

# PIMA: Media needs to represent people

Te Waha Nui attended the Pacific Island Media Association conference. These two pages cover the event and other Pacific issues in the media.

by Jacqui Stanford

"When you walk in the Waitakeres you don't see white people. You see cheeky darkies."

These words by Niu FM journalist Elma Maua encapsulated the feeling at this year's Pacific Island Media Association (PIMA) conference.

She was speaking as a contestant at the annual debate, arguing that New Zealand is a Pacific nation.

Although the debate was light-hearted, the underlying message was clear: Pacific Islanders are an ingredient of New Zealand and should be represented in the national media.

"Despite the influx of Pacific journalists in recent times, our influence has been minimal," said *New Zealand Herald* columnist Tapu Misa in her address at the Pacific Media Awards.

"However, the fact that we have the numbers to organise a conference like

this is impressive."

The two-day conference was hosted at Auckland University of Technology (AUT) with the theme "Strengthening Niu Media in New Zealand". AUT is a partner institution with PIMA.

The conference comprised forums, workshops and the annual debate, culminating with the second annual PIMA awards.

Former Fiji Deputy Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba and *Listener* editor Finlay Macdonald relaunched *Pacific Journalism Review*, which is now being published by AUT as an institutional journal.

This was followed by a launch of the New Zealand edition of *Niue Star* later that night.

PIMA's mission statement is to develop and nurture a strong Pacific Islands media voice, and this was reflected in the workshops and forums.

Pacific AIDS campaigner Maire Bopp Dupont spoke about her work and how media treats the disease.

Veteran New Zealand journalist Michael Field spoke about the Australian government's "spin doctor" role in the Solomon Islands and the poor coverage of the Pacific region by New Zealand media.

PIMA is aiming to be a media watchdog, linking Pacific media groups and encouraging training and development.

In her awards night speech, Tapu Misa was positive about the organisation's potential.

She said: "PIMA offers an opportunity for us to come together and work for one purpose. Our success as a community depends on us getting this right."

Chairperson Kalafi Moala said he was looking forward to a good year for the organisation.

Moala, the founding chair of PIMA, received the Pacific Media Freedom Award for the second year running.

The publisher and journalist is the editor of the newspaper *Taimi 'o Tonga*, which was banned in Tonga five times.

The need for more Pacific Island students to study media was emphasised in a workshop on Friday.

David Robie, a senior journalism lecturer at AUT, said: "We want a lot more Pacific Island and Maori students in Communication Studies."

Current Pacific Island or Maori students Kite Tuakalau, Leilani Momoisea and Terahui August spoke about their experiences as Pacific Island students at AUT.

Mr August, a third year multimedia student, said it was difficult for Pacific Island and Maori students to get into media courses.

"It's very lonely if you're Maori."

# Niu FM making waves in Pacific radio

by Jacqui Stanford

Niu FM is looking to make waves in Pacific and mainstream radio, and the station's new chief executive says they're on target.

"The station is about giving a voice to who we are as Pacific people. It's about reflecting what makes us unique — our diversity," says CEO Sina Moore.

Ms Moore is positive about the station's future, and says it will become more and more successful over time.

"We have been given a budget for two years. We will definitely be making a profit by then."

Station manager Simativa Perese announced the appointment of Moore at the PIMA conference last month.

Mr Perese also announced that former Radio New Zealand journalist Elma Maua has joined the station as a Wellington-based reporter.

"We are able to get into caucus now," Ms Maua said. "For every pakeha story there is a brown reaction."

Mr Perese says he wants the station to become the news leader in the Pacific. But Niu FM's professional quality was a contested issue at the PIMA conference's radio panel discussion.

PIMA member Vienna Richards said she is disappointed with the quality of presenters and programme content.

"I just think it needs to be a lot better," she said. "We need more in depth discussion and commentary on issues relevant to us as Pacific Islanders."

"You can't give peanuts and expect to get quality programmes - you get monkeys"

Planet FM host Sione Liavaa was also critical of Niu FM's performance, saying it had too much English language content, the quality was poor and voluntary workers were not professional.

"People are not trained and when they come on to the programme they don't know how to go about it," he said.

"You can't give peanuts and expect to get quality programmes - you get monkeys."

About \$50,000 has been budgeted for voice training to improve the quality of the station's sound, Perese said.

He admits the station has to improve, but remains optimistic about its future.

"I think we have the talent. We can produce the Pacific flavour that people will want to listen to."

Everyone who attended the panel discussion agreed there should be a Pacific station in New Zealand.



NIU FM DJ: Sela Alo

# Coverage of HIV/AIDS challenged

by Benedict Collins

The Pacific media must play a key role in changing traditional Polynesian values towards sex and HIV/AIDS if the epidemic is to be prevented from ravaging the region, says a leading campaigner on sexual health.

Marie Bopp Dupont, founder of the Pacific Islands AIDS Foundation (PIAF), says the media in the Pacific often makes the delicate situation worse by stigmatising HIV/AIDS victims instead of educating media consumers by looking at the overall picture.

"There is a lack of creativity in the media. That is because there is always a very negative focus by reporters.

"The media's mentality is to ostracise and isolate the individual. They focus on the person and not the issue.

"There is a mental psyche in the islands that blames the infected person — a culture which tells people there is no chance of life post-infection.

"The stigma and ostracising kill people before the virus does."

Ms Bopp, an HIV positive Tahitian journalist and chief executive officer of PIAF, presented a passionate speech at the PIMA conference in Auckland last month.

She is a journalism and history/politics graduate of the University of the South Pacific in Fiji.

For journalists working in the Pacific, Ms Bopp says it is essential they deal with HIV/AIDS stories in the same way they would treat any other — by being fair and accurate.

"International organisations have always been talking about what journalists can do to change the situation, but it is never the journalists themselves who are doing the talking.

"The challenge is to become a reporter who can report on HIV accurately."



CRUSADER: Marie Bopp Dupont at the PIMA conference in Auckland

Bopp says there is a widespread fear of HIV/AIDS, and of those infected by it, in the Pacific, a fear that unfortunately is all too evident among the media.

She says that while compulsory blood testing has been introduced at Fiji's major news radio station, its employees, who are interested in other test results, are scared of having the HIV/AIDS test.

Ms Bopp says that in Papua New Guinea — which she called, in relation to its HIV/AIDS infection rate, "the Africa of the Pacific" — the reporting of HIV/AIDS is even worse.

"In Papua New Guinea a girl was abducted and gang-raped for over a week. Later the girl contacted one of the men and told him that she is HIV positive.

"A reporter got hold of the story

and took the news angle of 'the poor men, and how they could possibly have unknowingly infected their wives'."

Papua New Guinea has 5000 of the 7000 identified HIV/AIDS cases in the Pacific. The World Health Organisation says HIV/AIDS in the Pacific is predominantly spread through homosexual contact.

However, in Papua New Guinea heterosexual infections rocketed in the 1990s after the introduction of large-scale industrial projects, such as gold and copper mines, that saw male-only work camps created.

These massive camps spawned a burgeoning bush-prostitution industry that helped spread the virus.

Ms Bopp says although there are only 7000 known cases of HIV in the Pacific, a minute figure international-

"The challenge is to become a reporter who can report on HIV accurately"

# Promoting AIDS awareness in the Pacific

by Amy Saunders

Tahitian-born Marie Bopp Dupont, 28, has been campaigning for AIDS since she publicly announced, at a media conference in Papeete five ago, that she had the HIV virus.

As a 23-year-old journalism graduate from the University of the South Pacific, she says she was as ignorant about AIDS as any Pacific Islander.

The difference is she had the courage to put a face to the disease no one talked about.

People in her own village didn't want to be near her after she went public. Her friends didn't know what to do with the crockery she ate off. And a recent trip to the dentist almost saw her leave with no treatment.

By setting up PIAF, a non-government organisation based in Rarotonga in the Cook Islands, she hopes to work with governments, businesses and other sectors of society to find ways to combat the disease, while improving the quality of life for those with HIV/AIDS and their families.

She wants PIAF, which is funded by Cook Islands Red Cross and Nelson Mandela Foundation, to work with the media, training them to focus on the issue, not the individuals involved.

"It's not getting fair coverage because it isn't a priority for people yet. There's a lack of knowledge and a lack of creativity about how to cover the issue."

Ms Bopp has travelled to many Pacific Islands, training media organisations and speaking publicly to raise awareness of living with HIV/AIDS.

In 2000 she received a United Nations Race Against Poverty award. Two years later she was sharing the stage with President Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela at the Barcelona AIDS conference.

Ms Bopp says Australia and New Zealand are the only countries that can help the Pacific Islands get the disease under control and she hopes to receive funding from them.

"I've talked to the New Zealand Ministry of Health and believe there is a budget for overseas help."