programmes with a global remit. The editorial emphasis is on business and finance that is aimed more at larger Asian economies and not smaller Pacific countries. BBC World News is also available via an array of television networks in countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and Hong Kong (*BBC World News Get the Channel* undated). The BBC's other TV channels are also making inroads, and in 2017 the BBC announced a deal that saw its BBC World, BBC Earth and CBeebies channels made available for the first time in Laos (*BBC Worldwide launches channels in Laos* 2017). 'BBC Earth' has been particularly successful since its launch in Asia in 2015, and 'is available in Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mongolia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam (*BBC Earth on what it takes to resonate with Asian audiences* 2015).' The latest BBC channel to land in the region is the entertainment channel 'BBC First.' This channel's video content is available in

various forms (direct broadcasting or via local television or subscription services) in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan (*BBC First Arrives In Hong Kong* 2016).

China's state-run TV station CCTV, is available throughout the world. Its strategy is 'Mobile First' (*China Global Television Network: Who we are* undated) and it consists of six TV channels, broadcasting in English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian and Chinese. As China media scholar Vivien Marsh (2018) points out, the decision to fund a multi-million-dollar expansion of media services around the globe was taken when Hu Jintao was in power, with the idea to promote 'cultural soft power.' The English language television service, China Global Television Network (CGTN) is available in the region via satellite, local TV stations and is free online (*Welcome to CGTN.com* undated). It also provides news footage free 'to thousands of TV stations and media organisations across the world (*GC TN - About Us* 2017).'

The Al Jazeera English television channel is available in parts of the region, via AsiaSat 7 which covers countries including China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Timor-Leste (*Satellite Frequencies* undated). While it does not have specific programming aimed at particular audiences, Al Jazeera has always stressed that it gives a 'global audience an alternative voice,' making it 'one of the world's most influential news networks.' (*Al Jazeera: Who we are* 2017)² 'CNBC Asia-Pacific' is a business and financial network which broadcasts into Asia, (*CNBC Television Asia Pacific Schedules* undated) to countries including China, Brunei, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines. It broadcasts its international service live from London and Singapore and has a host of dedicated programmes including 'Asia Business Day,' 'Managing Asia,' and 'Inside China. (*CNBC Asia Business Day* undated)' Again, as with other international broadcasters in the region, the station is really targeting richer Asian countries rather than the smaller economies of the Pacific. CNN International broadcasts its channel into the Asia Pacific. It does not have specifically named programming for the region, but its mixture of news and business content is tweaked according to the particular region of the world to which it is broadcasting at the time (*CNN International: This week in the Asia Pacific*). In New Zealand, TVNZ is currently fully-commercially funded although it still retains an ethos of the public service broadcaster that it was once. Some of its programming goes out in Fiji, the Cook Islands and the Solomon Islands, but this is replayed via local channels. This is mostly organized through Pacific Cooperation Broadcasting Limited (PCBL), (*PasifikaTV About Us*) which was set up by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Its aim is to deepen relationships with Asia Pacific nations by supporting the media sector.

Development Activities

The question of restoring English language and targeted language broadcasting to our neighbours must also be considered in the wider context of Australian aid and the ABC's developmental activities in the Asia Pacific. To the extent that the question is motivated by an interest in security and governance in the region and emergency responses to disasters, restoring broadcasting is only part of the answer. Australia's support of journalism education, media assistance programs and international development programs are additionally important.

Education and Training

Some Asia Pacific countries have undeveloped or limited education facilities, and therefore the ability to build the skills and knowledge required to operate as journalists in a rapidly changing news industry is

also limited. As outlined earlier, China is playing an increasing role in the delivery of training and education to journalists from parts of Asia and Pacific by providing scholarships for attendance at Chinese universities. At the same time, the cost of completing a journalism degree or post graduate degree in Australia remains prohibitive to many journalists from the Pacific and Asia, even if they are able to pass the academic requirements to enter these programs.

ABC International Development (ABC-ID)

ABC International Development is the international development branch of the Australia Broadcasting Corporation and is responsible for strengthening media in the region. It is a 'Registered Training Organisation' within Australia's vocational education and training system and can 'structure, develop, deliver and assess programs to offer both on-the-job training and formal tertiary qualifications' (*About ABC International Development* undated). ABC-ID provides expertise, training and program support to civil society and media in partnership with Australian government assistance and international organisations. ABC-ID also acts beyond just strengthening the sector, employing a communication for development (C4D) approach to impact issues of developmental importance, such as health and gender equality. ABC-ID has identified the following priority areas (Noske Turner 2015):

1. Capacity building for journalists and media workers, as well as improving technology;
2. Producing media content that addresses developmental challenges like health, education, governance and violence against women;
3. Improving disaster response and preparedness; and
4. Research collaboration to improve understanding of program impact and the needs of people in the Asia-Pacific.

Several signature ABC-ID projects are coming to the end of their funding in the short- and medium-term. Both scarcity and the short-term, insecure nature of funding impact the success of C4D projects in the Pacific (discussed in Noske-Turner & Taachi 2016).

Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

The Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) is funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and has been an operation of ABC-ID since 2007, which is currently its third and likely final phase. It is expected to end in 2019.

PACMAS has worked to support media operations across the countries of the Pacific, through training programs, policy and legislative efforts, capacity building in national media associations, targeted developmental aid and investment, as well as significant research and evaluation projects. There are three cross-cutting themes across these activities: gender, disability and youth.

PACMAS has been involved in projects in 14 countries (*About PACMAS* 2017). Its activities have included efforts to strengthen political, crime and court reporting, notably in Fiji (*Media watchdog role highlighted in parliamentary masterclass* 2016), the production of training materials and teaching curricula with tertiary education institutions (Khosla et al. 2015), and a focus on improving media financial sustainability (Stancombe Research and Planning 2015).

Non-communicable diseases, in particular diabetes, are significant problems in the Pacific (Anderson 2012). PACMAS has organised capacity building workshops and the production of content to help improve reporting and public information on this issue (Cullwick 2015).

Separately, the PACMAS Innovation Fund offers small grants for media projects with a “demand-driven focus”. The fund was introduced to allow Australian aid to be more responsive to localised needs and proposals. The future of PACMAS beyond its current phase is uncertain.

Cambodia Communication Assistance Project

One country that has benefited from the work of ABC-ID is Cambodia, although the media assistance program there could be replicated in a number of other neighbouring countries. The Cambodia Communication Assistance Project (CCAP) focusses on improving local government accountability through the strengthening of media and facilitating a dialogue with citizens (Kalyan et al. 2015). It has an additional priority focus on ending violence against women, and produces broadcast content in partnership with community and government radio stations.

This project began in 2012, although the ABC have been involved in development in Cambodia since the 1990s. It is expected to end in 2018 (*Cambodia Communication Assistance Project* undated). The situation for local media in Cambodia has deteriorated rapidly in the last year. The country fell ten places in the Reporters Without Borders’ 2018 ranking of press freedom, down to 142 (*Cambodia* 2018). The sale of the *Phnom Penh Post* to a government-connected business man was described by Human Rights Watch as the toppling of the last pillar of press freedom (Riley 2018). In this context the activities of ABC-ID, as well as the restoration of shortwave broadcasting previously discussed, take on increased importance.

Ongoing Media Research

The global media environment is changing rapidly with new challenges including the impact of social media on local news systems, the distribution of fake news resulting in civil unrest, and the impact of new technologies such as blockchain and artificial intelligence (AI). There is a need to boost research into new technologies as they impact on the region from an Australian perspective. Already China is currently leading the way in the use of AI technology for journalism.

Authors

[Gary Dickson](#) is a project assistant in the School of Media, Film and Journalism at Monash University, where he also teaches Journalism Law and Ethics. He is a freelance researcher and writer on issues related to press freedom. He received a Master of Journalism from the University of Melbourne in 2016.

[Heather Jarvis](#) is a senior lecturer in journalism, specialising in audio storytelling, radio and documentary. She has more than 20 years' experience as a broadcast and online journalist, presenter & producer at ABC International/Radio Australia and Radio National and has a strong interest in the Asia-Pacific region. She has reported from countries around the Asia-Pacific and Africa and has an interest in the role of journalism in international and community development. Heather is also a freelance podcast producer and radio documentary maker.

[Louisa Lim](#) is a senior lecturer in journalism at the University of Melbourne. She is also the co-host of The Little Red Podcast, which won the News and Current Affairs category at the 2018 Australian Podcast Awards. She is the author of *The People's Republic of Amnesia: Tiananmen Revisited*, which was shortlisted for The Orwell Prize. She is a former NPR & BBC correspondent in China.

[Colleen Murrell](#) is an associate professor at Swinburne University. She researches international newsgathering, public interest journalism, transnational broadcasting, social media, analytics, global news agencies and terrorism coverage. Before becoming an academic, she worked for international news organisations including the BBC, ITN, Associated Press, SBS and the ABC as a producer, reporter and news editor. She travelled widely as a field producer throughout the Middle East and Europe. Dr Murrell received her PhD from the University of Melbourne (2011). She is the author of 'Foreign Correspondents and International Newsgathering: The Role of Fixers (2015)' She is a co-secretary of JERAA and is on the editorial board of the Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies.

[Alexandra Wake](#) is a senior lecturer at RMIT University. Dr Wake has undertaken almost 30 years of journalism and 15 years of teaching experience in formal education settings both in Australia and abroad. Her research work centres on journalism education and pedagogy, international newsgathering, international broadcasting, social and mobile media, and supporting journalists with self-care when reporting responsibly on mental health, suicide, and other traumatic events. Dr Wake has more than 20 years' experience as a broadcast journalist, with six years spent as a freelancer at ABC International/Radio Australia. She is a co-secretary of JERAA.

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