



MEDIA RELEASE

ABC FRIENDS REJECTS PRIME MINISTERS PLANS TO COMMERCIALISE PACIFIC BROADCASTING.

The Prime Minister's announcement in North Queensland today that he plans to commercialise Pacific broadcasting will not provide quality public interest journalism to our Pacific neighbours.

If Mr Morrison wants to restore a fresh initiative like the Australia Network he is dependent on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation which has the experience and professionalism to create strong partnerships with Pacific nations.

The voice of Australia through Radio Australia, and more recently via a wider range of ABC media platforms, has long been valued by people in the Pacific and many ABC broadcasters have become popular in the region.

Australian foreign policy will not be enhanced by the commercial news judgements of Fox or Sky News, which does not provide independent analysis of complex issues.

Furthermore, professional broadcasting in the Pacific depends on two-way respectful communication that enhances understanding of diverse perspectives in the region.

In recent months Pacific leaders have made clear their expectations of Australian/Pacific public broadcasting.

Vanuatu Prime Minister Charlot Salwal has called for rebuilding public interest broadcasting.

In a speech to the Lowy Institute Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailete called for the Pacific voice to be heard in Australia and other Pacific leaders have echoed this call, as well as Secretary General of the South Pacific Forum

Significantly, if Australia were to accept this approach to Pacific broadcasting it would become the only nation to rely on the commercial sector to deliver its "soft power" diplomacy. Just imagine Canada or Britain giving such a significant national task to commercial interests!

ABC Friends President Margaret Reynolds urged the Prime Minister to reconsider this public policy shift and take advice from the Department of Foreign Affairs which is more familiar with the needs of Pacific nations and managing diplomatic relations.

Margaret Reynolds

ABC Friends National President

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