

## The life of *Pacific Journalism Review*

By Anna Majavu

A NEW mini-documentary which celebrates 20 years of *Pacific Journalism Review* is set to premiere at the *PJR*'s 20th anniversary conference and celebration in November this year.

The short film's director and writer, Sasya Wreksono, gave *Toktok* a sneak preview, which features interviews with contributors who have been writing for the journal almost since it began in November 1994.

Dr Philip Cass, who is Unitec's postgraduate programme leader in communication studies, and Professor Wendy Bacon, a professorial fellow at the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ), are both interviewed, having both been associated with the journal since its Port Moresby days in the mid-1990s when *PJR* was based at the University of Papua New Guinea.

In 1998, *PJR* moved with its founding editor Professor David Robie to the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. By 2003, the journal had moved again, this time to AUT University in New Zealand where it has now been based for 11 years.

The video describes how the Pacific Media Centre was established in 2007 out of a core of research issues into Pacific journalism. Once that happened, it became the new home of *PJR*.

Subscribers are all over the world, including the US Congress Library, and the journal has won awards from different countries, including China's Global Culture Industries Academy in 2010.

The film explores *PJR*'s focus on current events in journalism, such as an edition that was produced in 2001 to reflect on the previous year's attempted coup d'état in Fiji, where businessman George Speight



Director Sasya Wreksono (centre) and her two crew members Krissi Silao (camera) and Beth Elder (sound) filming for the *PJR* documentary. Article author Anna Majavu is on the left.

and renegade soldiers stormed Parliament, kidnapping 36 MPs and holding them hostage for 56 days.

### Cartoons edition

The *PJR* has also showcased the work of Pacific journalists. After Solomon Islands cartoonist Champion Ohasio (the first Solomon Islands full journalism degree graduate at the University of Papua New Guinea) contributed several cartoons to *PJR*, a special edition entitled *Ting Ting Bilong Mi* was dedicated to Ohasio's cartoons.

In the film, Dr Robie also discusses *PJR*'s focus on investigative journalism as a research methodology, and *PJR*'s leading role in the debate about media freedom in the Pacific.

Wreksono, a third year communications studies student majoring in Television and Screen Production, says making the documentary has been a fascinating five-month experience.

The TV and Screen Production final year students all take turns to work as crew on each other's videos but the responsibility

for directing, writing and editing the documentary was Wreksono's alone.

Documentary is such a visual medium so initially it was quite difficult to visualise how to make a film about an academic journal.

But Wreksono says she was helped along by reading lots of academic journal articles that her mother, Vitri, a PhD candidate, is currently researching, and by advice from her tutor on bringing the 20-year existence of *PJR* into life through storytelling.

"I am excited but also nervous about the premiere because everyone who has ever been involved with the journal will be there," says Wreksono.

### 'Nerve wracking'

"It's a bit nerve wracking because this is something that they have all worked on for a very long time and this is my take on it.

"Hopefully everyone with the journal really likes it," she says.

The conference in November will also feature acclaimed journalist and filmmaker Max Stahl from Timor-Leste - the man who exposed the 1991 Indonesian massacre at Santa Cruz cemetery to the world.

Other keynote participants include New Zealand film maker and AUT television lecturer Jim Marbrook with a special presentation about his new documentary on nickel mining on indigenous lands in New Caledonia, *Cap Bocage* and Dr Lee Duffield from Australia with a comparative history research paper about *Pacific Journalism Review*.

Conference information and registrations:  
<http://tinyurl.com/kra5jju>



# A free press and the Pacific's political spoilers

**Book Review:** By Patrick Craddock, Journalism Coordinator at the University of the South Pacific

*Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media, Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific* has been published while Fiji has been voicing the mantra of the free press at the same time as it continues to ban experienced Pacific reporters such as Barbara Dreaver and Michael Field from New Zealand and Sean Dorney of the ABC.

Ashwin Raj, chairman of the new Media Industry Development Authority (MIDA), has been haranguing journalists at public media meetings using expressions such as "...the complicity of select Fijian journalists and media either wittingly or those that remain oblivious to the laws of Fiji..."

The same MIDA that is so upset with Sean Dorney's mild comment that "there was a feeling in the room anyway that the situation in Fiji wasn't as free and open for the media as it should be" is also asking for "an ethos of robust debate".

MIDA might strengthen its interpretation of robustness by reading Pacific Media Centre director Professor David Robie's arguments for improving journalism education rather than putting media training on hold.

Dr Robie has been concerned with the quality of Pacific journalism training for many years. He looks beyond conflict reporting and quotes Kunda Dixit, editor-in-chief of the *Nepali Times*, who has little love for counterpoint in journalism stories that foster the tension and drama of controversy making most reportage "sound like a quarrel" in a way that obscures rather than increases clarity about global problems.

Robie writes on "deliberative journalism" which he says includes peace journalism, development journalism and human rights journalism. He tries to nail down his own interpretation, which is "critical development journalism", by saying it goes beyond the standard reportage model to get into the gutsy questions of "how, why" and "what now".

His views are parallel with an Asian-Australian academic, *Asia-Pacific Media Educator* editor Dr Eric Loo, who recently tried to "rescue" the journalism school at the University of Papua New Guinea, and who criticises a "biased" view by Western journalists of a journalism model that stresses successful social and economic development, instead of the conventional focus on conflict, such as failed government projects and their policies.



## Important issues

While Robie struggles, perhaps inconclusively, to get precision into the terminology of the many forms of journalism, he is clear on the need for journalists to continue to strengthen their skills in order to scrutinise the institutions of governance affecting many peoples of the Pacific.

He notes the diaspora of Pacific people migrating and settling in Australia, New Zealand and North America. These migrants, some of whom are now second and third generations, look to journalists to inform them on important Pacific issues other than disasters.

Writing quality journalism while dealing with cultural and tribal pressure is a problem identified by Robie. He notes that former *Fiji Daily Post* editor Jale Moala says about the Speight Coup of 2000 that customary obligations are a burden, that it:

*"...was not so much one of reporters taking sides, as it may have seemed at the time, but the inability of many reporters to function objectively under the pressures of the crisis. A lack of leadership in newsrooms was one reason."*

Robie worked in Papua New Guinea for a number of years and frequently wrote about Bougainville. He went to Kieta to report on the new war and stayed in a hotel where soldiers sat eating their dinners with their guns on their laps. This is a colorful chapter, full of detail with Robie at the heart of the conflict and reporting it.

New Zealand consultants had come up with a report saying the mining company was causing huge environmental damage. Robie published a series of articles on Bougainville and then, as head of the journalism programme at the University of Papua New Guinea, **he got his students to cover the conflict**. This rich chapter probes a nasty part of Pacific history.

A lesser-known conflict for Pacific readers was the 1989 struggle by Canadian Indians of the Lubicon Lake Nation with their call for sovereign rights on traditional hunting and trapping. Robie draws parallels between the struggle of the Indian First Nation tribes and the New Zealand Ngati Whatua's occupation of ancestral land in Auckland, which was ended by a police and army raid after a peaceful occupation of 507 days.

Robie neatly updates the Canadian story with one of the leading protagonists who says the original conflict continues and it is now in the hands of the courts.

## Painful stories

The book has photographs that reflect faces of families embroiled in the numerous conflicts, the plump faces of their leaders and lean soldiers toting guns. Painful stories from Tahiti, Tonga, Timor-Leste, Fiji, the Philippines

and other parts of the disturbed Pacific.

Investigative journalist John Pilger describes it as an "extraordinary secret history".

*Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face*, with its overview of various conflicts, needs to be added to the shelves of Pacific newsrooms and journalism schools. It would make a valuable addition to the shelves of numerous politicians who provided the author with considerable content for this book and who are now feeding him material for his next one.

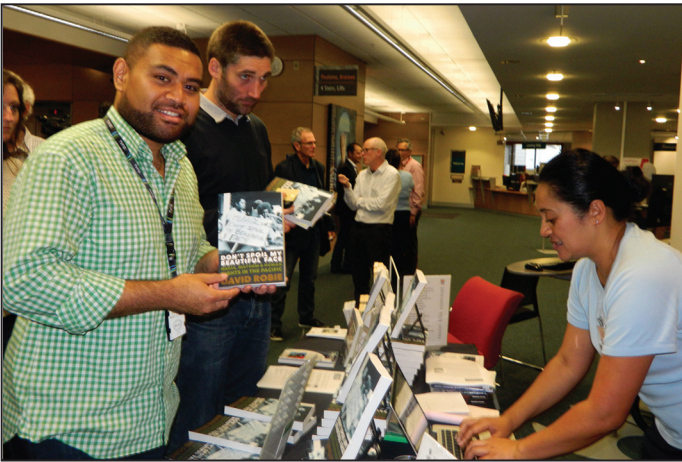
*Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media, Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific*, by David Robie. (Little Island Press, 2014, 362 pages, ISBN 9781877484254).

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Patrick Craddock

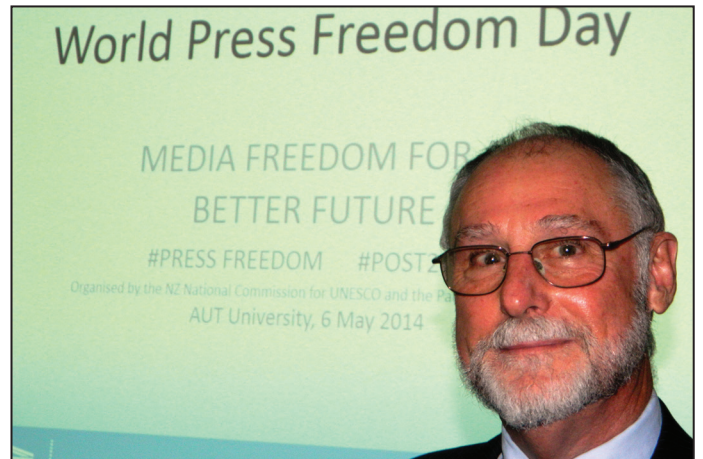




Book launch - *Don't Spoil My Beautiful Face: Media Mayhem and Human Rights in the Pacific*



PMC welcome for Walter Fraser ... AUT's new director of the Office of Pasifika Advancement.



Trish Carter and Dr Gavin Ellis at the UNESCO World Press Freedom Day lecture at AUT University.



# John Pulu

Director/Reporter, Tagata Pasifika TVNZ  
Bachelor of Communication Studies in Television

While still at high school John Pulu was lucky enough to get work experience through Gateway on TVNZ's *Tagata Pasifika* programme.

## Work experience opens doors

"I then kept in touch with *Tagata Pasifika* during my study – just persisting nicely – and one holiday break they arranged work for me on TV2's *Studio 2*."

John also took up other work experience offers, including freelance reporting for Tongan TV programme, *TNews*, and a bit of radio announcing with *Niu FM*.

His industriousness paid off. After John graduated at the end of 2009 *Tagata Pasifika* employed him on contract and in 2011 he became a permanent staff member.

## Gaining practical skills

"The hands-on experience I gained through the Television major, which included directing, camera operation and presenting, prepared me well for this job. I also really enjoyed creating visual documentaries."

"Another great resource was AUT's Pacific Media Centre," says John.

The Pacific Media Centre offers courses and information for Pasifika students studying towards a career in the media industry.

## Future in Pacific media

John feels strongly about telling Pasifika stories. "In the future I would like to pursue documentary making because there are so many tales from the Pacific yet untold."

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Alyson Young Photography