



WANTAIM PNG

THE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY BROADCASTING
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS, CANBERRA, ACT, AUSTRALIA

SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING SERVICES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC

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THIS SUBMISSION MAY BE MADE PUBLIC

I am mixed Manus-Australian and the founder of an INGO with an 11-year track record of grass root engagement in Manus Province.

I was fortunate to be in a rural village during the 2017 pre-election build up and attend several presentations by aspiring, visiting candidates. After each presentation I'd enquire about community views of the candidates and their presentations. The overwhelming response was a shrug of shoulders and a scratch of the head.

As most candidates addressed grass root concerns familiar to the audience, I concluded it was **not** the content they found puzzling. And yet from comments made – including those from community leaders – people appeared genuinely perplexed.

On further reflection I concluded this made sense. Indeed, how could villagers assess the views or comments made by any candidate? What sources could they rely on?

Newspapers aren't sold on the island.

Local radio broadcasts are often hard enough access in provincial capitals let alone rural areas where 85 per cent of PNG people live.

Social media requires reliable internet access, often a challenge even in urban settings.

Telecommunication is expensive and, in any case, is generally unavailable.

While both DFAT and the GoPNG have prioritised democratic governance, the reality is **today in PNG the most basic precondition for a strong democracy - public access to information - remains a distant pipe dream.**

With the decision to axe the ABC short wave broadcast villagers across PNG were left in an information black hole.

Restoring the service will improve the ability of communities to make informed decisions about candidates they elect.

It's not a panacea but it will help.

Lynne Shori

Founder

Wantaim PNG - *Working together to build thriving communities for all!*

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