

State of the Media: Fiji



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Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or the University of Adelaide.

Photos in this report are from ABCID programs, ABC staff, and ABC archives, unless otherwise specified.

CONTENTS

Acronyms.....	5
Executive summary.....	6
1. Introduction.....	8
2. Methodology.....	10
3. Media organisation footprint.....	12
4. Media content coverage	18
5. Media business resilience.....	20
6. Media policy and legislative environment.....	24
7. Media industry bodies.....	28
8. Misinformation and disinformation.....	30
9. Media infrastructure	32
10. Media consumption	34
11. Recommendations	36
Appendix 1. Radio	38
Appendix 2. Online media.....	41



House at the waters edge in Naloto village Fiji.

ACRONYMS

5G	fifth-generation
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABCID	Australian Broadcasting Corporation International Development
AI	artificial intelligence
AM	amplitude modulation
CFL	Communications Fiji Limited
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
FBC	Fijian Broadcasting Corporation
FJD	Fijian dollar
FM	frequency modulation
FMA	Fijian Media Association
FMC	Fiji Media Council
FOI	freedom of information
GEDSI	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
ICT	information and communications technology
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
LGBTIQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexually and gender diverse people
LTE	long-term evolution
MIDA	Media Industry Development Act
N/A	not available
NGO	non-government organisation
PACMAS	Pacific Media Assistance Scheme
PACNEWS	Pacific news
PCBL	Pacific Cooperation Broadcasting Limited
PINA	Pacific Islands News Association
PSB	public service broadcast
RNZ	Radio New Zealand
SCCN	Southern Cross Cable Network
SEO	search engine optimisation
SPC	Pacific Community
TAF	Telecommunications Authority of Fiji
TV	television
WiM	Women in Media

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Fiji. It outlines how Fiji is, in many respects, an outlier in the Pacific Islands region, with a highly developed and diverse media sector. This includes multiple newspapers, magazines, and an array of radio and television stations.

Media sector adapting to post-MIDA environment

Media practitioner respondents noted that Fijian media must be strengthened to be able to exercise the freedom it now enjoys with the repeal of the Media Industry Development Act (MIDA), which had curtailed media's ability to report freely for over a decade. Most media practitioner respondents highlighted that the repeal of MIDA brings with it a sense of uncertainty, as it involves moving away from historically entrenched values of self-censorship. The transition from working under a restrictive environment to one without MIDA requires a period of adjustment that, according to media practitioners, needs to be supported across the sector by the Fijian Media Association through awareness sessions and training.

Media access to official information remains a challenge

Although Fiji's Information Act 2018 protects the right of public access to information, at the time of writing the act has not been gazetted and is hence not in force. As such, most media practitioner respondents were not aware of the act or its provisions. Respondents also described challenges in accessing official information from the government, with departmental media units typically not responding to information requests in a timely manner. This has led to journalists forgoing story leads due to a lack of information.

Lack of equipment and resourcing in newsrooms

Despite the continued resilience of the media sector and its recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic problems remain around lack of media equipment and staff, particularly for small- to medium-sized media businesses. Media practitioner respondents from smaller organisations noted a lack of digital equipment (including cameras) to break stories online, which (as news consumption continues to pivot to social media platforms) leads to a competitive disadvantage against larger media organisations. Lack of newsroom staff has also meant that media are not able to chase all their leads, often having to either forgo a story or assign a non-journalist (e.g. driver) to cover it.



Journalists Talei Matairakula and Ioane Asioli conduct an interview in Suva.

Artificial intelligence cautiously leveraged by media

More than 50 per cent of media practitioner respondents acknowledged using artificial intelligence (AI) programs such as ChatGPT in their work. Media practitioner respondents noted that, while the use of AI enhances their work, they were cautious for it not to interfere with the human element in their writing, preferring to apply it as part of their editing process, as a research tool, or in drafting social media posts. Most media practitioner respondents also saw the value of AI in supporting search engine optimisation (SEO), to generate keywords that can be tagged to content for better online search visibility.

Media Facebook pages as primary news source for audiences

Among audience survey respondents, 78 per cent highlighted that the Facebook pages of established media organisations, such as the Fiji Times, remain their primary news source. The main motivation behind accessing news via Facebook is the low cost of data and non-paywalled content.



1. INTRODUCTION

Fiji is an archipelago of 332 islands and approximately 900,869¹ inhabitants. The majority of the population lives on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. English, Fijian, and Hindi are widely spoken. Fiji was a British colony and gained its independence in 1970. Independent Fiji was a constitutional democracy, although this was challenged by a series of coups in 1987, 2000, and 2006. The 2006 coup installed a military regime until Fiji returned to democracy following elections in 2014.

¹ Fiji Bureau of Statistics, 2025 Population Projection.



Journalists from Fiji TV put their mojo skills to the test.

The media industry in Fiji is highly active. Media outlets range across print, radio, television, and, more recently, online platforms, with Facebook and X (Twitter) particularly popular.²

This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Fiji. It is part of the State of the Media project, which comprises 12 country reports and one regional report. These reports serve as an accessible resource for media, civil society, and government organisations in support of development goals in the region. In addition to Fiji, the countries studied are: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

² Caroline Austin, *CDAC Network - Fiji media, language and telecommunications guide PDF*, (CDAC Network, 2021), 13.



2. METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology was guided by core research questions identified by ABC International Development (ABCID) and was designed to foreground the expertise of Pacific researchers and media professionals. Data collection, analysis, and report drafting were conducted by Pacific researchers.

The research team began with a desk-based review of relevant primary and secondary literature. Additionally, 27 stakeholder interviews with media practitioners and audience members were conducted, followed by a targeted online audience survey on media consumption patterns to contextualise the interview findings. At each step, feedback and advice was sought from the Fiji country media expert adviser, Richard Naidu, who cross-checked the accuracy of findings and co-authored this report. The research was approved by the University of Adelaide Human Research Ethics Committee, and steps were taken to mitigate risks to all research participants, including maintaining their anonymity.

A more detailed discussion of the project methodology is contained in the regional report.³

³ ABC International Development - Research.



Participants attend an event in Suva as part of the Young Pacific Change Makers program, Fiji 2022.



3. MEDIA ORGANISATION FOOTPRINT

Fiji's media landscape has a long history: radio broadcasting started in 1935, and the Fiji Times first published in 1869.⁴ The Fiji Times is the most prominent of the daily newspapers, with its main headquarters (which includes a printery) in the capital, Suva. It has a bureau in Lautoka, Western Division, and in Labasa, Northern Division. Fiji Sun is the second daily newspaper, with its main office and printery in Suva, and reporters and staff in its Nadi and Labasa bureaus.

4 L. G. Usher, Paper read to the Fiji Society (1962) - Brief History of the Fiji Times.



left: The Fiji Times celebrates 155 years, 2024. **right:** Behind the controls at the Fijian Broadcasting Corporation.

There is 100 per cent radio network coverage in Fiji, with key players being the government-owned Fijian Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) and Communications Fiji Limited (CFL). Television stations include Fiji Television, Mai TV, and FBC TV, all based in Suva, with Digicel providing pay-per-view through its Sky Pacific channel.

Print

The privately owned Fiji Times is an English-language daily newspaper. The Fiji Times also publishes Kaila, a special lifestyle weekly insert for teenagers, as part of its Wednesday publication. It has a website and is active on all major social media platforms. It also has an online news portal, The Lens@177, on YouTube. Fiji Sun, the other privately owned daily newspaper, offers online and e-paper editions of its print version. Wansolwara is a student newspaper produced by the University of the South Pacific. Islands Business magazine is a privately owned monthly publication focusing on regional business, circulated in Fiji and regionally.

Table 1. Print media

Platform	Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Newspaper	The Fiji Times	Private	English	Fiji One News - website Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X	Commercial
Newspaper	Fiji Sun	Private	English	The Fiji Sun website Facebook, Instagram, X	Commercial
Newspaper	Wansolwara (University of the South Pacific)	Community	English	University of the South Pacific, - Wansolwara news website Facebook	Community
Magazine	Islands Business	Private	English	Islands Business website Facebook	Commercial

Radio

The Fijian Broadcasting Corporation (FBC) operates a network of six radio stations: two in Fijian vernacular/ iTaukei (Radio Fiji One and Bula FM), two in Hindi (Radio Fiji Two and Mirchi FM), and two in English (Gold FM and 2Day FM). According to a contract between FBC and the government, the government buys airtime on, and contributes to the operating costs of, two “public service broadcast” stations, Radio Fiji One and Radio Fiji Two. The remaining four FBC stations are commercial operations.⁵

Communications Fiji Limited (CFL) has five radio stations: FM 96 and Legend FM broadcast in English, Navtarang Radio in Hindi, and Viti FM in Fijian. Radio Sargam is a community Hindi language service that complements Radio Navtarang. All FM services can be received by CFL’s mobile app. CFL also owns the online news site fijivillage.com.

Community radio stations are an integral part of Fiji’s radio broadcasting landscape. Prominent examples include FemTALK89FM, a Fijian community radio station run by femLINK Pacific, and Radio Pasifika, a radio broadcasting platform housed at the University of the South Pacific. As with most countries in the region, Fiji has an active faith-based media sector that includes organisations such as Hope FM, operated by the Fiji Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Radio Light FM, owned by the Evangelical Bible Mission Trust Board.

A list of radio stations in Fiji is attached to this report as appendix 1.

Television

The television landscape in Fiji comprises both state-owned and privately owned media. The first commercial television station, Fiji Television Limited, also known as Fiji TV, was established in 1994. It provides free-to-air programs in English, as well as in Fijian through its Na Lololo vernacular channel.⁶

The second commercial television station, Mai TV, was established in 2008 and broadcasts to more than 90 per cent of Fiji on the Walesi platform,⁷ which gives it equal reach to that of its competitors. It is a privately owned network and broadcasts local, Pacific, and international content, with a primary focus on major sporting events such as the Super Rugby and Pacific Netball Series.⁸

The Fijian Broadcasting Corporation is a government-owned entity providing the free-to-air FBC TV service, and since 2018 a free 24-hour sports channel, FBC Sports. Its board of directors is appointed by the government.⁹

Beyond the TV broadcasters noted above, pay TV subscription channels are also offered through the Fiji One TV service provided by Sky Pacific, a Digicel Fiji-owned corporation. The Fiji One TV subscription package offers over 20 channels.

Trinity Broadcasting Network, in partnership with Christian Mission Fellowship International (Fiji), relays Christian content in English.

⁵ *Fijian Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report 2022 - PDF*, Parliamentary Paper No. 94 of 2023, 9.

⁶ *Fiji One News - About Us*, accessed August 23, 2024.

⁷ *Walesi is the Fijian government’s digital television infrastructure company*.

⁸ *Mai TV - About Us*, accessed August 23, 2024.

⁹ *Fijian Broadcasting Corporation, Annual Report 2022*, 10.

Table 2. Television

Organisation	Ownership	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Fiji TV	Private	English	<i>Fiji One News - website</i> Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube	Commercial
Mai TV	Private	English/ Fijian	<i>Mai TV - website</i> Facebook, SoundCloud, YouTube, X	Commercial
FBC TV	State	English	Facebook, Instagram, SoundCloud, YouTube, X	Public
Fiji One TV	Private	English/ Fijian / Hindi	<i>Fiji One News - website</i>	Commercial
Trinity Broadcasting Network	Church	English	<i>Trinity Broadcasting Network - website</i>	Church

Online

Almost all media in Fiji have an online presence on major social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and YouTube, with many organisations cross-posting content across these channels. The Fijivillage online news site is owned and managed by CFL and delivers local, regional, and international news. The site is complemented by a Fijivillage app for audiences to access radio streaming, news, picture stories, audio and video content.

In similar vein, FijiLive is another online news media company offering news content on its website, app, and social media, with revenue generated from online advertising. It is owned by Webmasters Fiji Limited.

The Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) is a regional media membership organisation based in Suva and a subscription news agency serving 21 Pacific Islands countries. It distributes three daily bulletins of Pacific news (PACNEWS) and one sport bulletin to members and paid subscribers around the Pacific. It also has a website and a YouTube channel.

A list of online news media in Fiji is provided in appendix 2.

Target audience

Given the vast number of radio broadcasters in Fiji and radio's significance as a primary source of information for Fijians, the market is diverse, with several radio stations targeting niche audiences relevant to their main content offerings. For example, FM 96 targets listeners under the age of 30, while Legend FM captures the market share of listeners aged over 30. Additionally, FBC's Radio Fiji One and Radio Fiji Two target ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities, engaging with Fijian and Hindi-speaking listeners respectively.

Print and television, owing to their smaller markets (relative to radio), mostly cater to a general audience. Media practitioner respondents working in TV highlighted that news programs in Fiji typically cover a range of topics appealing to a broad range of audience demographics, providing something relatable for everyone.

Table 3. Target audience

Platform	Organisation	Target audience
Newspaper	The Fiji Times	General
	Fiji Sun	General
Magazine	Islands Business	National and regional leaders, both current and emerging, including development partners
Radio	Fiji One	General
	Fiji Two	General
	Gold FM	40–60 age group, English-speaking
	2Day FM	18–40 age group, primary focus on younger listeners
	Bula FM	18–40 age group, Fijian-speaking
	Mirchi FM	18–40 age group, Hindi-speaking
	FM 96 (English)	<30 age group
	Navtarang	Hindi-speaking, Indo-Fijians
	Viti FM	25–45 age group, Fijian-speaking
	Legend FM	30+ age group
	Radio Sargam	Hindi-speaking
	FemTALK89FM	Women, all ages
Television	Fiji TV	General
	Mai TV	General
	FBC TV	General

Government and civil society

There are media and communications advisers within most ministries in government, with a considerable number of departments maintaining a social media presence as a way of engaging with the public on key national developments and initiatives.

Beyond the government sector, there are several regional organisations – such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Community (SPC), and the University of the South Pacific – which have dedicated media and communication departments, most based in Suva. Many of Fiji’s civil society organisations also maintain communications functions and a social media presence.



Covering a Minister's presentation to the media during a budget reporting workshop.

04

4. MEDIA CONTENT COVERAGE

There is a strong regional focus in Fiji media content. For example, the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA) – which represents media professionals in over 20 Pacific Islands countries and territories – operates a daily news service, PACNEWS. Its members provide news article contributions on a range of topics relating to development, policy, business, and social issues, which are consolidated and distributed in a series of daily bulletins. Fiji's media regularly pick up regional PACNEWS stories for domestic audiences. Fiji's media coverage also includes media content produced overseas for Pacific-based audiences and Pacific diaspora.

A major part of Fiji's media coverage (as explained by media practitioner respondents) centres on regional and international events within the Pacific – such as the Pacific Games and the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture. The strong participation in these events serves as a great source of news. For example, the Fijian Media Association (FMA) sent seven journalists to cover the 13th Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture in Hawaii in June 2024, a trip funded by the US embassy.

The monthly magazine *Islands Business*, produced and printed in Suva, which publishes regional news from Fiji and other Pacific Islands countries, is the home of business, government, NGO, and academic sector coverage. Apart from its Suva-based reporters and editors, it relies on external contributors for stories outside of Fiji.

Gender equality, disability and social inclusion

The stakeholder interviews with media practitioners aimed to capture top-level themes including gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) representation in media content coverage in Fiji. The findings below should not be viewed as exhaustive due to a small sample size. Rather, these insights provide an indication of potential trends in media practitioner perceptions of GEDSI issues.

Media practitioner respondents noted several evolving sector-wide initiatives in Fiji that shape the content coverage on GEDSI-related issues in the media. This includes the FMA's establishment of a Women in Media (WiM) Fiji group in 2022¹⁰ which supports women content producers through mentoring and empowering them to navigate and enhance their careers. At an organisational level, the FBC Women in Media committee provides a safe space for female journalists to share and seek support around their experiences in the media.

Media practitioner respondents also highlighted support received from media development mentoring programs such as an initiative launched by WiM Fiji in collaboration with the Pacific Media Assistance Scheme (PACMAS) and WiM Australia. The program focused on “empower[ing] women in Fiji's media industry to advance their careers and take on leadership roles”.¹¹ It was funded under PACMAS.

The FemLINK Pacific Media Initiative has done substantial work in promoting inclusion both in Fiji and around the Pacific. Its Morning Waves show on FM 89 radio is hosted by members of the LGBTIQ+ community complemented by the weekly radio show *Look at My Abilities*, a “program for, by and about women with disabilities”.¹²

However, uncertainties exist in covering inclusion-related issues in Fiji, with a considerable number of media practitioner respondents expressing a lack of confidence in tackling stories and issues relating to GEDSI. There were requests for more targeted training around inclusive reporting conventions for media professionals across the country. As explained by a respondent: “We don't cover much when it comes to the topic. I don't touch on that a lot and if I do get the opportunity, I feel like I'm not knowledgeable enough to report on it. Just a lot of technicalities around reporting on people with disabilities” (Fiji 03).

There were also concerted calls from media practitioner respondents for stronger representation of people with disabilities in the news and for more content to focus on the strengths and achievements of people with disabilities.

¹⁰ Rosi Tamani-Doviverata and Kathy McLeish, *The Interpreter - Supporting Pacific Women to Tell the Region's Stories*, March 8, 2024.

¹¹ Litia Cava, *FBC News - New Mentoring Program for Women Journalists*.

¹² Austin, *Fiji Media, Language, and Telecommunications Landscape Guide*, 23.

05

5. MEDIA BUSINESS RESILIENCE

Most Fiji-based media organisations endured financial setbacks while operating under the Media Industry Development Act (MIDA). This legislation is discussed further below, under Media policy and legislative environment. Under the act, journalists were faced with substantial fines if they were found to have breached its conditions around reporting. According to media practitioner respondents and published research, this was amplified by a general lack of advertising revenue from the government, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing a considerable number of private media organisations to the brink of collapse.¹³

¹³ Ricardo Morris, *Pacific Journalism Review - Fiji Media Regulation: Emerging from the 'Worst of Times' to the 'Best of Times'*, Review 21, no. 1 (2015): 37.



left: Broadcast technicians at a Walesi transmission site. **right:** Reporters from Mai TV on the streets of Suva.

According to media practitioner respondents, the financial situation for private media organisations in Fiji has now improved, with the repeal of MIDA in April 2023. Under the current government, the public service broadcast (PSB) contract – historically a funding grant provided to FBC to produce and broadcast public interest content – has been opened to other private media organisations for tender, as of July 2024.¹⁴

Increased income diversification

Private media organisations have also continued to diversify their funding streams. For example, Communications Fiji Limited (CFL) earns its revenue from a series of non-media ventures, including an events planning firm, Total Event Company. CFL also has a stake in the regional media market; it owns PNG FM Limited, which runs a series of radio stations in Papua New Guinea.¹⁵ This diversification of revenue sources enabled CFL to install two new transmitters near Labasa in Vanua Levu in 2023.¹⁶ Similarly, Fiji’s national broadcaster, FBC, runs a production studio, Studio 69, for commercial work, and an events management firm, which hosts and manages public events for business and the government.¹⁷

Lack of equipment and human resourcing in newsrooms

Despite the continued resilience of the sector, systemic problems remain around a lack of media equipment and staff, particularly for small- to medium-sized media businesses. Media practitioner respondents from smaller organisations noted, as news consumption continues to pivot to social media platforms, a lack of digital equipment (including cameras) to break stories online, leading to a competitive disadvantage against larger media organisations.

Lack of newsroom staff has also meant that media practitioners are not able to chase all their leads, often having to either forgo a story or assign a non-journalist (e.g. driver) to cover it. One respondent reflected: “One of the challenges is I’m the only one working

¹⁴ Morris, “Fiji Media Regulation,” 9; FBC News - Government to Expand PSB Grant to Multiple Media Outlets, July 15, 2024.

¹⁵ Pratap, “Government to Expand PSB Grant.”

¹⁶ “CFL Radio Networks,” Communications Fiji Limited, accessed August 23, 2024.

¹⁷ Fijian Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report 2022 - PDF, Parliamentary Paper No. 94 of 2023, 11.



An interview being recorded using a mobile journalism kit.

here. Well, me and my photographer and driver. Sometimes there are lots of things happening, so we must pick which event we have to cover. If not, we'll have to split. One goes to this event; one goes to the other event" (Fiji 02).

Media perceived as an under-prioritised area in development funding

Media practitioner respondents highlighted that media resilience has not been a sufficiently significant priority for international development donors. From the perspective of respondents, this raises concerns about the level of international support for media freedom in the region. In an interview, a media executive stated that funding for media development is minimal relative to other areas (Fiji 27).

Artificial intelligence

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies has significantly impacted the traditional media industry.¹⁸ More than 50 per cent of media practitioner respondents acknowledged using AI programs such as ChatGPT in their work. Media practitioner respondents noted that, while the use of AI enhances their work, they were cautious for it not to interfere with the human element in their writing, preferring to apply it as part of their editing process, as a research tool, or in drafting social media posts. Most media practitioner respondents also saw the value of AI in supporting search engine optimisation (SEO), to generate keywords that can be tagged to content for better online search visibility.

Published research shows that the use of AI technologies can help journalists combat disinformation and enhance their work, but AI can also be risky for the media in general and may pose societal threats.¹⁹ At the regional level, the Australian Government is "working closely with Pacific states on data and communications infrastructure and investment in cyber security, which are essential to AI adoption".²⁰ Fiji is also embracing AI more broadly in its service delivery and development sectors, with potential benefits seen in areas such as poverty and climate change.²¹

18 Christoph Trattner, Dietmar Jannach, Enrico Motta et al., *AI and Ethics - Responsible Media Technology and AI: Challenges and Research Directions*, no. 4 (2022): 591.

19 Trattner et al., "Responsible Media Technology and AI," 585.

20 Miah Hammond-Errey, East Asia Forum, August 12, 2024, "[Laying the Foundations for AI in Australia and the Pacific](#)".

21 Iliana Biutu, – Kamikamica, "Fijivillage, June 12, 2024, [Fiji Village - Fiji's Cybersecurity Strengthens Among AI Driven Progress Towards Sustainable Development Goals](#).



6. MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The Media Industry Development Act (MIDA) was introduced in 2010 by the Fiji First Party. MIDA was known within the industry for its punitive and harsh provisions, regulating the ownership and registration of media organisations in Fiji, as well as media content.²²

²² David Robie, *Australian National University Press - Unfree and unfair? Media intimidation in Fiji's 2014 elections*, Series (2016).

With the election of the Sitiveni Rabuka coalition government, MIDA was repealed in 2023. The repeal was described as having “long been a unifying demand of all media organisations in Fiji”.²³ Since the repeal of MIDA, there is no specific legislation that regulates media organisations and the media industry. However, there is existing legislation that regulates radio and television broadcast and the telecommunication sector, as well as newer legislation relating to the work of the media: the Information Act 2018, Online Safety Act 2018, and Cybercrime Act 2021.

Freedom of expression

The right to freedom of speech, expression, and publication is protected under Fiji’s constitution, which includes the right to access information and freedom of the press and other media. The constitution calls for the regulation of the media and provides for the enforcement of media standards and the registration and conduct of media organisations.

With the repeal of MIDA, there is widespread celebration among media practitioner respondents over the return of media freedom in Fiji. However, respondents noted that Fiji’s media must be strengthened to be able to exercise the freedom it enjoys. Most media practitioner respondents highlighted that the repeal of MIDA does not automatically equate to a more conducive environment for public interest journalism, as there are challenges associated with moving away from historically entrenched values of self-censorship, especially when it comes to news reporting. A respondent reflected: “It’s new to a lot of people that’s been heavily censored the past few years. Even when we were told that we could cover anything like we wanted, what’s everything? It’s just a bit new. This goes back to your code of ethics” (Fiji 02). The transition from working under a restrictive environment to one without MIDA requires a period of adjustment that, according to media practitioner respondents, cannot be discounted.

Accessing official information

The right to access information held by public offices is protected in the Fijian constitution and enforced by the Information Act 2018. Under that act, a statutory body, the Accountability and Transparency Commission, oversees the process by which a person may request information held by public agencies. Although the legislation was enacted by parliament in 2018, it has never been brought into force, so it is not legally effective. According to a 2021 report by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), only a few journalists were aware the Accountability and Transparency Commission existed.²⁴

Media practitioner respondents regarded the non-implementation of the right to information legislation as a key challenge in trying to obtain official information for publication. As one respondent noted: “Fiji is a cautionary tale of how government legislation very nearly destroyed our industry. That experience has taught us of the danger of government control as exercised through laws/decrees. Government should implement FOI in a meaningful way” (Fiji 26).

²³ Communication Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Manoa Kamikamica, quoted in Pita Ligaiula, *Pacific News Service - Fiji’s Media Act Repealed by Parliament*, April 6, 2023.

²⁴ *International Federation of Journalists - A Way Forward - Pacific Media Consultation Report 2021 PDF*, (International Federation of Journalists in partnership with UNESCO, 2021), 4.

Table 4. Policy and legislation

Platform	Legislation
Radio	Broadcasting Commission Act 1953 [Chapter 105] ²⁵
Television	Television and Online Streaming Act 1992
Online	Online Safety Act 2018 Cybercrime Act 2021

Print

The 53-year-old Defamation Act 1971 applies to all media, including print. This act supplements, but does not codify, the common law on defamation. It provides that defamatory words that are broadcast are treated as libel, as opposed to slander, which only applies to oral statements.

Broadcast media

The national broadcasting service in Fiji was initially established under the Broadcasting Commission Act 1953 as the Fiji Broadcasting Corporation. However, it was incorporated under the Companies Act 2015 under its new title as the Fijian Broadcasting Corporation and as a government commercial company under the Public Enterprises Act of 2019. Under its initial establishment as part of the Broadcasting Commission Act, the role of the FBC, as the national broadcaster, is to deliver broadcasting services via radio for the information, education, or entertainment of the public. The Information Minister retains the power to prohibit broadcast of certain matters, without these being explicitly defined. The FBC is state owned and regulated by the Office of the Prime Minister.

Television services in Fiji are regulated by the Television and Online Streaming Act 1992. Under the act, the government regulates the provision of licences for television broadcasting and online streaming, with powers to set requirements on the broadcast of certain types of content (such as sporting events) and to restrict airtime on matters deemed contrary to the public interest.

Telecommunications

The telecommunication services sector is regulated by the Telecommunications Act 2008, the implementation of which is overseen by the Telecommunications Authority of Fiji (TAF) and the Telecommunication Appeal Tribunal, both established by the act. TAF manages the licensing of telecommunications services and the radio spectrum, with the power to revoke a licence where conditions of the act are deemed to have been breached. The role of the Telecommunication Appeal Tribunal is to address appeals relating to decisions on telecommunication and radio spectrum licensing.

The Telecommunications Act 2008 also grants the government the authority to prescribe “codes of practice to ensure that service providers adopt proactive measures to improve the resilience of their telecommunications network and telecommunications service”.²⁶

²⁵ The Broadcasting Commission Act remains current but appears to have been omitted from the online Laws of Fiji at [The Laws of Fiji - homepage](#). The law as of 1985 can be found at [Fiji Broadcasting Commission Act 1985 - PDF](#). It was further amended by § 20 of the Revised Edition of the Laws (Consequential Amendments) Act 2016, available at [The Laws of Fiji - Laws as Published - website](#).

²⁶ Telecommunications Act 2008, section 82.01.

Online

Social media in Fiji is regulated by the Online Safety Act 2018. This act addresses “cyberbullying, cyber stalking, internet trolling and exposure to offensive or harmful content, particularly in respect of children”, as well as seeking to “deter harm caused to individuals by electronic communications”.²⁷

The Cybercrime Act 2021 creates criminal offences relating to online data breaches, among other provisions relating to information access and use.²⁸

Other laws

Media practitioner respondents highlighted the Crimes Act 2009 as a potential restriction on media freedom, as the act treats criticism of the government as potentially seditious, and this has been used to target journalists and activists.²⁹

27 Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights, *Report on the Online Safety Bill 2018 (Bill No. 7 of 2018)*, Parliament of the Republic of Fiji - *Report on the Online Safety Bill PDF*.

28 Pita Suguturaga, *Pacific Legal Network - Cyber Crime Act of Fiji 2021 Update*, accessed August 23, 2024.

29 Ana Tuiketeki, *Periscope - The Rule of Law in Fiji: Freedom from Cruel and Degrading Treatment; Freedom of Speech and Association*, Periscope, July 2021.

On the set of Na Ketekete Nei Nau, Fiji TV.



07

7. MEDIA INDUSTRY BODIES

Fijian Media Association

The Fijian Media Association (FMA) has been active since 2014. The FMA is a voluntary association of media workers, established under the terms of the Industrial Associations Act 1941. It has a constitution and a code of ethics, with its mission and purpose built around values that protect the best interests of the association and its members. The FMA's main roles are providing training to build media workers' capacity and promoting and defending media freedom and freedom of information.



Representatives of the Fijian Media Association in Canberra, 2022. Makereta Komai, Dreu Vukailagi, Indra Singh, Stanley Simpson, Reginald Chandar, Rosi Doviverata, Vijay Narayan, Amelia Makutu (PACMAS), Fred Wesley

Women in Media Fiji (WiM) is an initiative of the Fijian Media Association driven and established by local media women to provide a safe space for women in media to talk about their careers, the issues they face and champion women's voice in media content.³⁰ The Fijian Press Club, a forum to generate dialogue between media and key stakeholders,³¹ works in partnership with the FMA to facilitate media training and discussion forums for FMA members. The FMA also facilitates public engagement with stakeholders across various sectors, such as sports teams, government officials, and businesses.

Fiji Media Council

Work began in April 2023 to revive the Fiji Media Council (FMC), an independent self-regulating body supported by all of Fiji's media organisations, with national media, community and government representatives. It aims to "promote high journalistic standards, safeguard the media's independence, uphold freedom of speech and expression, uphold the public's right to be informed accurately and fairly, promote an independent and effective Complaints Committee; and promote a Code of Ethics and Practice for journalists and media organisations".³² The FMC was last operational prior to the promulgation of the 2010 Media Industry Development Act (MIDA).

³⁰ *Women in Media - Paving the Way for Progress in the Pacific Through Advocacy, Mentorship, and Collaboration*, Nov 21, 2023.

³¹ Inoke Rabonu, *Fiji Sun - Fijian Media Association Launches Press Club*, May 5, 2022.

³² Timoci Vula, *The Fiji Times - Media Leaders Begin Work to Revive Fiji Media Council*, April 6, 2023.



8. MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Misinformation and disinformation have had distinct phases in Fiji. Misinformation became more prominent during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially at the height of lockdowns. Rampant anti-vaccination misinformation gathered significant online momentum.³³ This misinformation was compounded by a number of practising health officials hosting online sessions questioning the efficacy of the vaccines.³⁴

³³ Vipul Khosla and Prashanth Pillay, ABC International Development - Curb the Infodemic: Media Reporting, Debunking Misinformation and Geopolitical Concerns, August 22, 2022, updated October 4, 2023.

³⁴ Shalveen Chand, Fiji Sun - Fact Check Finds Errors in Dr Hawea's Claims, August 5, 2021.



Multimedia journalist Jale Daucakacaka reports during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The health ministry was placed under significant communications pressure to address the deluge of misinformation, because of its implications for Fiji's vaccination rate at the time. Fortunately, a collaborative, coordinated stakeholder effort, involving the government and the media, contributed towards addressing misinformation. This included fact-checking articles and editorials to mediate the onslaught of misinformation.³⁵ Media practitioner respondents noted that these resources helped to address misinformation, but such efforts could not prevent the online sharing of various unsubstantiated claims.

Disinformation has also been prominent in Fiji, especially during elections.³⁶ This can include publicly released letters making claims, or online social media pages, posing as news sources, that actively try to mislead uninformed citizens.³⁷ Since the 2014 national elections and the expansion of social media, disinformation has been more common, especially during political events.

Further to the above, media practitioner respondents stated that the rise of citizen journalism on social media has significantly amplified mis/disinformation in Fiji and contributes to a fast-evolving news cycle that may not always be driven by informed evidence. Respondents noted that media organisations are often unable to keep up with the pace at which misinformation flows online, with interventions to correct unevidenced narratives arriving too late and regarded as "stale news". This reinforces findings in a 2018 University of the South Pacific paper on citizen journalism narratives in Fiji, which asserts that "Fiji's media landscape is facing pressure from irresponsible citizen journalism compounded by the quick pace and real time nature of social media".³⁸

At the time of writing, Fiji does not have a specific law to address mis/disinformation, but it has several bodies with a related role in addressing the issue. Some of these authorities include the Fiji Online Safety Commission, the Fijian Media Association, and the Fijian Elections Office.

³⁵ Chand, "Fact Check Finds Errors."

³⁶ Lice Movono, *Pacific Beat - Elections Office Slams Fiji Political Party for Spreading Misinformation over Claims*, December 7, 2022.

³⁷ Movono, "Elections Office Slams Fiji Political Party"; *The Fiji Times - Report Fake Fiji Times Facebook Account*, December 16, 2018.

³⁸ Jope Tarai and Elikidrugunalevu, *University of the South Pacific - Citizen Journalism, Social Media and the Media in Fiji PDF*, University of the South Pacific School of Government, Development and International Affairs, Working Paper No. 7, 2018.

09

9. MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

Telecommunications

Fiji benefits from extensive submarine cables entering its vast geography and has some of the most developed information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure in the Pacific Islands region.³⁹ There are currently three fibre-optic cables connected to Fiji: the Southern Cross Cable Network (SCCN), the Tonga–Fiji Submarine Cable System, and the Tui-Samoa submarine cable system. The Fiji Government has partnered with Google on the Tabua Cable which will connect Fiji with Australia and the United States as part of Google’s South Pacific Connect Initiative, expected for completion in 2026.⁴⁰

³⁹ *USA Department of Commerce - Fiji Country Commercial Guide*, January 23, 2024.

⁴⁰ *Submarine Cable Networks - Fiji*, accessed August 23, 2024.



FBC's Peceli Naviticoko records a piece on camera.

The main telecommunications operators are Vodafone Fiji, Telecom Fiji, Fiji International Telecommunications Ltd (Fintel), and Digicel Fiji. The satellite internet provider Starlink was granted a spectrum licence by the Fiji Government in 2023 and is now operational in Fiji for those who purchase the Starlink kit.⁴¹

Due to lack of infrastructure in rural areas, about 5 per cent of the country does not have mobile network coverage.⁴² This includes both populated and unpopulated parts of the country that do not receive mobile signal due to geographical factors (e.g. mountains). However, Fiji is now the leading market in the Pacific region for long-term evolution (LTE) and fifth-generation wireless cellular technology (5G) development. This means that Fiji now has “the highest mobile and internet penetration in the Pacific Islands region”.⁴³

The extensive ICT infrastructure also supports the well-developed digital media landscape in Fiji, as noted by media practitioner respondents, with most media outlets sustaining a strong online presence that reaches audiences in most parts of Fiji, as well as internationally.

Broadcast transmission

Fiji's broadcast transmission landscape has undergone a key shift since the election of the current government. Under the previous government, broadcasters were directed to switch from analogue to digital transmission using transmitters from Walesi, a state-owned commercial enterprise established by the Fiji First government to expand digital free-to-air television nationally. This required broadcasters to shut down their own transmitters and pay Walesi a fee to finalise the switch – a development that, according to media practitioner respondents, led to sector-wide concerns about government control of TV and radio.⁴⁴ The transition to Walesi took place for TV broadcasters throughout 2022, however transition for radio was halted, amid claims of poor governance at Walesi, following the change of government in 2022.⁴⁵

Currently, the FBC public service broadcast on AM – through Radio Fiji One and Radio Fiji Two – reaches 100 per cent of the country. CFL also provides radio coverage across Fiji through its five FM radio stations, by building 10 transmitters across Fiji, and its radio network covers 90 per cent of the country.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Vijay Narayan, *Fiji Village Starlink Now Live Across Fiji*, May 20, 2024.

⁴² International Trade Administration, “Fiji.”

⁴³ Chiti Mbizule, *Budde Comm - Fiji Telecoms Market Report: Telecoms, Mobile and Broadband Statistics and Analyses*, October 2024.

⁴⁴ *National Federation Party (@NFPFiji) - Penalising the Poor: What is Happening at Walesi?* Facebook post statement by Lenora Qereqeretabua MP, vice president of the NFP, Facebook, December 3, 2021.

⁴⁵ *Walesi - Your Guide to Walesi Digital Switchover*, accessed November 15.

⁴⁶ Communications Fiji Limited, “CFL Radio Networks.”

10

10. MEDIA CONSUMPTION

The audience survey aimed to capture top-level themes relating to audience consumption patterns in Fiji. The findings below should not be viewed as exhaustive due to the small sample size. Rather, these findings provide insight to potentially noteworthy trends in Fijians' engagement with the media.

Media Facebook pages as key news source

Among audience members surveyed, 78 per cent highlighted that their main news source is the Facebook pages of established media organisations, such as the Fiji Times and Fiji Sun, owing to their easy accessibility and low data cost. According to respondents, most of the news content available on the social media pages of media organisations is free and not paywalled. This finding is consistent with recent research into the social media news consumption habits of Fijians, which found that “the top consistently engaged social media pages have been the news media organisations online, which indicates the emergent intersection between traditional media and the social media landscape”.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Jope Tarai, “Social Media Ecology in an Influencer Group: A Closer Look at Chat (Fiji) as a Case Study,” *Pacific Journalism Review* 30, no. 1&2 (2024): 144



left: Journalism student reads the newspaper in Suva, Fiji 2024. (Priestley Habru) **right:** CFL's Keisha Wilson learns the art of visual storytelling.

Radio the second most accessed news source

Among respondents, radio is the second most preferred news source, at 42 per cent. Listening to the news on the radio is appealing to sampled audience members due to radio's nationwide accessibility across urban and rural areas, making it a reliable alternative when television and internet coverage is limited.

Repeal of MIDA has increased media trust

Among audience member respondents, 65 per cent stated that they trust the media in Fiji as an accurate and credible news source. The repeal of MIDA and the change of government were cited as the primary reasons behind their increased levels of trust in local media. Additionally, respondents stated that with increased media freedom there is greater transparency in the relationship between media and audiences, leading to higher levels of trust. Audience member respondents also expressed a belief that the media is now less likely to operate under the influence of power and more likely to be motivated by valuing the importance of unbiased public interest journalism.

Audience expectation of more investigative journalism

Owing to the changing media and political climate in Fiji after the repeal of MIDA, respondents anticipate more robust and evidence-based investigative journalism pieces that hold decision makers to account, moving beyond the dissemination of government press releases that many believe previously dominated the coverage of some media outlets. This is regarded as an important "rebuilding phase" for Fiji's media sector. However, it was also acknowledged that an understandable level of hesitancy remains for media to embark on this new trajectory in reporting, after previously being made to comply with strict laws. This is regarded as especially pertinent for younger journalists who began their careers within this restrictive environment and will need time to adjust to the freedom they never previously had.

Balanced media important for "watchdog" role

Audience members surveyed asserted that the media in Fiji has an important role to play in ensuring there is a strong civil society, particularly in raising awareness on key issues of public interest and holding government and leaders in other sectors to account as part of its "watchdog" role. The fundamental prerequisite for achieving this, according to audience member respondents, is a media that remains neutral and unaffected by political pressures. Historical challenges during the previous, suppressive media environment are regarded as valuable learning points for media to navigate various influences and report truthfully.



11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations on strengthening Fiji's media sector are informed by data from media practitioner respondents.

Improving media access to public information

Media practitioner respondents noted that access to government information remains a priority for further improvement, particularly because the Information Act 2018 has not been gazetted and is thus not legally binding. Respondents also described challenges in securing responses to information requests submitted to government departments, even when access to departmental media teams is granted. As such, certain news stories or leads are not pursued further due to a lack of information, as a respondent summarises: "If I must reach out to one of the people in the administration, I'd have to go through their media team. And if I get through them, it doesn't guarantee a fast response as I would like, but it will take a couple of days to wait for them to reply to the question. Sometimes they don't reply at all. So, I have to quickly think about something else to fill in the news" (Fiji 03). Advocating for meaningful access to government information is viewed by respondents as a necessary step to which all media practitioners should commit to ensure balanced reporting.



Talei Matairakula reporting live into FBC's nightly news, Suva.

FMA crucial in supporting media's transition away from self-censorship

The FMA is viewed as having a crucial role to play in supporting the media, through a series of sector-wide trainings, in adapting to an environment that is now less restrictive and more viable for balanced and evidence-based journalism. It is recommended that the FMA prioritise the training needs of mid- to early-career journalists, who entered the industry while MIDA was active and will presumably need more support in exercising their right to hold decision makers to account, without feeling the need to self-censor. Media practitioner respondents called for the FMA to design and plan these trainings from the ground up to ensure sustainability.

Increased rural focus in local content offerings

Despite Fiji's well-developed digital media infrastructure, with relatively low data costs and widespread internet penetration, respondents feel that more needs to be done to leverage these extensive digital networks to bring audiences more news content from Fiji's dispersed rural population and communities. The prevailing view among media practitioner respondents is that Fiji's extensive digital media network is not being utilised to its fullest potential in capturing news stories from rural Fiji and its outer islands, and that more resources need to be invested in rural content-making to preserve and showcase Fijian values in the media.

Provision of psychosocial support for media

Among media practitioner respondents, there were requests for increased sector-wide provision of psychosocial support for journalists covering challenging and traumatic events and stories, as it is believed that the long-running and unaddressed impact of continued exposure can lead to burnout and affect individual mental health. Respondents suggested that media organisations "should have an in-house counsellor or a psychiatrist and allow a free, open space for journalists to debrief after covering traumatic events" (Fiji 23).

CONCLUSION

The media landscape in Fiji has reached a significant milestone in its history as it embraces the freedom gained from the repeal of MIDA. Findings highlight ongoing opportunities for media industry bodies to provide targeted support for local media to effectively exercise this freedom.

APPENDIX 1. RADIO

Table 5. Radio

Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
Radio Fiji One	State/FBC	Fijian	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Government
Radio Fiji Two • Suva/Nadi/Lautoka/ Labasa – FM 105.0 • Sigatoka/Ba – FM 104.8 • Tavua – FM 105.2 • Rakiraki – FM 105.4	State/FBC	Hindi	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Government
Bula FM	State/FBC	Fijian	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Commercial
Mirchi FM	State/FBC	Hindi	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Commercial
2Day FM 95.4/95.2/95.8	State/FBC	Music / English	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Commercial
Gold FM	State/FBC	English	<u>FBC Radio - website</u> Facebook	Commercial
Radio Navtarang	Private	Hindi	<u>Radio Navtarang - website</u> Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	Commercial
Viti FM 92.0/92.2/92.6	Private	Fijian	<u>Viti FM - website</u>	Commercial
Legend FM 98.4/98.6/99.0	Private	English	<u>Legend FM - website</u> Facebook, Instagram, X	Commercial
FM 96	Private	English	<u>FM 96 - website</u> Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X	Commercial
Radio Sargam FM103.4	Private	Hindi	<u>Radio Sargam - website</u> Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	Commercial
Mix FM 93.8	Private	English	<u>Mix FM - website</u> Facebook	Commercial

Table 5. Radio continued

Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
FemTALK89FM	Fiji Women's Rights Movement and International Women's Development Agency	English/ Fijian/ Hindi	<i>Fem Talk Radio - website</i> Facebook, LinkedIn, X	Community
HOPE FM 107	Church (Seventh-day Adventist)	English	Adventist World Radio apps, Facebook	Church
Radio Light FM 104/104.2	Church (Evangelical Bible Mission Trust Board)	English	<i>Radio Light FM - website</i> Facebook	Church
Naya Jiwan FM 94.6	Church (Evangelical Bible Mission Trust Board)	Hindi	<i>Naya Jiwan FM - website</i>	Church
Nai Tala – online	Church (Evangelical Bible Mission Trust Board)	Fijian	<i>Nai Tala online radio - website</i>	Church
Radio Andaz Fiji – online	Private	Hindi	<i>Radio Andaz - website</i> Facebook	Commercial
The Vox Populi – University of Fiji Campus Radio	University of Fiji	English	<i>The Vox Populi Radio - website</i> Facebook	Community
Radio Pasifika FM 89.4	University of the South Pacific	English/ various	<i>Radio Pasifika - website</i> Facebook, Spotify, TikTok, X, YouTube	Community



The Fiji Times building in Suva, Fiji 2024.

APPENDIX 2.

ONLINE MEDIA

Table 6. Online media

Organisation	Ownership/ Funding	Language	Website/Social media	Sector
The Fiji Times	Private	English	<u><i>The Fiji Times - website</i></u> Facebook, YouTube	Commercial
Fiji Sun	Private	English	<u><i>Fiji Sun - website</i></u> Facebook, X, YouTube	Commercial
Fijivillage	Private	English	<u><i>Fiji Village - website</i></u> Facebook, Instagram, Threads, TikTok, X, YouTube	Commercial
FijiLive	Private	English	<u><i>Fiji Live - website</i></u> Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, X, YouTube	Commercial
FBC News	State	English	<u><i>FBC News - website</i></u>	Government
Fiji One News	Private	English	<u><i>Fiji One News - website</i></u> Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube	Commercial
Mai TV	Private	English	<u><i>Mai TV - website</i></u> Facebook, X, YouTube	Commercial
PACNEWS	Pacific Islands News Association	English	<u><i>PACNEWS - website</i></u> Facebook, X, YouTube	Commercial
Islands Business	Private	English	<u><i>Islands Business - website</i></u> Facebook	Commercial