

# Kiwi coverage of Pacific Island issues criticised

by Juliet Rowan and Miriam Bell

New Zealand mainstream media coverage of Pacific issues is often little better than travel writing, says Agence France-Presse correspondent Michael Field.

The New Zealand-based correspondent, who has the distinction of being the most banned journalist in the Pacific, derided the coverage as being "travel journalism with a whine" during a keynote address at the two-day PIMA conference in Auckland.

He said New Zealand journalists covering July's Australian-led intervention in the Solomon Islands wrote stories about the "nobility" of New Zealand's involvement instead of properly analysing the political situation.

He suggested their objectivity might have been compromised by the fact they flew as a group to the Solomons on an Air Force plane.

Mr Field has covered many of the region's major stories over the past decade and has been banned in Kiribati, Nauru and Tonga for controversial reports on environmental and political issues.

He said the Pacific tended to be a region ignored by New Zealand journalists unless "there's a rugby game or when there's a freebie".

He was also critical of the media's

use of the term "failed state".

British magazine *The Economist* had published an article that labelled the Solomons a failed state.

Mr Field said Australia used this and similar reports as justification for intervening in the country to stop ethnic rivalries.

But he questioned the notion of the Solomon Islands as a failed state, saying the troubles were limited to the capital, Honiara.

Outside the capital, which was home to only 20% of the population, local authorities functioned smoothly, he said.

He added that labels like "failed state" ignored the country's many achievements, such as innovative communications that

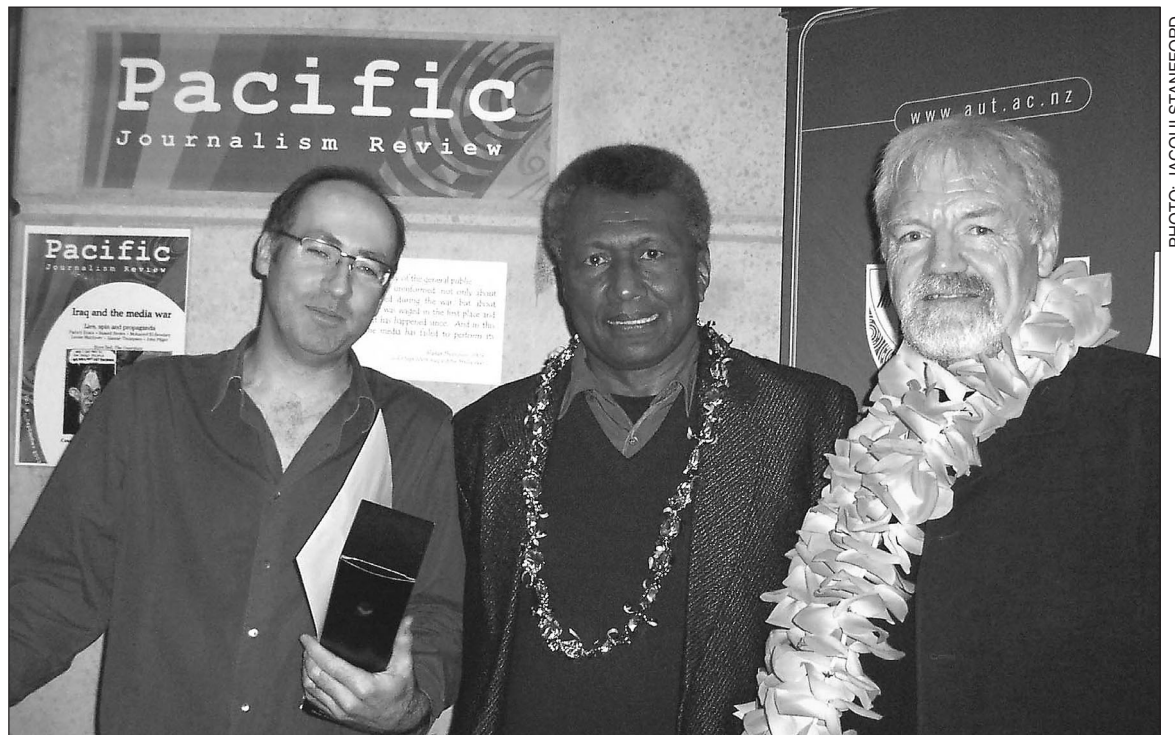
meant a leading non-government organisation had established e-mail links by radio to remote parts of the country.

Mr Field said "troubled state" was a preferable term for such countries.

"It's important for journalists to define things before politicians do," he said.

The two-day PIMA conference included many Pacific media speakers, such as columnist Tapu Misa and Tahitian campaigner Maire Bopp-Dupont, from the Pacific Islands Aids Foundation (PIAF) in the Cook Islands.

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GUEST SPEAKERS: Finlay Macdonald and Dr Tupeni Baba with editor David Robie.

## Review relaunched at AUT

by Nada Tielu

New Zealand media is obsessed with itself, and too much opinion is replacing "real reporting", says *Listener* editor Finlay Macdonald.

He was scathing about the state of the media while jointly launching the *Pacific Journalism Review* last month.

Mr McDonald spoke with former Fiji deputy Prime Minister Dr Tupeni Baba, who was a member of the government deposed in an attempted coup by renegade soldiers and businessman George Speight in May 2000.

Mr Macdonald said there was too much opinion in the media with an over-emphasis on the "antics of televi-

sion presenters" and "the relentless personalising of media issues".

He said too many media columns were being written by those working in the media industry.

"I would rather read the analysis of an intelligent and perceptive consumer of news and current affairs than the opinions of a competitor or a peer."

According to Mr Macdonald, many media columns were becoming review columns.

He said columns are taking the place of "real reporting" because they

were relatively cheaper than actual news reporting.

He praised the *Pacific Journalism Review* journal, now published by AUT, for its role in providing "useful and thoughtful coverage of the Asia-Pacific region".

"This new edition is superb and all credit to editor David Robie for keeping the dream alive."

Previously the journal was published at the University of the South Pacific, located in Fiji.

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# Tongan editor wins media freedom award

by Sebastian van der Zwan

Kalafi Moala won the Media Freedom Award for the second year in a row at the Pacific Media Awards in October.

The *Taimi 'o Tonga* publisher and the rest of the newspaper's staff were awarded the prize in Auckland for their struggle for media freedom in what has been an especially difficult year.

Judged by an independent AUT media panel, this year's awards were presented by Niva Retimanu and Jaed Victor.

The Auckland-based newspaper, described by the judges as "an icon in the Pacific", has successfully fought off five bans by the Tongan government.

"The long-term outcome for media freedom is critical not only for Tonga, but for other countries in the region, including New Zealand," the judges said.

The judges praised the newspaper's staff, especially those working in Tonga, for their determination and courage in their fight for media freedom, and for being an inspiration for other journalists in the Pacific.

Freelance cameraman Frank 'Atu received a highly commended award in the same category for his coverage for New Zealand's TV3 of an illegal trade in dolphins from the Solomon Islands.

The judges praised the former Fiji heavyweight boxing champion for his "initiative and courage in filming in dangerous conditions" in mid-July 2003.

They also commended him and reporter Ingrid Leary for their role in exposing a "cruel trade in risky circumstances".

Mr 'Atu was attacked and threatened in his attempts to get footage.

Both Mr 'Atu and Ms Leary were arrested while filming a cargo plane used to transport the dolphins.

Sandra Kailahi was presented with the Television Award for directing, scripting and researching a special TVNZ *Tagata Pasifika* documentary programme, *Diabetes: The Silent Killer*.

The judges described the pro-

gramme as an "excellent and inspiring piece of television" and commended it for its "warmly human and honest" story-telling about a sensitive subject.

"But the programme's main strength was its clear focus on what is being done by Pacific Islanders themselves to tackle the root causes of the illness."

Awards were not made in two categories that received only single nominations, Print and Radio Broadcasting.

However, the judges complimented *Te Puutake Radio Show* and also *Taimi 'o Tonga* deputy editor 'Ulu'alo Po'u'hila for breaking a news story about a vanishing Tongan rugby team that stirred national headlines in September.

The annual Pacific Media Awards are presented by the Pacific Islands Media Association (PIMA) to encourage excellence in New Zealand-based Pacific media.

It is the second year the awards have been presented and Pacific media people were called on to make more nominations for next years award.

The judges were journalism curriculum leader Susan Boyd-Bell and senior journalism lecturer David Robie of AUT's School of Communication Studies, and Alfred Schuster of AUT's Community Partnerships.



WINNER: Kalafi Moala

# Advertising industry needs unique culture

by Miriam Bell

Two publicists have called for more Pacific people to join advertising to ensure the growth and development of the industry in the region's media.

The speakers at the PIMA conference workshop on advertising last month emphasised that Pacific media outlets wanted to attract good advertising needed to use their cultural uniqueness.

Pacific Mango's Andrew Fiu said there was a serious lack of Pacific people in sales and advertising and that this needed to be addressed.

He wants Pacific media outlets to use their own people in the business and in ads in order to better market themselves for bigger clients.

"Managers say our people are not qualified enough, but we need to invest in them more," he said.

"We need to remember that we are all different. You can't just sell one personality. Our industry, our Pacific people need to think bigger."

Frank Kolo'i, of Ethnic Communications, agrees. He believes Pacific people, need to sell themselves as a group package.

He said Pacific people need to use their culture, traditions and humour to appeal to clients of all types.

"We are so rich in culture and

resources for creative work. We just need to get together. And if we can, then we can most certainly sign up the big guys."

Both Mr Fiu and Mr Kolo'i said it was essential for Pacific media outlets to look beyond small community businesses if they wished to benefit from advertising.

"If we look after small clients, we will stay small. But there is no reason why we cannot sign up big companies like Vodafone," said Mr Kolo'i.

"We have to figure out how to get different markets in. That's why we are here. We are trying to figure out how to do better for Pacific people."

Mr Fiu said appealing to potential clients was all about the building of relationships.

"We need to try to be seen by bigger customers as being at the heart of our community. It is not just about money. You have to create a relationship that counts."

But the building of such relationships would benefit from greater numbers of Pacific people in the industry, said Mr Fiu as he challenged PIMA to look into the issue.

He said Pacific Mango had discussed how it could make a contribution and had decided it would work towards the provision of some sort of partnership or sponsorship scheme.