

# STATE OF THE MEDIA SOLOMON ISLANDS RESEARCH BRIEF

**ABC**  
INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

**PACMAS**  
Pacific Media Assistance Scheme

**THE UNIVERSITY  
of ADELAIDE**



## AT A GLANCE



**1.** Radio the primary information source for Solomon Islanders



**2.** Print media a highly trusted information source



**4.** Advertising not a sustainable income source for media



**5.** Challenges faced by media in accessing government information



**3.** Encouraging signs of entrepreneurialism among online publications



**6.** Media practitioners concerned about their ability to report freely

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This report provides a detailed up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Solomon Islands. 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.

## METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a multi-method approach. The research team began with a desk-based review of relevant primary and secondary literature. Additionally, 20 stakeholder interviews 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 Solomon Islands' media expert advisers, Derek Gwali Futaiasi and Georgina Kekea, 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.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 1. Radio the primary information source for Solomon Islanders

The geography of Solomon Islands plays a significant role in determining public access to media. With internet coverage not absolute and newspapers limited in their distribution, radio remains the preferred daily information source. As a national broadcaster, Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation (SIBC) is the only provider of nationwide shortwave radio services,<sup>1</sup> and it remains the main provider of information and programs covering national interest topics such as education, culture, sports, and religion. It is also an emergency broadcaster providing vital information during natural disasters.

### 2. Print media a highly trusted information source

Despite the rise of online media platforms, over 80 per cent of audience member respondents expressed high levels of trust in Solomon Islands' print media, which covers both the Solomon Star and Island Sun newspapers. The dedication of print media to evidence-based journalism and its long legacy in confronting "thorny topics" with relevant experts have reinforced print media as the "voice of truth" in a media landscape increasingly exposed to online misinformation and disinformation.

### 3. Encouraging signs of entrepreneurialism among online publications

The Solomon Islands media landscape has changed dramatically, with print and broadcast media organisations now publishing content online. Outlets such as Solomon Business Magazine (SBM) Online, In-depth Solomons, Tavuli News, Melanesian News Network (MNN), and Sunday Isles are all owned and operated by seasoned local journalists, who also oversee marketing and commercial objectives. This has led to a renewed drive in certain quarters of the media sector to diversify content offerings and explore monetisation opportunities to leverage audience demand.

### 4. Advertising not a sustainable income source for media

The market for media advertising in Solomon Islands is small, which means that media struggle to maintain sufficient revenue from advertising, as only a few mainstream media organisations can secure advertising deals at any one time. The Solomon Islands government remains a key buyer of media advertising. The precarity of advertising as a revenue stream has compelled the two daily newspapers, Island Sun and Solomon Star, to generate external revenue by using their printing presses to provide commercial printing services for clients.

### 5. Challenges faced by media in accessing government information

Media practitioner respondents noted ongoing challenges in accessing information from government officials to report accurately on government performance and institutional accountability initiatives. While media freedom is an active topic of discussion in Solomon Islands, obtaining insight into government matters remains difficult, with some journalists relying on anonymous leaks or confidential disclosures from public servants. Respondents noted that the absence of media officers in certain government ministries and departments means that press releases on key national topics happen inconsistently.

### 6. Media practitioners concerned about their ability to report freely

Media practitioner respondents asserted that the media faces institutional pressure to cover stories in ways that align with Solomon Islands' diplomatic and political ties. Media narratives not aligned with broader national political alliances are publicly disapproved by the government, raising concerns in newsrooms about the media's ability to report freely and objectively.

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*Disclaimer: 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.*

<sup>1</sup> Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation, *Statement of Corporate Objectives* (SIBC, 2016), <https://www.pacificsoe.org/solomon-islands/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/SIBC-SCO-2020-2023.pdf>.