



**SIGNIS  
PACIFIC  
NEWS**

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No 1

*Above: Bp Peter Ingham, President, Oceania Bishops Conference and Chair, Australian Catholic Film and Broadcast Office. Below: Joe Vidiki, Solomon Islands and Leopold Ariipeu, Tahiti*

## From Across the Ocean

They came from small island nations such as Wallis and Futuna, large but poor countries like Papua New Guinea, coral atolls such as Kiribati and politically unstable states like Tonga, Fiji and the Solomon Islands. Twenty two people from fourteen Pacific nations arrived in Melbourne, Australia, for the SIGNIS Pacific Assembly and Training Workshop, February 5-9, 2007. Some came as SIGNIS Pacific delegates and others to participate in the training workshop. For many it was a struggle to come. The cost of travel is high and the planes infrequent and often unreliable. Delegates gave reports on media activity in their country particularly the media apostolate of the church in radio, television, cinema, internet, video and related media.



**President:** Mr Bill Falakaono, Tonga.  
**Vice President:** Mdm. Nicole Constans, New Caledonia.  
**Sec/Treasurer:** Mr Peter Thomas, Australia.

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*SIGNIS Pacific is part of SIGNIS, the World Catholic Association for Communication.*





*Left: Recording a drama in preparation for the Editing Workshop. Right: Murae Arawaia and Eritabeta Buoa from Kiribati editing at the Editing Workshop.*

With six Apple Macintosh G5 computers loaded with Final Cut Pro editing software, Chris Downey, an associate member of SIGNIS Pacific, and a well-known Australian freelance Editor, taught the participants the joys of modern digital editing techniques. Small teams worked on a comedy/drama, shot on Monday, the first day of the workshop, to edit a complete production by Friday. The deadline was daunting but each of the workshop participants worked tirelessly to complete their assignment on time. Melanesian, Micronesian, Polynesian, Australians and others brought a rich mix of cultures and experience to the meeting, the workshop, the liturgies and the sing-along. The peoples of the Pacific from islands set far apart with similar languages and customs, while some neighbouring countries come with radically different cultures. In spite of cultural differences each brought their faith, their religious belief and their sincere quest to evangelise through the means of social communications. Although some nations are already editing with digital equipment much of it is inadequate for the demands of the new broadcast, both radio and television, systems operating in these countries.



*Left: Recording a drama in preparation for the Editing Workshop; Right: Eritabeta Buoa from St Paul's Communication Centre, Tarawa, Kiribati.*



The meeting was graced with the presence of two bishops, Archbishop Denis Hart of the Archdiocese of Melbourne and Bishop Peter Ingham, Chair, Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting and President, Federation of Oceania Bishop's Conference, bishops from the Pacific, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Australia and New Zealand.

Although SIGNIS Pacific delegates strive to meet together annually the prohibitive cost of travel often means that they meet every other year. The fourteen nations represented were: Australia, Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, New Caledonia, Northern Marianas, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, Wallis and Fortuna.

### *The SIGNIS Pacific Melbourne Declaration*



*There was unanimous support at the SIGNIS Pacific Assembly in February, 2007 for the following declaration.....*

We the delegates for this SIGNIS Pacific General Assembly meeting in Melbourne, February 5 - 9, 2007 call upon our colleagues in media throughout the Pacific; proprietors, publishers, broadcasters, journalists and producers to uphold the principles of truth and justice in their reporting and program production.

We acknowledge, with deep sadness, that the spiraling social, economic and political crisis that plague many of our nations, bring hardship to our citizens and create significant ethical dilemmas to those in the media who bare the heavy responsibility of assisting our governments and our citizenry to explore and implement policies that insure basic human rights.

Our hope and sustenance for a media that maintains a willingness and freedom to explore comes from the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. In the Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications published following the Second



Vatican Council, our Church taught - *“The means of social communication are a public forum where every man and woman may exchange ideas. The public expression and the confrontation of different opinions that occur within this dialogue influence and enrich the development of society and further its progress.”* (Past.Inst. 1971, Ch.1.V24.)

We exhort Pacific media to continue their vital role and indeed to adopt a robust mandate to alleviate the spiraling incidence of alcohol and drug use, increasing unemployment, growing occurrence of HIV/AIDS, political instability and transnational crime.

We the SIGNIS Pacific delegates gathered for this Assembly from ... Commonwealth of Australia, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Independent State of Samoa, Kingdom of Tonga, New Caledonia, Republic of the Fiji Islands, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Republic of Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, stand in solidarity alongside our sisters and brothers in the Pacific media offering our support and prayers. We pledge ourselves to work tirelessly for a Pacific media that fearlessly seeks truth at every turn.

*For further information contact: Viliami Falakaono, President, SIGNIS Pacific. 676 46546 in Tonga or Peter Thomas, 0419 899 199 in Australia.*



## ***Inspirational Words***

Denis J. Hart, Archbishop of Melbourne, celebrated Eucharist with us during the SIGNIS Pacific Assembly. In his homily the Archbishop had this to say to our delegates ...

*“The constant inspiration of your challenging professional work is always that you have encountered Christ first and by constantly returning to him will find the enthusiasm, the skill and the ability to articulate those means which are best to communicate the Gospel.*

*May the Lord reward you for your great skill and dedication. May he meet with you, find you humbly open to his inspiration and may your work bring rich rewards to the service of the Gospel and to you for all that you do.”* (Mass at St Mary’s College, Parkville, 6 Feb. 2007.)

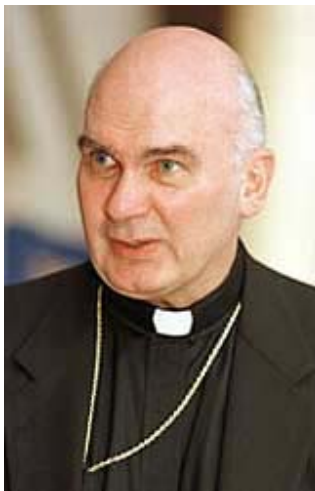


## ***Melanesian Spirituality***

“Where does our spirituality begin? Experience gives birth to spirituality, so that spirituality for the Melanesians begins from empirical experience, from an experience of and about this world and all that it contains. Melanesian spirituality begins with the total cosmos, the totality of the whole creation. What we see, feel, touch or smell around us is part of our spiritual experience. In addition Melanesian spirituality is a pragmatic spirituality, concerned with acquiring answers for existential questions. A Melanesian person knows that he or she will always receive answers to the questions that are being asked. *Gutfala laef*, which is the goal of life or satisfaction in life, is the result of spiritual experience. The experience of this empirical world brings them to spiritual experience that they are able to feel and know something that is not merely of this world.”



*Extract from “Melanesian Spirituality” as published in “Voice Katolika”, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2006- Author: Fr Henri Paroi OP is Superior of the Dominican House, Henderson. He teaches at the Seminary and was also attached to the Melanesian Institute, Papua New Guinea.*



## ***A message from Rome***

Archbishop John Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, sent his best wishes to members attending the SIGNIS Pacific meeting in February, 2007. The Archbishop wrote:

*“ It is impressive to see that you will be bringing together communicators spanning the globe given that SIGNIS Pacific covers many island states spread over a third of the planet....I hope that the gathering offers a special opportunity to share, learn and support one another in your media efforts and work of evangelization through them.”*

Archbishop Foley asked SIGNIS Pacific members to pay special attention to the Holy Father’s 2007 Message for the 41<sup>st</sup> World Communications Day, “Children and Media: A Challenge for Education.” *The text of the Pope’s message is on the SIGNIS website: [www.signis.net](http://www.signis.net)*



## RECOMMENDED WEBSITES - [www.fijilive.com](http://www.fijilive.com)



Fiji Live is one of the few Pacific Island news sources that reaches an international audience. Although it has an excellent reputation for accurate news reporting, since 2003 it has undergone a transformation with much of its focus on infotainment.

Also take a look at [www.pinanius.com](http://www.pinanius.com) , the official site for the Pacific Island News Association.



### *World President at Assembly*

With thousands of tertiary students returning from Malaysia to Australia to attend university it was extremely difficult for Augustine Loorthusamy, World President, SIGNIS, to find a seat on a aircraft coming from his hometown of Kuala Lumpur to join SIGNIS Pacific delegates at the Melbourne assembly, Feb 5-9, '07. When he eventually arrived his presence was much appreciated by all delegates who welcomed him as a friend as much as a colleague. Augy is well known in the Pacific for his media education lectures, particularly his annual teaching at the SIGNIS Pacific Regional Seminary

Communications Seminar in Suva. His inspirational messages to delegates, underpinned as always by his strong faith and loyalty to the church's mission and evangelization, was greatly appreciated.



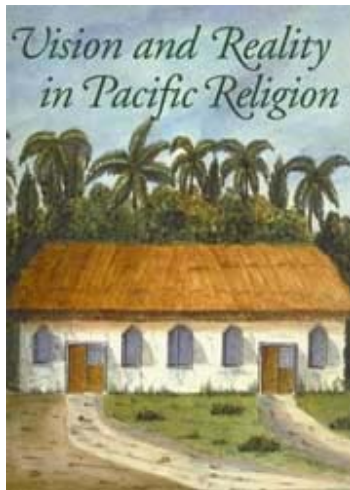


## Media Advocacy - Fiji Media Watch

### .: Welcome to Fiji Media Watch

Fiji Media Watch is a young organisation. Begun only a few years ago, it was incorporated and registered under the Charitable Trust Ordinance in 1994. In June 1993 a public outcry against explicit sex scenes in television programmes carried in the daily newspapers and posters led to the setting up of Fiji Media Watch.

As one of the aims of SIGNIS around the world is to promote and engage in media advocacy it is gratifying that throughout the Pacific, members take this role seriously. Perhaps none more so than in Fiji where delegate, Agatha Maria Ferei, works with Fiji Media Watch, an organization that raises awareness of the power of media in Fiji and encourages ways in which the media can enrich people's lives. Fr Larry Hannan SM, a lifetime Honorary Member of SIGNIS Pacific, is Chair of Fiji Media Watch. [www.fijimediawatch.com](http://www.fijimediawatch.com)



**Book Review - 'Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion'** - Edited by Phyllis Herda, Michael Reilly and David Hilliard 2005. If religion exists at the heart of every human culture, this is especially the case in the Pacific Islands. People in the Pacific are often described as 'deeply religious' with most Islanders actively following a faith. The importance of religion and its institutions in the Pacific is often marked by the extent of their involvement in all parts of island society, including services such as health and education. 'Vision and Reality in Pacific Religion', explores the religious history of Pacific Islands, examining the local receptions of Christianity and other faiths, and their varying processes of

indigenisation. The early chapters explore the indigenous deities of Oceania and the new visions of God that came with the reception of Christianity. Much of the book is devoted to the consolidation and growth of missions during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, highlighting the practical 'politics' of individual missionaries. The final chapters draw these studies into a broader Pacific context, examining forays into Polynesia by the Mormons, the postwar establishment of the Baha'i faith in the Pacific, and the nature of theological practice and education in the Pacific. Published by Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies; University of Canterbury, New Zealand; Pandanus Books Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies and the Australian National University, Canberra.

## SIGNIS Pacific

*As an affiliate of SIGNIS World we bring together media professionals, from the Pacific region, to advance the communications mission of the Church.*



