



The Centre for Democratic Institutions

PNG PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORTING WORKSHOP PORT MORESBY 12-16 NOVEMBER 2001

Report

Journalists from across Papua New Guinea attended a week-long workshop in Port Moresby in November aimed at developing skills in reporting public affairs in PNG and bringing a more sustained and professional approach to the task of reporting government.

The workshop, which was run jointly by the Centre for Democratic Institutions and the Centre for International Journalism (CIJ) at the University of Queensland, sought to help the Media Council of PNG achieve its goal of lifting the standards of journalism in PNG. The workshop facilitator was Nigel McCarthy.

Speakers

Speakers at the workshop outlined the challenges facing PNG such as infrastructure breakdown, rapid turnover of ministers, departmental secretaries and bureaucrats, the benefits and threats from globalisation, corruption, mal-distribution of government funds and social problems such as urbanisation, poverty, domestic violence and the handout mentality. The coming 2002 election and electoral reform were discussed. The nature of local journalism and the history of the PNG media and its future directions was considered.

The speakers were:

Mr Mike Manning, director of the Institute of National Affairs, PNG.

Mr Beno Boeha, director of the National Research Institute, PNG.

Mr Ila Geno, Chief Ombudsman, PNG Ombudsman Commission.

Lady Carol Kidu, Member for Moresby South.

Dr Ray Anere, head of Political Science Department, University of PNG.

Mr Oseah Philemon, editor of the Post-Courier.

Ms Anna Solomon, publisher of the Independent.

Handouts

Fact sheets and discussion outlines on news values, public affairs reporting, political and financial journalism, source analysis, internet research, risk-spreading when reporting on corruption or civil rights abuses, the three-tier approach to investigative reporting, news writing and key issues from the workshop were displayed or distributed.

Activities

Various activities were undertaken including the following:

- Attitudes to corruption were surveyed and discussed.
- Participants carried out newspaper source analysis and a critique of the major local newspaper.
- Participants explored strategies for systematically following-up on reports of corruption.
- A checklist to gauge politicians and candidates was developed.
- (After much debate, the participants nominated candidates' policy, track record, values, time spent in the electorate, knowledge of the electorate and its needs, knowledge of the political and bureaucratic framework, promises/results, strategy to implement those promises, public skills, and personal 'integrity account' as key points in assessing candidates.)

Review Sessions

A feature of this workshop was the use of review sessions after each day's work. Each participant was asked to look back over the day's work and nominate one issue, technique or piece of information as being of the particular value in the pursuit of their profession.

The Participants

Of the participants, eight were women and five men. Seven were from Port Moresby and six were from other parts of the country. Two were 24 years-of-age or younger, ten between 25 and 34, and one older than 35. Two had completed journalism cadetships, one a diploma in journalism and eight had tertiary degrees. Five had less than four years experience in the media, three between five and nine years and four more than 10 years. Three participants worked in the print media, nine in radio and one in television.

All participants attended every session of the workshop and all turned out for the informal dinner session.

The participants were:

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| 1. Ms Faye Duega | The Independent, Port Moresby |
| 2. Ms Roselyn Gau | NBC, Mount Hagen |
| 3. Mr Kamo Kini | FM Morobe, Lae |
| 4. Ms Celina Korei | NBC, Vanimo |
| 5. Mr James Koteke | NBC, Alotau |
| 6. Ms Sophia Magi | Em-TV, Port Moresby |
| 7. Ms Jean Nui | PNGFM, Port Moresby |
| 8. Ms Denise Ray | NBC, Port Moresby |
| 9. Mr Alexander Rheeny | Post Courier, Port Moresby |
| 10. Ms Mataria Rupa | FM 100, Port Moresby |

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| 11. Ms Donna Saiwal | NBC, Wewak |
| 12. Mr Dick Sorariba | NBC, Port Moresby |
| 13. Mr Theo Thomas | Post-Courier, Mount Hagen |

Observations

The support of the Media Council of PNG for this workshop – both in the planning and in having senior media executives contribute to the workshop program – was most appreciated. The CIJ and the instructor are most grateful to the other speakers who made time for the workshop despite busy schedules. Australian journalist Kevin Ricketts, the AAP Correspondent in PNG, devoted a full morning to the workshop and Sean Dorney, the ABC's Pacific Correspondent, made himself available during the informal dinner session with the participants in place of the formal session because he was due to be away from Port Moresby on assignment.

The participants themselves were of the highest calibre and displayed a very strong commitment to high standards of journalism and to their role in the future directions of PNG.

Australian Foreign Policy in the Pacific was an area of much interest among the participants with unanimous criticism of 'offshore processing' of asylum seekers as an infringement of PNG's sovereignty.

During the visit to news organizations, it was dismaying to see the dilapidated state of the National Broadcasting Commission's (NBC) buildings and facilities. Also a matter of concern were reports from participants that the amount of the NBC's core funding has remained unchanged for 26 years, and that funding shortfalls have seen the cancellation of provincial programming for the 80% of PNG's population in rural areas.

Workshop Program

Monday 12 November

Morning:

Introduction and outline

Nigel McCarthy

Afternoon:

Overview – Public Affairs Reporting

Nigel McCarthy

Review Session

Tuesday 13 November

Morning:

Overview of government in PNG

Guest speaker: Mr Mike Manning, Director Institute of National Affairs and Mr Beno Boeha, Director National Research Institute

Afternoon:

Leadership and corruption

Guest speaker: Mr Ila Geno Chief Ombudsman, PNG Ombudsman Commission

Review Session

Wednesday 14 November

Morning:

Urbanisation and poverty issues

Guest speaker: Lady Carol Kidu, Member for Moresby South

Afternoon:

Visits to news organizations

Review Session

Thursday 15 November

Morning:

Globalisation and PNG

Guest speakers: Dr Ray Anere, Head, Political Science Department, University of PNG

Afternoon:

Expert panel

Guest speakers: Editors and journalists from various PNG media organizations

Review Session

Friday 16 November

Morning:

The view from outside

Guest speakers: Mr Richard Dinnen, ABC correspondent in PNG, and Mr Kevin Ricketts, AAP correspondent in PNG

Afternoon:

Presentations and Conclusions