



Submission by Free TV Australia

Strengthening Australia's Pacific
relationships – the importance of
Australian media in the Pacific

Foreign Affairs
and
Aid Sub-Committee
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Executive Summary

- **The PacificAus TV model works:** This initiative enables Australian content to be provided to existing Pacific broadcasters for them to broadcast within their program schedules. Given the positive feedback received from the participating Pacific nations, DFAT and the Department of Communications have now asked Free TV to conduct a Scoping Study on Tonga and Samoa with the view to expanding the PacificAus TV initiative to those nations.
- **Commercial TV programs work in the Pacific:** Free TV consulted with broadcasters in the region to determine the genres and specific programs that were most sought after by the Pacific audience. Pacific broadcasters are required to report back to Free TV on the scheduling of these programs and it is pleasing to note that virtually all of the programs supplied are being scheduled in prime-time slots.
- **The PacificAus TV model is scalable:** The initiative can be expanded to Tonga and Samoa at minimal incremental cost. With the addition of Tonga and Samoa, Free TV will cost-effectively deliver over 40 different programs from 12 different suppliers to 14 free-to-air broadcasters in 9 Pacific territories across 4 time zones. Free TV is currently planning to make available approximately 1300 hours of first run programs to Pacific broadcasters in 2020 and 1700 hours in 2021. The initiative could be expanded to include programming from other broadcasters or independent producers.
- **There is a demand for free-to-air coverage of premium Australian sports:** Most of the major Australian sports already have pay TV distribution arrangements in place in the Pacific and the Australian Government may want to consider introducing a scheme that gives free-to-air broadcasters a chance to show major events in the Pacific region.
- **The smaller Pacific nations also require technical infrastructure and support:** The broadcasters in Tuvalu and Nauru did not have the necessary satellite dishes to receive the PacificAus TV content so Free TV has supplied dishes to those broadcasters within the funding envelope.
- **PacificAusTV provides a good model for any further media initiatives in the Pacific:** Despite the significant impacts of COVID-19, PacificAus TV launched on 25 May 2020, on time and under budget and has been enthusiastically received by partner Pacific broadcasters. Its success is evidenced by the scheduling of the programs supplied and the fact that within two months of launch, the Australian Government was looking to expand the PacificAus TV initiative to Tonga and Samoa.

Introduction

2.1 About Free TV Australia

Free TV Australia proudly represents all of Australia's commercial free-to-air TV broadcasters in metropolitan, regional and remote licence areas. Our members, in combination, are able to reach 97% of Australians, wherever they live in Australia.



Our members are dedicated to supporting and advancing the important contribution commercial free-to-air TV makes to Australia's culture and economy. Australia's commercial free-to-air TV broadcasters provide trusted local news, tell Australian stories, give Australians a voice, nurture Australian talent and create jobs for Australians.

2.2 What is PacificAus TV?

PacificAus TV is a program of the Australian Government that complements a range of initiatives to enhance Australia's engagement in the Pacific. Prime Minister Morrison first announced Australia would be "taking our engagement to a new level" in what would be a "new chapter in relations with our Pacific family" in November 2018. This is known as the 'Pacific step-up' announcement.

In this announcement, the Prime Minister noted that he had been discussing with Free TV Australia how to get more Australian television content to the Pacific. He announced that the Government would work with Australian commercial media networks in order to provide access to more quality Australian content on television and other platforms. He specified that this would include things like lifestyle programs, news, current affairs, children's content, drama and – potentially – sport. He also noted that this was an initial step towards providing more Australian content that is highly valued by the Pacific community. Free TV Australia was then selected to work with the Australian commercial free-to-air television networks and partner Pacific broadcasters to supply, free of charge, premium Australian content across the Pacific.

The PacificAus TV initiative enables additional Australian content to be provided to existing Pacific broadcasters for them to broadcast within their program schedules. This enables our Pacific partners to make independent decisions on the programming of the content provided to ensure the content broadcast meets audience and broadcasting needs and complies with all relevant requirements within their territory.

The objective of the PacificAus TV initiative is to make the broadcast rights to a variety of Australian television programs available to Pacific broadcast partners in Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru. This includes over 1,000 hours per year for three years of content including lifestyle programs, factual programs, children's programs, drama, reality TV and sport.

The intended outcome of the initiative is to distribute Australian television content to promote Australia and our values and help balance an increasing regional media presence of other nations in our region.

The Australian Government has budgeted \$17.1 million over three years for the initiative, to cover program rights and technical delivery as well as administrative costs.

2.3 The role of Free TV in delivering PacificAus TV

Free TV was selected as the appropriate entity to deliver this initiative as it could leverage its comprehensive commercial television network member base and role as the central repository of commercial industry content knowledge. Given this position, Free TV's costs to acquire the distribution rights to the Pacific Islands were judged to be highly unlikely to be matched by another media entity. Consideration was given to various alternative grant recipients, including the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. No other option offered the same breadth of commercial content and could be implemented in an appropriate time frame.

Key to the success of the PacificAusTV initiative has been Free TV's ability to work with our Pacific broadcast partners to ensure that the programming made available meets the needs of the Pacific communities.

To achieve this aim, Free TV undertook a three-stage process to develop the program:

- **Scoping Study:** The agreement with the Government included an initial scoping phase. Free TV engaged a consultant to liaise with broadcasters in the region to determine the genres and specific programs that were most sought after by the Pacific audience. The consultant travelled over 18,000 kms at the end of 2019 to conduct interviews in the seven selected Pacific nations. Leaders and executives from all major broadcasters in these nations were interviewed along with a number of Government officials. Respondents to the Scoping Study indicated that they would welcome Australian content which delivered family entertainment and which reflected "Christian family values" (not violent or strong sexual content) in any genre. Particular interest was shown in news, drama, lifestyle programs and sport. The consultant also recommended the most appropriate delivery mechanism for each territory, given the technical capabilities of each of the broadcasters.

- **Implementation Strategy:** Free TV engaged a Project Manager to liaise with rights holders (networks, international distributors and sporting bodies) on a preliminary basis to determine likely costs of rights clearance to fulfil the Government's commitment of 1,000 hours of content. The Project Manager also consulted with technical playout centres and satellite providers to determine the likely costs of delivery of the content to the Pacific audience. This information was compiled into a Program Management Plan which included a draft budget, risk management plan, timeline and market impact assessment in addition to the criteria stipulated in the Grant Conditions.
- **Rights clearance, content delivery and ongoing management:** Following an assessment by both the Australian Government and Free TV, a final decision was made to proceed with the PacificAus TV initiative. Free TV was then responsible for the ongoing delivery of the content and the reporting requirements under the agreement with the Australian Government.

Successful program delivery and outcomes

3.1 Progressive rollout

Despite the coronavirus pandemic significantly affecting Free TV's ability to access and deliver the necessary equipment to Partner Pacific broadcasters, finalise licence agreements and to access sports programming, the PacificAus TV service was successfully launched on 25 May 2020.

The principal distribution method for content was planned to be via uplink to a dedicated slot on an appropriate satellite (IS19). However, Free TV also provided a file-based internet distribution model replacing or supplementing the satellite uplink in some nations serviced by under-sea cables. This ensured that our delivery mechanism met the needs of each Pacific broadcast partner:

- Papua New Guinea broadcasters commenced broadcasting programs from the launch date as they could download programs from the internet portal established by Free TV
- The three Fijian broadcasters followed suit progressively through June and the Vanuatu broadcaster commenced once satellite delivery of programs started on 21 June 2020
- The Solomon Islands broadcaster and DFAT officially launched the initiative in that market on 1 July 2020
- The Kiribati broadcaster also started to receive a curated block of content delivered by Free TV via satellite from August 1 2020
- The broadcasters in Tuvalu and Nauru did not have the necessary satellite dishes to receive the PacificAus TV content so Free TV has supplied dishes to those broadcasters.
- The Nauru broadcaster received its dish on 19 July 2020 via airfreight and is hoping to commence broadcasting the curated block of content by the end of September
- The Tuvalu broadcaster received its dish on 17 September (via sea freight) and is hoping to commence broadcasting the curated block of content as soon as possible
- Given the restrictions on travel, Free TV will be supporting local broadcasters in the installation of the downlink dishes with phone support from Australia.
- An implementation timeline is included as Appendix B.

3.2 Pacific broadcast partners

Free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters in each nation were selected for the grant of broadcast rights. As there are multiple FTA broadcasters in PNG and Fiji, Free TV offered each free-to-air broadcaster in those countries a differing package of programs. By adopting this approach, Free TV believes it has minimised the economic distortion to each local television market of offering free content.

Free TV has received the following feedback from our Pacific broadcast partners on the program:

- **PNG:** "NBC is excited to be part of this Pacific TV initiative to incorporate Australian TV programs into our existing TV schedule. We are equally appreciative of the Australian Government's commitment, through Free TV, to cover the licence costs of this content. While the initial arrangement will see us receive many popular Australian programs, we also look forward to sharing some of our local NBC content with our close Australian neighbours in the future." **Kora Nou, Managing Director, National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC)**

Acting CEO of EMTV, Sheena Hughes, expressed her gratitude to the provision of content by the Australian Government, especially during a time where COVID 19 has presented many challenges to the broadcasting industry in the Pacific Region. She also stressed the importance of this arrangement which would strengthen EMTV's commitment to providing a variety of Free-To-Air content to over 4 million viewers nationwide. "We have the largest TV viewership in the country, complimented by the highest following on social media, so this content is guaranteed to be viewed by our people throughout the country and more importantly, FREE-TO-AIR."

Tau Gima, Head of Content & Scheduling, also commented that the content provided by the Australian Government is not only relevant to PNG's viewer interests but also pertinent to our viewership patterns. "This initiative gives the Aust Govt an opportunity to share their content throughout the region and the hope is that this sets a platform for a similar initiative for broadcasters in PNG to be able to share some of our content with Australia in the near future."

- **Fiji:** "The programs will greatly enrich the television content available to all Fijians. We have received a great mix of drama, entertainment and educational programs that will both delight and inform our viewers on Mai TV. Sincere thanks to the Australian Government for the initiative." **Stanley Simpson, Director Mai TV.**

COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on Fiji's television industry. It has shut down or delayed production of many of our own television programs with substantial consequent negative impacts on revenues through advertising sales.

At a difficult time like this, PacificAus TV came through as a blessing in terms of the free content they provided to us. FBC TV received nine shows in total from PacificAus ranging from genres such as drama, entertainment, factual, children's and sports shows. All of the shows have been very well received by the Fijian audience, namely the children's shows, drama and the sports shows. Fiji being a rugby-crazed nation have received the NRL shows and A-League matches with open hearts. The sports shows and matches are broadcast on FBC's 24 hour sports channel called FBC Sports".

Riyaz Sayed-Khaiyum, CEO Fijian Broadcasting Corporation.

- **Solomon Islands:** "We would like to thank PacificAus TV and the Australian free to air broadcasters for clearing the rights to enable their programmes to be viewed in the Solomon Islands and other Pacific countries. TTV will have the pick of some of the very best and most popular Australian productions which we know will bring much enjoyment to our many viewers". **Arthur Yen, CEO Solomon Telekom Co. Ltd.**

"We greatly appreciate the additional content which will fill gaps in our TTV1 schedule as we move away from so much news to more entertainment, education and information programmes. Acquiring content is an expensive business and I can say the programmes provided by PacificAus TV are well received and we thank them very much. I'm sure there will be ongoing changes to the TTV1 schedule as we get to know our viewer habits. I would also like to thank PacificAus TV for the opportunity to provide programming feedback from our viewers who always appreciate a mix of Pacific related content, and Pacific Island Food Revolution is a great start". **Tony Rayner, TTV Manager**

"The programmes will be scheduled on TTV1 and I am very excited at the range of programmes being provided. These include: cooking, factual, drama, sport shows, music, lifestyle and reality and children's programmes. I want to make sure as many viewers as possible get to see the episodes, at times most suited to them," **Fred Osifelo, TTV Programme Manager.**

- **Kiribati:** "August 3, 2020 was the 'Switching ceremony' that marks the inclusion of PacificAus programming into the Kiri One broadcasting. The Kiribati people are now able to watch popular Australian programming TV shows such as world news, The Voice, MasterChef, Boarder Security, 60 minutes and most importantly, the children's educational programs.

Since then, we have seen an increase in the number of viewers (10%) who have started watching Kiri One channel because of the additional contents broadcasted on the free channel. People have shown their appreciation to the Government of Australia for the assistance as can be seen on comments uploaded on social media e.g. Facebook etc.

We anticipate that the numbers will increase more starting from this month to early next year. The reason for the increase is because of the allowances, the increase in the minimum wages and the social benefit provided by the Government of Kiribati. More people will be able to afford to buy their own TV and connect to Kiri One free-to view channel," **Tiarite Kwong, General Manager, Kiri One TV**

Expansion to Tonga and Samoa

Given the positive feedback received from the Pacific nations, DFAT and the Department of Communications have now asked Free TV to conduct a Scoping Study on Tonga and Samoa with the view to expanding the PacificAus TV initiative to those nations.

The Scoping Study has already been submitted to the Department of Communications and will address another four free-to-air broadcasters. DFAT involved senior High Commission officials to assist Free TV in engaging with the relevant broadcasters in Tonga and Samoa.

3.3 Program Delivery

The Program Plan for 2020 involves the acquisition of over 40 different programs from 12 different suppliers and supplying them to 10 free-to-air broadcasters in 7 Pacific territories across 4 time zones.

Some of the more popular programs include Neighbours, The Voice, 60 Minutes, MasterChef Australia, Border Security, children's programming and live sport. Home & Away was also requested by most broadcasters but it was already licenced to ABC Australia and unavailable to the PacificAus TV initiative. A full list of programs is included in Appendix A. Free TV is also aiming to supplement this list with Australian domestic and international men's and women's T20 cricket.

The objective of the PacificAus TV Grant Agreement is to enable at least 1000 hours of Australian television content each year for three years to be broadcast by Pacific broadcasters. Free TV is currently planning to make available approximately 1300 hours of first-run programs to Pacific broadcasters in 2020 and 1700 hours in 2021.

Pacific broadcasters have also started to report back to Free TV on the scheduling of these programs and it is pleasing to note that virtually all of the programs supplied are being scheduled in prime-time slots.

In August 2020 for example:

- 60 Minutes was scheduled in a prime-time evening time slot in every market;
- BrainBuzz, the C classification children's program, was scheduled in an appropriate afternoon time slot in every market;
- Neighbours, MasterChef, The Voice and Border Security were all scheduled in a prime-time evening time slots in the largest markets of PNG, Fiji and the Solomon Islands; and
- Super Netball matches were shown live on Saturday and Sunday afternoons in the largest markets of PNG, Fiji and the Solomon Islands.

3.4 Potential future enhancements

As noted above, the initiative has been enthusiastically received by partner Pacific broadcasters but PacificAus TV has also received requests for additional programming and services.

- There is a demand for free-to-air coverage of **premium Australian sports** but most of the major Australian sports already have pay TV distribution arrangements in place in the Pacific. All Australian Rugby League and Rugby Union matches have been secured by the pan-Pacific pay TV broadcaster, Sky Pacific (owned by Digicel). Not all matches are broadcast and there are a limited number of matches broadcast on the Digicel free-to-view channel, TV WAN.

Interestingly, the NZ Government has been able to negotiate with both Digicel and the NZ Rugby Union, to relax the exclusivity of the existing rights contract and achieve free-to-air coverage of major NZ rugby matches on Pasifika TV. The Australian Government may want to consider introducing a scheme to stop pay television broadcasters from buying the Pacific region rights to major Australian sporting events before free-to-air broadcasters have had the opportunity to purchase the rights in order to give free-to-air broadcasters a chance to show major sporting events .

- There is also demand for **international news programs and education programs**, particularly in the form of production support. The Scoping Study revealed a demand for a regular news service incorporating international, Australian and Pacific Island stories. However, such a service would be complex and demand significant production resources across multiple time zones. Education programs would also have to be tailored for each market. Production of original content was considered beyond the current scope of PacificAus TV and could not be accommodated within the Grant budget envelope.
- There have also been a number of requests for **technical support** in running existing television facilities, training of staff and infrastructure support to extend the reach of existing broadcasters. The broadcasters in Tuvalu and Nauru did not have the necessary satellite dishes to receive the PacificAus TV programs so Free TV supplied dishes to those broadcasters within the funding envelope. PacificAus TV does not have the human or financial resources to accommodate all of these requests.

A. Programs delivered

Drama

Neighbours
800words
Doctor Doctor
Love Child
Seachange

Children's Programs

BrainBuzz
Get Arty
Get Clever
Scope
Totally Wild

Lifestyle & Reality

Better Homes & Gardens
Pacific Island Food Revolution
Australian Ninja Warrior
LEGO Masters
The Voice
Travel Guides
House Rules
MasterChef Australia
This Time Next Year

Sport

Classic NRL matches
Super Netball
Constellation Cup Netball
(Australian Diamonds vs NZ)
Shute Shield Rugby
A-League Football
W-League Football
Socceroos & Matildas International Friendlies

News & Factual

Paramedics
Border Security: Australia's Frontline
The Force
60 Minutes
The Latest

Sport Panel

100% Footy
Inside the NRL
Yokayi Footy

B. Implementation timeline

Draft Grant Agreement
Provided to Free TV

Free TV commences Scoping Study
Same day as Grant signed

Amplifying Australia's Voice in the Pacific
7 August 2020

PacificAus TV

Sept 2019–Aug 2020

Timeline



Media Release
25 May 2020

Free TV Australia Welcomes the Launch of PacificAus TV

Free TV Australia welcomes today's [joint announcement](#) by Ministers Paul Fletcher, Marise Payne and Alex Hawke that audiences in Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (PNG) will have free access to premium, Australian television programs through the PacificAus TV initiative. Over the coming months, PacificAus TV will also roll out to additional Pacific nations including Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru.

PacificAus TV is the result of a partnership between Free TV Australia and the Federal Government. PacificAus TV has sourced content from Australian commercial television networks and other content providers to supply Pacific partner broadcasters with premium Australian content across the Pacific, free-of charge. 1000-plus hours of Australian television content will be provided each year for the next three years.

"We are excited to share with our Pacific neighbours so many of the quality television programs that Australian audiences know and love," said Bridget Fair, CEO, Free TV Australia. "Through our Pacific partner broadcasters PacificAus TV will offer the best of Australian drama, entertainment, children's programming, sport and lifestyle shows to viewers in our region."

Pacific audiences will be able to watch episodes of iconic Australian programs including Neighbours, Better Homes & Gardens, Totally Wild, Border Security, 60 Minutes, The Voice, MasterChef, 800 Words, Paramedics and Lego Masters. Sports fans will not be neglected - Free TV Australia is in the process of finalising agreements for live matches and review shows from Australian sporting codes including football, netball, cricket, rugby league and AFL. A full list of programs is available on the PacificAus TV [website](#).

PacificAus TV content will be supplied directly to Pacific Partner broadcasters using either a file-based internet distribution portal or satellite depending on the requirements in each nation. The local broadcasters will then incorporate the PacificAus TV content into their own broadcast services to meet their own audience and programming requirements.

"NBC is excited to be part of this Pacific TV initiative to incorporate Australian TV programs into our existing TV schedule," said Kora Nou, Managing Director, National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) in PNG. "We are equally appreciative of the Australian Government's commitment, through Free TV, to cover the licence costs of this content."



While the initial arrangement will see us receive many popular Australian programs, we also look forward to sharing some of our local NBC content with our close Australian neighbours in the future."

"The programs will greatly enrich the television content available to all Fijians," said Stanley Simpson, Director Mai TV, Fiji. "We have received a great mix of drama, entertainment and educational programs that will both delight and inform our viewers on Mai TV. Sincere thanks to the Australian Government for the initiative."

In some markets such as Tuvalu and Nauru, broadcasters do not currently have the necessary satellite dishes to receive the PacificAus TV content. Free TV has ordered satellite dishes for these broadcasters and, given the constraints on travelling presented by COVID-19, Free TV will offer remote support to local broadcasters with their installation.

For media enquiries, please contact:

Bridget Fair
Chief Executive Officer
Free TV Australia
M: 0417 260 478
E: bfair@freetv.com.au

Dorothy Kennedy
Communications and Corporate Affairs
Consultant
Free TV Australia
M: 0451 692 989
E: dorothyhayeskennedy@gmail.com

ABOUT Free TV Australia

Free TV Australia is the peak industry body for Australia's commercial free-to-air broadcasters. It represents all its members through advocacy, innovation and strategic advice. The members of Free TV Australia are Seven West Media, Nine Entertainment Co, Network 10, Southern Cross Austereo, Prime Media Group, WIN Network and Imparja Television.

ABOUT PacificAus TV

PacificAus TV is a program of the Australian Government that complements a range of initiatives to enhance Australia's engagement in the Pacific. It is funded under the "Amplifying Australia's Voice in the Pacific" initiative announced by Prime Minister Scott Morrison in January 2019. Its development and roll-out is being led by Shane Wood, Project Manager, PacificAus TV.





THE HON PAUL FLETCHER MP
Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts

SENATOR THE HON MARISE PAYNE
Minister for Foreign Affairs, Minister for Women

THE HON ALEX HAWKE MP
Assistant Defence Minister, Minister for International Development and the Pacific

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

25 May 2020

Australian content boost for audiences in the Pacific

Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji will have access to more Australian television content through the PacificAus TV initiative delivered by Free TV Australia.

Programs such as *Neighbours*, *MasterChef*, *The Voice*, *60 Minutes*, *House Rules*, *Border Security: Australia's Frontline* and children's program *Totally Wild* will be available for broadcast on local free-to-air channels.

Minister for Communications, Cyber Safety and the Arts, the Hon Paul Fletcher MP, said that the PacificAus TV Initiative is a great way to broaden audiences for much-loved Australian screen content.

"Our close neighbours across the Pacific can now enjoy more Australian television content including lifestyle programs, news, drama and sports on their local free-to-air television stations through the initiative. I want to acknowledge the efforts of FreeTV who made this possible," Minister Fletcher said.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, said today's announcement builds on the range of initiatives under Australia's Pacific Step-up, strengthening links between Australians and people across the Pacific.

"Having the opportunity to watch the same stories on our screens will only deepen the connection with our Pacific family. For decades, many Pacific countries have had access to Australian programmes and televised sporting matches and this initiative will expand those entertainment options. Free TV Australia is in the process of finalising arrangements for sport to be broadcast from codes including netball, cricket, soccer, AFL and NRL," Minister Payne said.

Assistant Defence Minister and Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon Alex Hawke MP, said Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji are the first of seven countries that will receive Australian content through the initiative.

"The PacificAus TV initiative is a terrific demonstration of shared cultural ties and links between Australia and the Pacific. While Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Fiji are the first to switch on to the Pacific TV initiative, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Nauru will follow in the coming months," Minister Hawke said.

The PacificAus TV initiative will make the broadcast rights to 1,000 hours of Australian television content available to broadcast partners in Pacific nations each year for three years.

Free TV Australia was selected to work with Australian commercial free-to-air television networks and Pacific partner broadcasters to supply premium Australian content, free of charge, to the Pacific broadcasters.

Content availability is based on consultation by Free TV Australia with Pacific broadcasters, and the additional Australian content is provided for programming by partner broadcasters as best meets their audience needs and other country-specific requirements.

The initiative is worth \$17.1 million over three years.

Find out more about PacificAus TV here: <https://www.pacificaustv.com/>

ENDS

Media contacts:

Minister Fletcher:

Brad Hatch | 0448 162 679 | Brad.Hatch@communications.gov.au

Rebecca Papillo | 0439 892 771 | Rebecca.Papillo@communications.gov.au

Minister Payne:

David Wroe | 0429 531 143 | David.Wroe@dfat.gov.au

Melanie Ruiz | 0427 888 392 | Melanie.Ruiz@dfat.gov.au

Minister Hawke:

Wade Laube | 0409 193 057 | Wade.Laube@dfat.gov.au