

Shockwaves from Australia Network cuts threaten Radio Australia

by Ashlee Betteridge
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Just prior to the budget, I wrote about how cuts to the Australia Network could have flow-on effects to the rest of the ABC's coverage of the Asia-Pacific region. Now, unfortunately, it appears that those predictions may become reality as Radio Australia struggles to keep hold of the funding it has left after the axing of the Australia Network.

The Australia Network supported the ABC's Pacific and Asia reporting more generally. If, as is the risk now, Radio Australia were to be decimated by the Australia Network axing, it would be yet another blow for Pacific audiences and those in Australia who seek to understand and engage with this region.

For us here at Devpolicy, we understand how challenging it can be sometimes to attract the attention of the Australian media on aid and development issues, particularly when it comes to the Pacific. Radio Australia, in particular its *Pacific Beat* program, is far and away the media organisation that most frequently covers our work.

Ironically perhaps, last week's coverage of the Federal Budget provided a sound example of this. While we were lucky enough to have our analysis of the aid budget picked up and quoted quite widely, the interviews where we were given the most space and time to explain and discuss the implications and detail of the aid budget, particularly in relation to the Pacific, were those by Radio Australia's *Pacific Beat* and the Australia Network program *The World* (which is also broadcast on ABC News 24). Later, we saw parts of these interviews appear in ABC Online news articles that were widely circulated on social media. This is not unusual—interviews that members of our team have done on *Pacific Beat* (via phone and usually at the crack of dawn) have more than once found their way to the front page of the ABC's website later in the day. We also see these stories get picked up or reproduced by Pacific media.

So we see first hand how Radio Australia's coverage not only serves to inform Pacific regional audiences, but how it filters back up through the ABC to bolster its coverage of the Pacific, particularly on the web. We rely on Radio Australia's coverage of the Pacific in informing our own research and blogging. And we see how it provides a platform for a range of voices and commentary on the Pacific, a region with which the Australian Government has committed to strengthen

its engagement.

Additionally, as a former journalist myself who at one stage worked on an English-language newspaper in Indonesia (*The Jakarta Globe*), I am very aware of the importance of accurate, timely and high quality news for the members of the international business community out there working in the region. If we want to support economic diplomacy in the Pacific, ensuring this quality information exists and that it flows between Australia and the region is crucial.

If you value Radio Australia, now is the time to **speak up and let management know**.

Author/s:

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Link:

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