

State of the Media: Niue

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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.

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ACRONYMS

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
AI	artificial intelligence
AM	amplitude modulation
BCN	Broadcasting Corporation of Niue
CSO	civil society organisation
FM	frequency modulation
4G	fourth generation (wireless technology)
GEDSI	gender equality, disability and social inclusion
ICT	information and communications technology
LGBTIQ+	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and other sexually and gender diverse people
MHz	megahertz
NGO	non-government organisation
NMA	Niue Media Association
PacLII	Pacific Islands Legal Information Institute
TNL	Telecom Niue Ltd
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VHF	very high frequency

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Niue. It outlines how Niue maintains a vibrant media sector, despite having a very small population, aided by a small community of hardworking and committed journalists. The following themes were identified in the research.

Social media and online content primary sources of information

Social media and online content are the primary sources of news and information among audience members sampled. Almost all media organisations, government departments, and civil society organisations in Niue have social media accounts to connect with their audiences, notably on Facebook. Factors contributing to the rise of online and social media content are the expansion of the Manatua cable system in 2021 and the high internet penetration rate in the country. High internet cost remains a challenge. There is also limited capacity among regulatory bodies and media organisations to address emerging issues of online safety and digital misinformation and disinformation.

Diaspora communities a significant part of Niuean media audience

While approximately 1,500 people live in Niue, about 23 times that number of Niueans live abroad. The growing Niuean diaspora is a critical part of the media audience. Factors contributing to this trend include the rise of social media and the unprecedented uptake of livestreaming services by Niueans abroad during the COVID-19 pandemic, which extended content reach significantly. Media in Niue increasingly play a role in sustaining the diaspora's connection to their homeland and preserving generational knowledge of culture and language.

Critical need for resilient media infrastructure and sustainable media business models

As a small island developing state, Niue is exposed to climate change impacts and disaster risks, and contends with limited resources and a decreasing population. While international support has been available, there is strong interest among media in Niue to have greater capacity to cope and rebuild when confronted with natural hazards and to address an acute shortage of staff.

Media association established to promote media freedom and strengthen industry

The Niue Media Association was established in 2023. The establishment of the association that promotes free and independent media is significant in a country that has no constitutional provisions or legislation guaranteeing freedom of expression and the media. Moreover, the association's launch signals promising opportunities to strengthen the industry by addressing gaps in journalism training and education, and by enhancing relationships between media and the community.



Headquarters of the Broadcasting Corporation of Niue.

Distinct challenges and opportunities as a mini media ecosystem

Media in Niue face distinct challenges and opportunities, given the very small size of the media landscape. In addition to limited staffing, resources, and infrastructure, the closely connected nature of Niuean society poses several challenges. These include investigative journalism being perceived as intrusive and divisive, and the limited newsworthiness of content, given that information tends to reach the community before it is reported by media. However, the tight-knit nature of Niuean community also allows information to be verified promptly, which contributes to mitigating misinformation risks.

1. INTRODUCTION

The island of Niue is in the Polynesian subregion of the Pacific Islands, located between Tonga and the Cook Islands to the north-east of New Zealand.

Niue is a self-governing state in free association with New Zealand. Under this arrangement, all Niuean nationals are automatically conferred New Zealand citizenship and have unrestricted mobility between Niue and New Zealand. According to the 2022 census, Niue's resident population is 1,564, and has been declining over the years.¹ More than 90 per cent of Niueans live outside the island, including more than 30,000 ethnic Niuean residents living in New Zealand² and approximately 6,225 in Australia.³ The official languages of Niue are the Niuean language, Vagahau Niue, and English. Vagahau Niue has been classified as a "definitely endangered" language by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and very few Niuean children learn to speak it as their main language.⁴ Christianity is the religion most represented in the country.

Niue has a very small economy and faces challenges common to other small island countries in the Pacific region. These include a small population, geographic isolation, and limited natural resources. Niue is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts

¹ [Niue Statistics Office - 2022 Niue Census of Population and Housing Report](#), (Statistics Niue, 2022), p.10.

² [Stats NZ Tatauranga Aotearoa - Niuean Ethnic Group](#), accessed September 13, 2024.

³ [Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Niue Country Brief](#), accessed September 13, 2024.

⁴ [UNESCO World Atlas of Languages - Niuean](#), accessed September 14, 2024.

and disaster risks such as cyclones. The tourism sector is a significant contributor to the economy,⁵ and its revenue streams were severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶ Niue relies heavily on official development assistance.⁷ New Zealand provides substantial aid including administrative and economic assistance, giving Niue a relatively stable support system to maintain basic socio-economic infrastructure.⁸

Niue is also a highly connected country. It was one of the first in the region to have access to radio and television, and the first in the world to achieve a nationwide wireless internet system, in 2003.⁹ The internet penetration rate in 2019 was reported as 91.2 per cent, the highest in the Oceania region.¹⁰ Historically, Niue has invested in the development of information and communications technology (ICT) as foundational to the national project of building a prosperous and sustainable country.¹¹ Today, Niue continues to invest in ICT development, especially in conjunction with national digital transformation strategies.¹²

Niue's media sector is small but active. It includes one privately owned newspaper, Niue Star, which operates from New Zealand. It has one state-owned radio station, Radio Sunshine; one privately owned online radio station, OKARock Music; and one state-owned television station, TV Niue, which also produces online news content. The Broadcasting Corporation of Niue (BCN) is the national public broadcaster and operates Radio Sunshine and TV Niue.

This report provides a detailed, up-to-date snapshot of the state of the media in Niue. 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 Niue, the countries studied are: Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

5 [Pacific Tourism Sector Snapshot - Niue PDF](#), November 2021, (Pacific Private Sector Development Initiative, 2021), p.1.

6 [Government of Niue - Fiscal Strategy and National Budget Overview Financial Year 2023-2024 PDF](#).

7 [Asian Development Bank Policy Paper - Niue PDF](#).

8 *Ibid.*

9 David Fickling, [The Guardian - Coral Island to Become World's First Wire Free Internet Country](#), June 27, 2003.

10 [TV Niue - Niue Top Internet Users in Oceania and Fifth Equal on Facebook Use](#), December 8, 2020. While data on Niue's rate of internet usage differs, there is a consistent theme across all sources of high rates of internet penetration and usage.

11 Jennifer Anayo and Heather Horst, [Information Technologies and International Development - Technologies of the Nation: Public Wi Fi and the Demand for More in Niue](#), no. 4 (2016): 1–9.

12 [Mere Satakala, TV Niue - ICT Policy on Niue's Digital Development](#), March 5, 2024.



2. METHODOLOGY

The study's methodology was guided by core research questions identified by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's International Development unit (ABCID). It 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 literature. Additionally, seven stakeholder interviews with media practitioners were conducted, followed by a targeted online survey to contextualise the interview findings. Feedback and advice were sought from the Niue expert adviser, Esther Pahivi, who also crosschecked 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 research participants, including maintaining their anonymity.

A more detailed discussion of the project methodology is contained in the regional report.¹³

¹³ [ABC International Development - Research.](#)



Niue flags and road signs in Alofi (Priestley Habru).



3. MEDIA ORGANISATION FOOTPRINT

Print

Niue Star is the only newspaper in Niue. It is a privately owned, independent newspaper that has been running for more than 30 years. Niue Star was founded in 1993 by one of the longest serving journalists in Niue, Michael Jackson. Its operations relocated from Niue's capital city, Alofi, to Auckland, New Zealand, after Cyclone Heta destroyed its building in 2004.



Esetela Viliamu a big loss to Niuean community

Labour's Pacific Affairs Spokesperson has sent condolences to the family of Esetela Viliamu who passed away this week at the ripe age of 81 years old.



Taofa

The Niue Star celebrated 30 years in 2023. (Facebook: Niue Star 'The Community Newspaper').

Niue Star is published fortnightly or monthly, depending on the readership demands. Content includes local news and advertisements and is published in Vagahau Niue and English. In Niue's rapidly transforming media environment, marked by increased digitisation and the rise of social media, Niue Star targets the older population and audiences who prefer to consume news in print newspaper format.¹⁴

Radio

Niue has two radio stations: the state-owned Radio Sunshine 91 FM operated by BCN, and a privately owned online radio station, OKARock Music.

Radio Sunshine was first established in August 1967 as Radio 2ZN. The Broadcasting Corporation of Niue was formally established in 1989 and now operates Radio Sunshine as well as TV Niue.¹⁵

Radio Sunshine broadcasts midday bulletins from Monday to Thursday providing local and regional news. Due to high costs and financial constraints, in the mid 1990s Radio Sunshine stopped broadcasting on the AM band. Since February 2023, Radio Sunshine's programs have been available online on BCN's website. According to one media practitioner respondent, Radio Sunshine has 100 per cent coverage on the island via the FM frequency, and acts as a crucial source of information, especially in times of emergency.

OKARock mainly plays Niuean music to both in-country and international audiences. It began in 2008 as an FM radio station, OKARock 107.9 FM, which broadcast Niuean music within the vicinity of Alofi. Since 2020, OKARock has also been available as a full online streaming service.

¹⁴ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - The Country's Only Newspaper, Niue Star Turns 30 this Month*, June 21, 2023.

¹⁵ *TV Niue - About Us*, accessed August 26, 2024.

Television

TV Niue is the only television station in Niue and is operated by BCN, the state-owned broadcaster. TV Niue's local news bulletin is aired at 8pm on Tuesday and Thursday each week.

From 2016 to 2020 TV Niue offered 12 television channels, before the BCN studios were destroyed by fire in May 2020. Since the fire, TV Niue has been offering five channels, including Pasifika TV from New Zealand and ABC Australia from the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. TV Niue's reach on the island, according to a media practitioner respondent, extends to 97 per cent coverage.

As of 2024, the BCN building is undergoing remediation works as part of a climate and disaster resilience project funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.¹⁶ This project aims to support the public broadcaster to continue to inform the Niuean public, including during times of emergency such as natural disasters, and share news related to climate change mitigation.

Online

BCN is the only mainstream media organisation providing online news in Niue. Additionally, there are freelance media practitioners who produce online content to share local news and community information with Niuean audiences.

BCN began providing online news articles in 2019 on its website and social media platforms – Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). According to a media practitioner respondent, among the BCN social media accounts Facebook has the highest number of followers and traffic.

Target audience

The target audience of mainstream media organisations is the general public. Media practitioner respondents clarified that this includes not only Niuean audiences residing on the island but also the large Niuean diaspora based in New Zealand, Australia, and elsewhere. One respondent reflected on the significant influence of diaspora audiences on the type of media content produced:

Niueans living abroad want to know what is happening with their relatives on the island. As a result, content producers create their content with diaspora audience in mind. For example, they livestream funerals, weddings, church services, local sports, and other social and cultural events on the island. (Niue 04)

Media practitioner respondents acknowledged that it is the ability to engage with audiences on social media and online platforms that has expanded media reach to include the Niuean diaspora. One media practitioner respondent observed that, based on social media engagement data, the majority of the social media audience is Niueans living overseas (Niue 02).

¹⁶ [Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Development Assistance in Niue](#), accessed December 13, 2024, Australian Government.

The COVID-19 pandemic was noted by respondents as a significant turning point in expanding their online audiences. The subsequent travel restrictions, along with the high rate of internet penetration in Niue, contributed to the rise in Niuean audiences on online platforms.

It was during the COVID-19 that opportunities to do livestreaming came about. It became an opportunity to connect the communities and allow people who could not attend events in person to be virtually present, for example, at funerals or local events. Even after the pandemic, people developed new habits and continue to watch livestreaming services. (Niue 04)

Due to the small number of audience members residing on the island, media practitioner respondents explained that it is common for media organisations to work with one another collaboratively, rather than competitively, to share news stories for different audience types. For example, one respondent explained about a partnership between BCN and Niue Star that enabled news content published by the public broadcaster to also be printed in the independent newspaper. This was done with the shared goal of ensuring that content reaches audiences on different platforms and that the public has access to information.¹⁷ Reflecting on the priority of keeping audiences informed, one media practitioner respondent commented: “It is up to the audiences how they interpret the news we provide. What matters is we fulfil the role of providing information to the public” (Niue 02).

Government and civil society

The media and communication activities of government ministries and departments, non-government organisations (NGOs), and community groups play a significant role in the Niuean media environment.

According to one respondent, most government departments and civil society organisations (CSOs) in Niue have Facebook accounts and use these as the primary means to provide the latest information to their audiences. The Office of the Secretary of Government has a dedicated communications office, which manages the government’s media and communication services. It regularly disseminates press releases and information on its website and on Facebook. Similarly, Niue Tourism Office communicates actively on its website and Facebook page.

Several government departments also use radio to keep the public informed, in collaboration with the national public broadcaster. For example, BCN hosts radio programs in partnership with the Meteorological Services, the National Disaster Management Office, and the Departments of Environment, of Health, and of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. These programs raise awareness among the Niuean public on issues related to the weather, disaster risk reduction, primary industries, environmental conservation, and public health.

CSOs predominantly use Facebook to communicate their activities. For example, NGOs, the chamber of commerce, organisations for people with disabilities, women’s rights groups, and environmental conservation groups based in Niue actively use Facebook to connect with their audiences. One media practitioner respondent observed that one of the challenges of CSOs’ communications being set up on social media, rather than on dedicated websites, is the tendency for these to not be maintained when staffing changes occur.

17 Esther Pavihi, [TV Niue - The Country's Only Newspaper, Niue Star Turns 30 this Month](#), June 21, 2023.



4. MEDIA CONTENT COVERAGE

Locally produced content mainly focuses on issues affecting Niuean communities, both on the island and abroad. Prominent issues that respondents mentioned being covered in the media include key national events, Niuean ways of life on the island and abroad, and preservation of Vagahau Niue.

National events such as the annual village show days and the annual flag-raising ceremony on Constitution Day¹⁸ are filmed and produced as hour-long shows for TV Niue. Until 2020, DVD copies of these locally produced programs were available for purchase.

The Niuean diaspora's connection to their homeland was also mentioned by respondents as a content theme. For example, one media practitioner respondent explained that to coincide with the 50th anniversary of self-government, a documentary series exploring Niuean ways of life has been produced. The series focuses both on Niuean individuals who reside on the island and on those from the diaspora seeking to reconnect with their homeland.

Media content aiming to preserve Vagahau Niue was identified as a key theme. For example, one respondent identified a locally produced children's radio program that was intended to revitalise and promote Vagahau Niue, which targeted early childhood education. This was modelled on the ABC television program Playschool. Episodes were aired on Radio Sunshine and also made available on YouTube and Facebook, including visuals and subtitles in Vagahau Niue.¹⁹

Audience feedback on social media platforms, captured through number of views and comments, was noted by one media practitioner respondent as a factor that increasingly influences content production decisions (Niue 03). One media practitioner respondent explained that it has become common for Niuean journalists to find story ideas based on event information and announcements posted on social media, including by audiences; they then physically attend these to cover the event.

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 Niue. 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.

Niue media operate in a GEDSI context marked by several constitutional and legal challenges. The constitution does not include any provisions to prohibit discrimination based on sex or gender.²⁰ Additionally, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was ratified by New Zealand and extended to Niue through association in 1985, has not been incorporated into domestic law. Niue is also yet to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. NGOs have reported that this lack of action is largely due to lack of awareness and limited resources rather than lack of political will.²¹ However, Niue did accede to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995. Niue also decriminalised same-sex relations between consenting adults in 2007.

18 *Constitution Day marks the anniversary of the signing of Niue's Free Compact of Association with New Zealand on October 19, 1974.*

19 *The project was implemented in 2022 by Plan International Australia, funded by New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The BCN, the Niue Education Department, and local enterprise Rocksteady Entertainment were partners in the project.*

20 [UN Women - Gender Equality Brief for Niue PDF](#) (UN Women Asia and the Pacific, 2022), p.1.

21 [Secretariat of the Pacific Community - Stocktake of Gender Mainstreaming in Niue](#), (The Pacific Community [SPC], 2015), p.18, 33.

In this context, media in Niue play an important role in raising awareness and stimulating public discussion on GEDSI issues. One media practitioner respondent emphasised that it is crucial the media cover GEDSI-related stories in an accurate, impartial, and gender-sensitive manner and avoid misinformation that might contribute to harmful perceptions and norms (Niue 04). One media practitioner respondent who identifies as a human rights advocate explained that there is proactive coverage of news and stories that impact women, children, and people with disability. This includes coverage on topics such as domestic violence and the need for legislation to protect the rights of women, people with disability, and underrepresented groups. Another media practitioner respondent observed that there tends to be more media coverage of disability issues than of gender-based stories (Niue 01).

Most media practitioner respondents stated that there is little media coverage of LGBTIQ+ topics as issues related to diverse gender identities and sexual orientations are not as prominent in Niuean society. However, respondents expressed openness and interest to report on these topics, including raising awareness about the lack of legal protection for those who identify as LGBTIQ+.

Most media practitioner respondents had not received any formal training on reporting on GEDSI issues, or on trauma-informed reporting.

Artificial intelligence

Artificial intelligence (AI) is considered a new phenomenon in Niue. A third of media practitioner respondents indicated that they use AI, but most respondents stated they never use it. The Niue Tourism Office recently introduced an AI chatbot. This new initiative is reported to have been implemented with the intention of making communication more efficient.²²

Respondents expressed various sentiments towards the use of AI. One media practitioner respondent expressed grave concern: “We found [AI] as something frightening and bad. When you use AI, you are not using your knowledge” (Niue 01). On the other hand, another media practitioner respondent commented that AI has promising features, provided its users are well informed: “AI seems like it could be used for good. We need to understand it well before using it” (Niue 03). Other respondents noted the growing trend of incorporating AI into content production as a way to streamline processes. Reflecting on the experience of using AI as part of producing music content, one respondent noted: “Content producers could use AI to work smarter, not harder” (Niue 04).

²² [Yonder - Niue Tourism](#), accessed August 26, 2024.



Niue's youngest MP Ms Rhonda Tiakia-Tomailuga being interviewed (Val Lawaci/BCN Niue).

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5. MEDIA BUSINESS RESILIENCE

The national public broadcaster, BCN, is supported largely by state funding, which is bolstered by self-generated revenue and donor funding from aid agencies. The government funding it receives mainly covers personnel costs and capital expenditure. The small income generated from TV subscriptions and paid radio announcements and advertisements covers most of the operational and equipment maintenance costs.

Challenges for BCN to become financially self-sufficient, as identified by respondents, include the small size of the population and the national economy, and the destruction of the BCN studios by fire in May 2020. To sustain its business, respondents expect that BCN will likely need to continue to receive government subsidy.



BCN's makeshift studio combined with office space, after fire damaged the building in 2020.

Additionally, limited staffing, shortage of up-to-date equipment, lack of training opportunities, and the high cost of the internet were noted as significant challenges to media business resilience in Niue more generally.

As of May 2024, the BCN news team comprises only two reporters. These reporters produce content for television, radio, and online news as well as managing other production work. They are supported by two camera operators who also edit interviews and reports. During the COVID-19 lockdown from September 2020 to January 2022, one media practitioner respondent explained that there was only one reporter working for BCN, covering content for TV, radio, and online news. Due to limited resources and staffing, the respondent mentioned that BCN brought in reporters and technicians from Fiji.

Infrastructure issues also constrain BCN services. A power outage incident in 2022 halted its operations for two days²³. Citing this, one respondent highlighted the need for more reliable power generation for BCN, including a backup generator, to ensure it can fulfil its role of delivering information to the public – especially during natural disasters.

Niue Star, the only newspaper for the island, generates most of its revenue from advertising. It is now produced and printed in Auckland, New Zealand. Despite the small Niuean economy and needing to relocate after a cyclone destroyed its building, the newspaper has been able to sustain its operations with the support of the Niuean diaspora. However, media practitioner respondents highlighted that sustaining print media in a small and increasingly digitised media market is becoming more challenging.

²³ Esther Pavihi, [*TV Niue - Island Wide Power Outage Shuts Down the National Broadcaster for 48 Hours*](#), June 29, 2022.



6. MEDIA POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Freedom of expression

The Constitution of Niue does not guarantee freedom of expression or media freedom. However, according to media practitioner respondents, generally Niuean people can exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression, and media organisations in Niue operate relatively freely, with minimal government restriction or censorship.



The office and reception area at BCN.

The Niue Media Association (NMA) has a constitution and a code of ethics, which provide members with a framework to promote freedom of expression and media freedom. These documents also act as a guide on professional and ethical conduct for media practitioners.

In 2021, a parliamentary select committee was established under a standing order to examine the operations of BCN and Telecom Niue Ltd (TNL).²⁴ The committee investigated BCN's governance and operations. The public was given opportunity to make submissions during the public hearing on BCN's program content and news coverage.²⁵ It was reported that there was lack of clarity around the purpose and the expected outcomes of the investigation.²⁶

Accessing official information

Currently, there are no provisions in the constitution or laws that guarantee the right to information in Niue.

Media practitioner respondents highlighted that the right to access official information is crucial for media to function effectively and for citizens to participate fully in public life. Respondents noted several recent initiatives that aimed to enhance access to official information. These include the establishment of a dedicated communications office in the government, which has enabled more active dissemination of government press releases to the media and the public;²⁷ and workshops sponsored by the United Nations that aimed to improve access to information among government, media, and civil society²⁸ and build policy frameworks around the right to information.²⁹

²⁴ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - Parliamentary Committee Confirmed to Probe into the Operations of BCN and TNL*, July 20, 2021.

²⁵ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - BCN News Come Under Fire on Day Two of the Committee Hearing*, August 13, 2021.

²⁶ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - First Ever Parliamentary Committee to Look into BCN and Telecom Niue Operations*, May 6, 2021.

²⁷ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - Government Announces Its New Communications Strategy*, February 17, 2021.

²⁸ Esther Pavihi, *TV Niue - Niue Sets Example with Media Awareness Workshop and Building Relationships with Leaders*, March 8, 2022.

²⁹ United Nations Development Programme, *United Nations Development Programme - Strengthening Right to Information Takes a Step Forward in Niue*, November 9, 2022

Print

Print media in Niue is regulated by several pieces of legislation. For example, Section 187 of the Niue Act 1966 provide for criminal libel on defamatory publications,³⁰ while section 80 of the Niue Assembly Act 1966 provides for publishing defamatory statements relating to political candidates.³¹

Broadcast media

The Broadcasting Act 1989 sets out the regulatory framework for the broadcasting industry. The role of BCN, as set out in section 9 of the act, is to inform, educate, or entertain the public in relation to matters of public interest.³² The act requires media practitioners in the broadcasting sector to adhere to the journalistic principles of accuracy, impartiality, and independence when acquiring and producing news stories.³³ While the government does not have the power to censor editorial material, the minister in charge of broadcasting may mandate the broadcast of any program of national interest. Besides the act, BCN is also guided by its own Code of Ethics created in 2019 and the Niue Public Service Code of Conduct 2006. The two regulations supporting the Broadcasting Act 1989 are the Broadcasting Regulations 1989 and the Radio Regulations 1972.

Public service announcements and other government messages on BCN are subject to the cabinet's approval. In practice, all matters relating to broadcasting services and content are referred to the BCN Board, which requires its members to be representative of the community.³⁴ This includes four members representing the interests of the religious sector, women, youth, and the business community.

Telecommunications

The Communications Act 1989 sets out the regulatory frameworks for telecommunications, radio communications, and postal services.³⁵ Under this act, management and granting of all licences for public communications, private communications, radio communications, and telecommunications is assigned to the cabinet.³⁶

30 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Niue Act 1966, PacLII, s. 187.](#)

31 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Niue Assembly Act 1966, PacLII, s. 80.](#)

32 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Broadcasting Act 1989, PacLII, s. 9.](#)

33 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Broadcasting Act 1989, PacLII, s. 35.](#)

34 [Sariah Magaoa, TV Niue - Cabinet Approves New Board of Directors, July 7, 2022.](#)

35 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Communications Act 1989, PacLII.](#)

36 [Niue Consolidated Legislation - Communications Act 1989, PacLII, s. 2.](#)

Online

Despite having a very high rate of internet usage, Niue currently has no legislation that provides for reporting and complaints mechanisms that address harms caused by online content. The “most common forms of cybercrime in Niue are malicious software and cyber bullying”.³⁷ The Niue Police is the authority that intervenes in such cases.

In Niue, policy related to online content is being developed in the context of national digital transformation strategies and ICT development that aim to build Niue into a digitally inclusive society.³⁸ For example, a national consultation on Niue’s ICT Policy was held in February 2024. The consultation included feedback on how technologies such as AI might impact the future of Niue’s society and economy. According to the media statement from the government, AI is considered a promising ICT tool to transform various sectors and enhance efficiency and innovation.³⁹

37 [Council of Europe Octopus Cybercrime Community- Niue](#), accessed August 26, 2024.

38 Mere Satakala, [TV Niue - ICT Policy on Niue’s Digital Development](#), March 5, 2024.

39 Government of Niue, “Niue ICT Advisory Committee Facilitates National Consultation to Advance ICT Policy,” media release, February 29, 2024.

Handover of equipment to BCN from the Government of The People’s Republic of China (Facebook: Broadcasting Corporation of Niue).



7. MEDIA INDUSTRY BODIES

The Niue Media Association (NMA) was established in June 2023. The membership of the association comprises journalists, radio presenters, camera operators, photographers, and journalism students, as well as public relations and communications personnel associated with the media. Members of the NMA are guided by a constitution and code of ethics when executing their roles.

The NMA aims to enhance professional standards, support early career journalists, and develop connections with other media in the Pacific region.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the association seeks to promote awareness about the role of journalism and improve the relationship between the media and the community.

⁴⁰ Sariah Magaoa, [TV Niue - First Ever Niue Media Association Officially Launched](#), July 4, 2023.



Senior Reporter at BCN, Esther Pavihi. (Val Lawaci/BCN Niue)

Media practitioner respondents' insights on media freedom and self-regulation highlight the significance of having an independent media industry body like the NMA. Their insights flag its importance in helping ensure media can operate freely, ethically, and responsibly, as well as maintain objectivity in such a tight-knit society.

According to respondents, it is vital to have an independent body so media can promote media freedom and self-regulate: "[We need] an independent body to provide oversight, a check and balance on the media and to protect the right of journalists to do their work" (Niue 02). Respondents expressed the view that if media can develop standards and policies with accountability and transparency, a healthy relationship can be maintained with the government. As one respondent stated: "I think the media needs to regulate itself. If the media develop their own policies transparently, the government will not need to step in and regulate, concerned that the media is not doing its job" (Niue 01).

Overall, there was a consensus among media practitioner respondents that it is essential for the media to be able to operate freely with minimal external regulation. One respondent expressed concerns that government regulation would impinge on editorial independence and restrict freedom of expression: “The biggest fear is not being able to do certain stories or touch the hard stories, not to ask the hard questions” (Niue 02). Another respondent shared a view that regulations interfere with their creativity to produce content (Niue 04). One respondent expressed their preference for minimal government interference given certain conditions. “As long as I’m not producing misinformation or spreading propaganda, I do not see the need for government to interfere” (Niue 03).

At the same time, an audience member respondent commented that there needs to be a balance between defending media freedom and ensuring media fulfils its responsibility to inform the public:

I think there is a fine balance between freedom of media and bias of media. In the past, I heard about instances when news content that reflected personal views of journalists were broadcast or published, and complaints were made about that. I also recall the broadcasting corporation was taken to court for defamation by members of the public, so there needs to be a balance. (Niue 209)

Additionally, media practitioner respondents identified the need to maintain healthy relationships between media and the government for the effective flow of information, especially in the context of a small island country. One respondent stated that maintaining an appropriate balance is foundational to the media fulfilling its role – between working collaboratively with the government to inform the public and simultaneously holding them accountable to their mandates and commitments:

I think we need to work together with government and foster that relationship, so the free flow of information can come from government to the media. And then we do our role as a media to scrutinise what government is doing. At the end of the day, they’re working for the people of Niue. The point is to foster that relationship and build trust. (Niue 01)

Respondents also acknowledged that, for media to do their work, it is crucial to have an industry body like NMA that builds understanding of journalism’s role in the community. They see this as especially important in a closely connected community like Niue. For example, one respondent highlighted that conducting investigative journalism can be seen as divisive by the community, and can be an isolating experience for journalists:

Working as journalists in small communities is challenging and isolating. As journalists, it’s important to ask sharp and critical questions about certain decisions made by the leaders in the government or NGOs. But that can be seen as amplifying negativity in the families, church communities, and the broader community. (Niue 197)

Another respondent noted that the personal relationships the journalists have in the community can also pose challenges:

In a small place, you are related to each other as family or friends. No matter how well trained you are as a journalist, there will be some level of self-hesitation to report on some stories that are too ‘close to home’. (Niue 202)

Having an industry body like NMA that helps improve the relationship between media and the community is seen to address some of these distinct challenges.



BCN's building in Alofi.

08

8. MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

In Niue, there are currently no laws, policies, or formal codes of practice to address misinformation and disinformation. One media practitioner respondent expressed the view that “spreading misinformation and lies should be regulated and penalised” (Niue 03).

The Code of Ethics developed by BCN emphasises accurate, independent, and fair reporting. However, it does not explicitly address misinformation and disinformation.

Two challenges were mentioned by media practitioner respondents in relation to mis/disinformation. First, capacity is limited to deal with public health misinformation and disinformation, such as COVID-19 anti-vaccination information. Second, the gap is widening between the speed at which misinformation and disinformation can spread – increasingly rapid as enabled by AI and social media – and the speed at which news can be produced to verify information.



Content being viewed on a mobile phone.

Several respondents mentioned that while misinformation and disinformation are a significant issue, the risks are mitigated to some extent by the small population size and closeness of Niuean community. They explained that information can sometimes be quickly verified because most Niuean citizens know one another. Moreover, one media practitioner respondent noted that if inaccurate information is published as news, journalists in Niue openly acknowledge their error and publish corrected information.

09

9. MEDIA INFRASTRUCTURE

Media infrastructure in Niue provides telecommunication and internet services along with broadcast transmission for radio and television to keep the public informed. Telecom Niue Ltd (TNL) is the state-owned telecommunications service provider. It is a private company wholly owned by the government, and provides mobile and fixed telephone and internet services.⁴¹

As a country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and disaster risks such as cyclones, Niue has been investing in climate-resilient media infrastructure. For example, in 2023, a transmission tower in Hikutavake that had been damaged by harsh weather was replaced with a tower that can withstand a category five cyclone, with a 50-year lifespan.⁴² Additionally, the BCN studio that was damaged by fire in 2020 is being rebuilt with climate resilience in mind.

⁴¹ [Telecom Niue - Welcome homepage](#), accessed August 26, 2024.

⁴² Mere Satakala, [TV Niue - Telecom Niue Replaces 45 Meter Tower at Hikutavake](#), November 23, 2023.



Satellite dishes at BCN (Vai Lawaci / BCN Niue).

In May 2024, Niue extended its maritime VHF (very high frequency) network, enabling island-wide VHF coverage that can reach 12 nautical miles offshore.⁴³ It is envisaged the network will provide an effective communications platform for government agencies and a reliable platform for distress calls when lost at sea or during natural disasters. This is especially significant for an island country like Niue that has deep cultural connections with the oceans and a thriving fishing community.

While Niue already enjoys a high internet penetration rate, there have been further investments in infrastructure to increase the quality of connectivity. In 2019, TNL launched the fourth generation (4G) long term evolution (LTE) network on band 28 (700 MHz).⁴⁴ In May 2021, internet connectivity was further enhanced when the Manatua fibre-optic cable system was established.⁴⁵ The system comprises “a 3,600km submarine cable connecting Samoa, Niue, Rarotonga and Aitutaki in the Cook Islands and Tahiti and Bora Bora in French Polynesia”.⁴⁶ It has been reported that internet connection costs in Niue are among the highest in the Pacific,⁴⁷ and it is yet to be seen whether the new cable system will reduce costs.

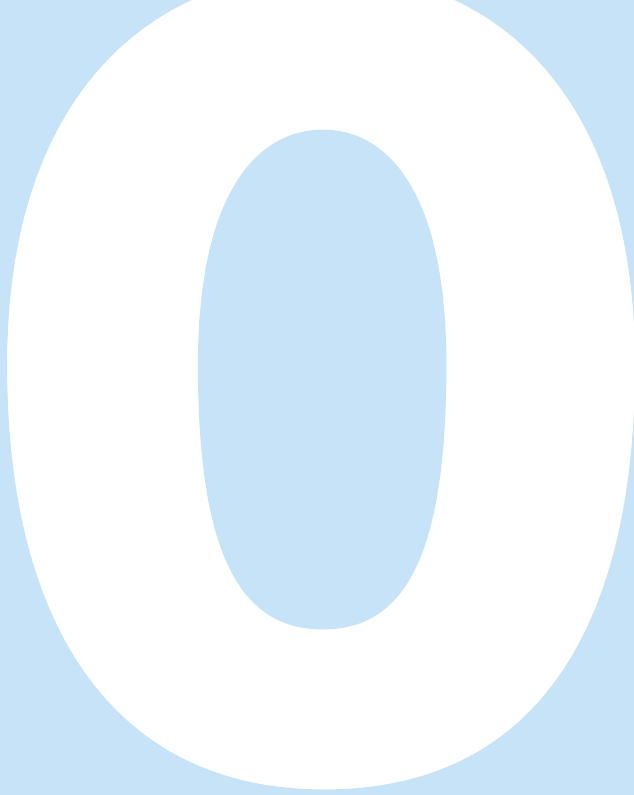
43 Government of Niue, “Government of Niue Extends Its Maritime VHF Network,” media release, May 2, 2024.

44 [Telecom Niue - About Us](#), accessed August 26, 2024.

45 Esther Pavihi, [TV Niue - Faster Internet with the Commissioning of the Manatua Cable Today](#), May 13, 2021.

46 [Submarine Cable Networks - South Pacific](#), accessed August 26, 2024.

47 Niue was ranked 18th out of the 22 countries in the Oceania region for how cheap internet connection is, according to [cable.co.uk](#), cited in Esther Pavihi, [TV Niue - Comparing INternet Data Costs in Oceania: Niue Ranks 18th out of 22 Countries](#), September 17, 2021.



10. MEDIA CONSUMPTION

The online survey and stakeholder interviews with audience members aimed to capture top-level themes around audience consumption patterns in Niue. The findings below should not be viewed as exhaustive due to the small sample size. Rather, these insights provide an overview of noteworthy trends in how Niuean audiences are engaging with the media.

Social media the most frequently accessed platform for news consumption

Surveyed audience members consume news daily by accessing social media, news websites, radio, and television. Social media is the most used and most frequently accessed platform for news consumption. The vast majority of the online survey respondents indicated they access news daily on social media websites and apps, especially Facebook.



More than two thirds of online survey respondents frequently consume news and information relayed from New Zealand media, and view this as highly relevant. Factors contributing to this trend include the free association Niue has with New Zealand and the large Niuean population residing there. News and information relayed from Australian media and other Pacific Island countries are also viewed as relevant by survey respondents.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for strengthening the media sector in Niue are informed by data collected from media practitioner respondents.

Increase collaboration opportunities with Pacific media

Operating in a small island country, respondents expressed interest in creating more opportunities to collaborate with other Pacific-based broadcasters and media outlets to exchange knowledge, skills, and experiences:

Women in media from across the region at the 2024 PINA Summit in Niue would like us to collaborate more with other Pacific media organisations and engage in more exchange programs to support each other. I think the opportunities are there for us to learn from each other. (Niue 02)

Build capacity to use AI tools and other digital technologies

Building the capacity of media practitioners to effectively use AI tools and other digital technologies was raised by respondents as a critical opportunity. In a small media sector with a limited number of journalists, there is growing interest in making workflows more efficient while also ensuring journalism standards and ethics are not compromised. Respondents suggested increasing training opportunities to equip practitioners with an understanding of AI's potential and risks, and the practical knowledge and skills to apply digital tools in their work.



Women in media from across the region at the 2024 PINA Summit in Niue.

Explore innovative and entrepreneurial online content production

Leveraging the country's internet connectivity, respondents expressed a strong interest in exploring opportunities for innovative online content production that can be monetised to enhance media business sustainability. According to respondents, this requires not only practical skills and knowledge of innovative production methods, but also foundational knowledge in online safety and risks.

Invest in media literacy and civic education on the role of media

Raising awareness in the community and among government officials of the media's role was identified by respondents as crucial for media to function effectively in Niue's tight-knit society. Respondents envisage that this enhanced understanding will enable the media to report more responsibly. This entails the media being able to ask questions more boldly and conduct investigative journalism more confidently without being perceived as divisive and intrusive. Suggestions include media awareness and literacy trainings with government officials, and workshops with schools and community groups, facilitated by an independent industry body like the NMA.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this report highlight the importance of social media and online content as the primary sources of information for Niueans, especially the significant diaspora communities that reside abroad. It also highlights the important role that the small Niuean media sector plays in cultural and linguistic preservation. There is a critical need for resilient media infrastructure and sustainable business models in the face of climate change vulnerabilities and acute staff shortages. Nauru's small and closely-connected society poses a challenge for in-depth journalism, however information can be easily verified in such a tight-knit community. Lastly, the establishment of the Niue Media Association in 2023 signals promising opportunities to strengthen the media industry.