

SUBMISSION to

REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING SERVICES IN THE ASIA PACIFIC

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POSITION	Senior Research Fellow, School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, UQ
ACCESS	This submission may be made public
SCOPE	This submission addresses Terms of Reference (2) <i>“use and value of Australian shortwave technology in the Asia Pacific region”</i>

1 HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS

Shortwave broadcasting has been a lifeline for Pacific islanders since WWII because the radio has been and still is their only means of access to the world outside the village. As most Pacific Islanders live in rural and remote villages, and often on remote islands and atolls far from their national capital, internet providers and mobile coverage, hearing Sean Dorney and Jemima Garrett on radio reporting on events in their own nation, in other Pacific Island nations (PINs), in Australia and globally, has been a daily ritual. Sitting on the floor of a local materials, or modern timber frame and iron roof house, and listening to Radio Australia, or programs replayed through local stations, has provided an essential service.

More than 90% of Melanesians live in rural and remote areas and an equally large sector of the populations in Micronesia and Polynesia are also located in villages. In the respective capital cities of Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga, Samoa and Guam— Suva, South Tarawa, Nuku’alofa, Apia and Agana - adults might be watching TV and teens listening to music on their phone, but out in the villages the radio is still a focal point for connecting to the outside world.

Historically, until the recent cutback, shortwave broadcasting had demonstrated to Islanders that Australia is a partner with them, rather than a distant aid donor. This type of friendship and relationship is crucial in the context of today’s global diplomatic rivalries in the region.

The benefit back to Australia is that through the expertise developed in Australia by an expanded shortwave broadcasting service, the resource base or talent pool in journalism and foreign affairs within Australia will allow for expanded and enhanced reporting on the Pacific in Australia. Although a decline in Pacific Studies research, teaching and publication has been a trend for more than a decade in Australia, there has been a reasonable coverage of downloaded material on Pacific affairs available on internet, but sadly, less so in the Australian radio, press and TV. Social media such as FaceBook sites offer some access, for example;

- Tom O’Lincoln, “Australian colonialism in PNG”, www.redflag.org.au, 7 Aug 2013
- Sean Dorney, “Australia’s ignorance about PNG is a loss for both nations”, Lowy Institute, 20 Sept 2017
- Johnathon Pyrke, “A manifesto to build Australia’s Pacific connection”, Lowy Institute *The Interpreter*, 22 Nov 2017
- Harriet Smith, “Pacific links: sharks, trouble in West Papua, Free trade, and more”, Lowy Institute *The Interpreter*, 23 Nov 2017
- James Batley, “Keep calm and step up: The White Paper’s message on the Pacific”, Lowy Institute *The Interpreter*, 27 Nov 2017

- Paul Kelly, “Abdication of responsibility in the Pacific Ocean neighbourhood”, *The Australian*, Jan 31 2018
- Hamish Macdonald “Pacific Ire lands; Independence in the South Pacific”, *The Saturday Paper* Apr 28 2018

Australia’s historical connections to the Pacific have been long-lasting and deep. A summary is provided in Chapter 6 of *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific* in 2009ⁱ.

Books by Roger Thompson,ⁱⁱ Greg Fry,ⁱⁱⁱ Buckley and Klugman,^{iv} Hainsworth,^v Hasluck,^{vi} Moore,^{vii} JMR Young^{viii} and others provide details of linkage through the 19th and 20th century. The historical survey in *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific* concluded that “the media also needs to play a larger role in informing the wider Australian public on the one region of the world where Australia is the major player and where so much Australian aid is directed”.^{ix} This was true in 2009, and a decade later, even more so now that Australia is no longer the major player due to as yet unresolved incursions by China, Russia and Indonesia.

In the 1990s, Prof Hank Nelson listed 400 works by Australians about Papua New Guinea. A similar list would double that by now. I can also relate anecdotal evidence of interest in the region, when as a Guest Speaker on a P&O cruise to the islands, more than half the lecture audience of 400 raised their hand when asked if they had a family connection to PNG. However, the argument here is not only about Australian’s knowledge, empathy and understanding of their neighbours, but equally about positioning Australia as a friend and partner and provider of news, knowledge and cultural material about other PINS, the region, the world, and of course about Australia itself. That the historical expertise developed in maintaining a broadcast service to the Pacific would accumulate in a growing body of expertise, a so-called talent pool, about the region in the media (government, NGOs, academia and more widely) in Australia is an important flow-on advantage and asset.

It is embarrassing to note that New Zealand has replaced Australia as the Number 1 broadcaster into the islands and has doubled the staff in its Pacific broadcasting service.

The ABC budget, within its current restraints, for example, should audit and review its funding for international broadcasting.

This recommendation is not concerned with the quality of Pacific reporting in Australia (which is minimal) but is about the national interest. Historically by broadcasting across the whole region, Australia had positioned itself as a friend and partner in the region and in the context of events in the last two decades, this relationship is of crucial value to nurturing our National Interest.

There is a compelling historical argument for expanding and maintaining Australian awareness of our connection with the region, and of Islanders awareness of their PIN, their region and of Australia. Shortwave broadcasting is the appropriate media to develop these relationships.

2 AUDIENCE/CONTENT

The audience for expanded shortwave broadcasting is diffuse, and this in turn affects the choice of content. It should not be a vehicle for promoting favourable opinions about the current government in Australia. An element of boosting and boasting is of course expected and appropriate, but the audience is simply defined; rural and remote Pacific islanders. And as noted above this is still predominantly the bulk of the PIN populations, and predominantly they are beyond internet and mobile range, leaving radio as an essential link to their own PIN, the region, and Australia.

Shortwave broadcasting should be targeting rural and remote audiences with; the following;

- Australian content (related to PIN interests and developments)
- National content for each PIN audience (through providers in the islands)
- Regional content
- Global content
- News of the ASSI community in Australia
- News of the PI community in Australia

Through the human resource base developed in Australia – the talent pool of operators and reporters – Pacific news would be better referenced back an Australian audience, and develop in the media in Australia a better informed journalism in Australia about Island affairs and events.

Radio is also still an integral part of daily life in urban areas, and runs parallel to TV, newspapers, mobile phone networks and the internet, so there is also an urban audience. Shortwave broadcasting is especially important in those nations where oppressive restrictions are placed on free and independent reporting, or where the above services are still in infancy and do not reach all of a PIN urban community.

3 NEW DIRECTIONS

(i) **Regionalism:** There have been many attempts since WWII to promote a concept of regional identity across the region, resulting in some regional institutions being created (eg., in education environment and diplomacy - SPBEA, SPREP, Pacific Forum) but the fourteen independent nations have mostly prioritised national identity over belonging to a region. Expanding shortwave to the wider region will create a regional identity. This aim was considered important after WWII and then in the 1960s and 1970s as former colonies became independent (ending in 1994 with Palau.) In recent decades the concept of regionalism as a binding and powerful force that Islanders could exert has faded. Sub-regional grouping such as the MSG (Melanesian Spearhead Group) emerged and the new PINs rejected outside pressure on them to merge and unite as one voice. In 2018, as the White Paper noted, the players, priorities and challenges are changing fast. Providing basic news, knowledge and cultural material about their nation, other PINS, the region and Australia is not just about broadcasting, but now importantly it can be a factor in creating a stronger region, with Australia as a close friend.

(ii) **Superpower rivalry:** The increasing presence of China, Russia and Indonesia in the Islands means that multilateral and bilateral relationships have become convoluted and crowded and Australia needs in the coming decades to reassert its position as a friend, neighbour, partner and collaborator with PINS and providing daily news and programming through radio is the perfect soft-power approach to adopt. Shortwave Broadcasting can now also serve Australia as it reasserts its position in this new era.

(iii) **Restore: Maintain: Innovate;** these three catchwords sum up my submission. Shortwave broadcasting needs to **restore and expand coverage** across the region (meaning both the North and South Pacific) and it needs to be **maintained** over a twenty-year time-frame to develop expertise in Australia on broadcasting into the Pacific, and from the Pacific, and in partnership with PIN services and providers. In a rapidly changing environment as internet and television expands beyond its current urban limits into rural audiences, the technological aspects of **innovation** in all media distribution platforms (TV, radio and online) become critical, and I am certain will be addressed in other submissions.

(iv) About Australia: About the region; The expansion of shortwave technology to its previous geographic range, and further in the future, is essential in Australia and in the region across all six audiences and content domains;

1. About individual PINs in the region,
2. Australia's connections to the region,
3. Pacific Islanders in Australia
4. International engagement with the islands
5. News, knowledge and cultural material about other PINs
6. Regional linkages, bilaterally and multilaterally between and across the islands

The report into Pacific Studies in Australia in 2009 noted radio journalist Sean Dorney's opinion that, "*part of the reason for the generally weak understanding of the complexities of the Pacific region is that the Australia media does not take the Pacific seriously*".^x Expanding shortwave broadcasting serves the multiple purposes of giving Australia more presence in the region, creating awareness of the region within PINs, informing Australians more about the Pacific, and through the increase in trained operators and journalists it will increase the human resource base with Pacific expertise in Australia.

The report, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, stressed that "*Australia has a long and deep historical engagement with the Pacific*" but needs "*a national strategy with funding and coordination to revitalise and develop our understanding and engagement as a part of the Pacific Islands region*".^{xi} Restoring, maintaining and being innovative in shortwave broadcasting meets all six audiences listed above and will create a pool in Australia of expertise on the Pacific that is sorely needed.

4 RECOMMENDATION

This submission has a simple recommendation; **to restore, expand and maintain Australia's shortwave technology in the Pacific Islands.**

5 THE AUTHOR

Max Quanchi was the inaugural secretary of the AAAPS (Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies in Australia, now AAPS) and convenor of the first AAAPS national conference (Brisbane 2006) and has worked in, taught and conducted research on Australia and the Pacific for forty years.^{xii} He conducted a regional Professional Development Program for teachers (TTPF, 1995-2001), led a regional research network (Moana Project 2011-2015) and has taught at UPNG and USP. He introduced and taught the first BA degree course on "Australia and the Pacific" at QUT from 1990 to 2009. His academic research focusses on Pacific Island History and the History of Photography. He spoke at the Sydney Ideas Festival in 2014 and a USP/French Embassy symposia in 2015 on WWI Memorials in the Pacific. In 2007, his monograph *Photographing Papua* focused on the colonial frontier in PNG. His most recent books are *The A to Z of Discovery and Exploration of the Pacific* with John Robson (2010) and with Susan Cochrane, *Hunters and Collectors; Oceanic Collections in Australia*, (2010) and with Max Shekleton, *Postcards from Oceania; Plantations, Pirogues and Port towns* (2015). He was co-author of *A National Strategy for Pacific Studies* (2009) and editor of a special issue on Australia and the Pacific for *Social Alternatives* (2010). He is currently working on a history of 19th C connections between Victoria and Fiji, a book on the early 20th C Australian photographer in the Pacific, Thomas McMahon, and a memoir of his own "Nasho" days in TPNG (1966-1967).

NOTES

- ⁱ Rose S, Quanchi M and C Moore, 2009, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, Brisbane: AAAPS, see Chapter 6, pp.81-107
- ⁱⁱ Thompson R, 1980, *Australian imperialism in the Pacific*, Melbourne, MUP; Thompson, R, 1998, *Australia and the Pacific Islands in the 20th Century*, Melbourne, Australian Scholarly Publishers
- ⁱⁱⁱ Greg Fry has produced the most exhaustive analysis of Australia's recent relations with the Pacific region; for example, for his works between 1981 and 1997 see;
- Fry G, 1981, "Regionalism and international politics of the South Pacific" *Pacific Affairs*, Vol 54, 3. pp.458-60 and 476-84
- Fry G, 1982, "Melanesian and South Pacific regional politics" in May R and Nelson H, eds, *Melanesia beyond diversity*, RSPacS, Canberra, ANU, pp.651-73
- Fry G, 1983 *A nuclear free zone for the Southwest Pacific; prospects and significance*, Working Paper No 75, SDSC, Canberra, ANU
- Fry G, 1987, "Regional arms control in the South Pacific" in Ball D and Mack A, eds, *The future of arms control*, Canberra, ANU pp.137-56
- Fry G, 1991a, ed, *Australia's regional security*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin
- Fry G, 1991b, "Constructive commitment with the South Pacific; Munroe doctrine or new partnership" in, *Australia's regional security*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin
- Fry G, 1991c, "The region in review", *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol 3/2, pp.384-8
- Fry G, 1991d, *Australia's South Pacific policy; from strategic denial to constructive commitment*, Working Paper No 8, RSPacS, Canberra, ANU
- Fry G, 1992a, "Australia and the South Pacific" in Boyce RJ and Angel JR, eds, *Diplomacy in the marketplace; Australia in world affairs 1981-90*
- Fry G, 1992b, "The region in review; international issues and events 1991", *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol 4/2, pp.379-86
- Fry G, 1992c, *Peace keeping in the South Pacific; some questions and prior considerations*, Dept of International relations, Canberra ANU
- Fry G, 1993a, "The region in review; international issues and events 1992", *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol 5/2, pp.390-402
- Fry G, 1993b, "At the margin; the South Pacific and the changing world order", in Richardson JL and Leaver R, eds, *The post-cold war order; diagnoses and prognoses*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin
- Fry G, 1994, "Climbing back on the map? The South Pacific Forum and the new development orthodoxy" *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 29,3, pp.64-72
- Fry G, 1996, *Framing the Islands; knowledge and power in changing Australian images of the South Pacific*, Working Paper, Dept of International Relations, Canberra, ANU
- Fry G, 1997a, "The South Pacific experiment; reflections on the origins of regional identity", *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 32, 2, pp.180-202
- Fry G, 1997b, "Australia and the South Pacific; the rationalist ascendancy" in Cotton J and Ravenhill J, eds, *Seeking Asian engagement; Australia in world affairs 1991-95*, Melbourne, OUP, p.291-308
- Fry G, 1997c, "Framing the islands; knowledge and power in changing Australian images of the South Pacific", *The Contemporary Pacific*, Vol 9, 2, 305-344
- ^{iv} Buckley K and Klugman K, 1983, *The Australian presence in the Pacific; Burns Philp 1914-1946*, Sydney, Allen and Unwin
- ^v Hainsworth DR, 1971, *The Sydney traders*, Cassell, Australia
- ^{vi} Hasluck P, 1976, *A time for building; Australian administration in Papua and New Guinea 1951-1963*, Melbourne, MUP
- ^{vii} Moore CR, 1984, *Kanaka; a history of Melanesian Mackay*, Port Moresby, UPNG Press
- ^{viii} Young JMR, 1968, *Australia's Pacific Frontier*, Sydney, Cassells; Young JMR, 1984, *Adventurous spirits; Australian immigrant society in pre-cession Fiji*, Brisbane, UQ Press
- ^{ix} Rose S, Quanchi M and C Moore, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, p.104
- ^x Rose S, Quanchi M and C Moore, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, p.103. The Report makes numerous references to radio (pp.117-18), media (pp.103-4), the ABC and the need for a Pacific focussed, "Capital City Media Briefing Program" (see Recommendation 37, p.104.)
- ^{xi} Rose S, Quanchi M and C Moore, *A National Strategy for the Study of the Pacific*, p.vi

Articles by the author on aspects of historical and contemporary connections between Australia and the Pacific Islands are typical of other Australian academics who focus on the Islands. Australia founded remains home to the international associations, the *Pacific History Association* and the *Australian Association for Pacific Studies*, and journals such as the *Journal of Pacific History*. The author's works on Australia and the Pacific between 1995-2017 include;

- "TJ McMahon; photographer, essayist and patriot in colonial Australia, the Pacific and empire" in Max Quanchi and Alaima Talu, eds, *Messy Entanglements*, Brisbane, PHA, pp.49-62, 1995
- "Lobbying, ethnicity and marginal voices; the Australian South Sea Islanders call for recognition", *The History Teacher*, Vol 36, No 1, 31-41, 1998
- "Australia's South Sea Islanders; a call for recognition", *Journal of the Pacific Society (Japan)*, Vol 21, No 3-4, 3-19, 1998
- "The Pacific – of academic interest" in *The Walkley Magazine*, August, 42, 1999
- "Contrary images; photographing the new Pacific in *Walkabout* magazine", *Journal of Australian Studies*, Vol 79, 2003, pp.77-92 and 230-33
- "Power of pictures; learning by looking at Papua in illustrated newspapers and magazines", *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol 35, No 123, pp.37-53, 2004
- "Jewel of the Pacific and planter's paradise; the visual argument for Australian sub-imperialism in the Solomon Islands", *Journal of Pacific History*, Vol 39, No 1, pp.43-58, 2004
- "A name that featured once or twice a year; not noticing New Caledonia in mid-20th century Australia", *Journal of Pacific Studies*, vol. 29, no. 2, 195-216, 2007
- "Attracting Attention or Affirming Identity; Pan-Pacific Unity among Pacific Islanders in Brisbane" in Helen Lee (ed.), *Ties to the homeland; second-generation transnationalism*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, pp.168-180, 2008
- 2009 "Talking and planning: Planning and talking – Australia and the Pacific in the next 20 years", *Social Alternatives*, 28, 3, pp.1-6, Sept 2009
- with Samantha Rose, "Our neighbours, the Pacific: Deeper understanding and closer relations", *Ethos*, 17, 3, 2009, 8-12, 2009
- with Susan Cochrane, eds, *Hunters, Collectors and Exhibitions; Oceanic collections in Australia*, Cambridge Scholars Press 2011
- "Decolonisation", *Agora*, 46, 2, 2010, 28-35, 2011
- "It's our turn to give orders: *Walkabout's* view of a nation in the making" in *Living history and evolving democracy; Waigani Seminar 2008*, edited by Ted Wolfers, Ron Crocombe and Ian Maddocks, Port Moresby: UPNG Press, pp110-116, 2011
- "Thomas McMahon's Pacific neighbours; an early Australian photojournalist", in *Early Australian Photography*, edited by Anne Maxwell, Melbourne: Black Swan Press, 2013
- "Australia(not) in the Pacific", *Agora*, 48, 2, 2013, 28-35, 2013
- "No 1 Neighbour: Art in Papua New Guinea 1966-2016", in *Journal of Pacific History*, 52, 4, pp.530-532, 2017