

Enhancing Pacific Connectivity

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ESCAP report: **Enhancing Pacific Connectivity: The current situation–Opportunities for Progress:**
<http://www.unescap.org/icstd/research/pacific-connectivity/Enhancing-Pacific-Connectivity.pdf>

Stocktaking Background

The Pacific - Bargain Knowledge Workers: The report publishes, for the first time (?), draft Human Development Index numbers for virtually all Pacific states. The data document admirably high basic literacy rates (higher than proportional to HDI for all Pacific states), yet generally low GDP per capita ==> **“Bargain Knowledge Workers”**

Ready for better jobs and economic opportunities: This means that Pacific economies can pursue (at least basic) knowledge economy opportunities: data entry, back office support, call centres, better promotion of tourism SMEs, telecommuting immigrants (?) to your 'paradise', etc.

Such opportunities benefit from affordable, accessible, connectivity.

Technical/Business Options

Cable: When usage (or likely growth from competition) grows, cable may be desirable. Re-deployed 1st-generation cable may put PNG, Samoa, and others on the map. Can new cable ventures repackage their offerings to fit Pacific situations? Can landing station costs be leased as part of cable usage – or can Pacific telcos be partners-owners of the cable (like WASC/SAFE Africa)? Can the Pacific negotiate for an innovative cable service/business model? ==> **Probably, yes.**

Satellite: Alternatives to expensive traditional single-user satcom contracts: User consortia for increasing market size (e.g. OPT-PF and TCI – but perhaps bigger?). Negotiate to join Thuraya's ECO scheme (US\$. 20/.39 / minute phone calls). Engage with SPC on RICS connectivity for your communities? Engage with O3B Networks – early – to pave the way for optimal arrangements for the Pacific?

Economic Viability

Prof. James McMaster ==> \$66M(\$80M?)/yr can be put into the pockets of consumers from competitive telecoms ==> enough to pay for a Pacific satellite, cables, etc.

Set policies to implement competitive services & pricing. Otherwise, telecoms and economic development therefrom may languish.

If the Pacific pursues basic knowledge economy opportunities, incomes will rise.

Institutional Support?

How to help Pacific decision-makers make good (and timely) decisions on policy, external and internal connectivity, infrastructure and services?

- Noumea meeting 12 March 2008: “Pacific Plan Digital Strategy Task Force.” Are they delivering?
- Does everyone need an expanded network of expertise, to confidently make good decisions?
- What can be learned from ECTEL in the Eastern Caribbean?
- What can Mauritius share from its WASC/SAFE experience?

Conclusion

Is it time to pursue universal service in the Pacific?

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Constitutional Freedom of Expression and choice in connectivity avenues/services

Dominica Decision² – Monopoly telecoms is a violation of the constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression.
- a policy-related decision? But note the similarity between the passage in the constitutions of Dominica and, say, the Solomon Islands.

Dominica Constitution, 1978

- **10: Protection of freedom of expression.**
- *Except with his own consent, a person shall not be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference (whether the communication be to the public generally or to any person or class of persons) and freedom from interference with his correspondence.*
- Nothing contained in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of this section to the extent that the law in question makes provision-
 - that is reasonably required in the interests of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health;
 - that is reasonably required for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons or the private lives of persons concerned in legal proceedings, preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of the courts or regulating the technical administration or the technical operation of telephony, telegraphy, posts, wireless broadcasting or television; or
 - that imposes restrictions upon public officers that are reasonably required for the proper performance of their functions,
- and except so far as that provision or, as the case may be, the thing done under the authority thereof is shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

Solomon Islands Constitution, 1978

- **12: Protection of freedom of expression**
- (1) **Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, and for the purposes of this section the said freedom includes the freedom to hold opinions without interference, freedom to receive ideas and information without interference, freedom to communicate ideas and information without interference and freedom from interference with his correspondence.**
- (2) Nothing contain in or done under the authority of any law shall be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention of this section to the extent that the law in question makes provision-
 - (a) in the interest of defence, public safety, public order, public morality or public health;
 - (b) for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons or the private lives of persons concerned in legal proceedings, preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of the courts, or regulating the administration or the technical operation of telephony, telegraphy, posts, wireless, broadcasting or television; or
 - (c) that imposes restriction upon public officers,
- (3) and except so far as that provision or, as the case may be, the thing done under the authority thereof is shown not to be reasonably justifiable in a democratic society.

Solomon Islands Draft Constitution, 2004

- 37. Expression –
 - (1) **every person has the right to freedom of expression, which includes -**
 - a) the press and other media;**
 - b) to publish, impart or receive information or ideas;**
 - c) of artistic creativity; and
 - d) in academic teaching and research.
 - (2) The rights provided for an subsection (1) do not affect the validity of any law or official action that resonably protects the freedom and rights of others or the maintenance of peace, order and good government in a free and tolerant society.