

# PACIFIC MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS FACILITY NEWSLETTER

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## **(2) Pacific Information Disclosure Policies**

We are very pleased that this initiative has been completed, with the development of a toolkit for Pacific governments to use as they consider developing their information disclosure policies (IDP).

The objective of this particular activity is to, as far as possible, develop a framework for effective information disclosure policies in the large, medium and small island nations. The framework includes not only the *raison d'être* for IDP but provides a model with explanatory that acknowledges government responsibility with financial and commercial realities.

The PMCF was delighted to work with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), and Ms. Charmaine Rodrigues on this activity.

The fundamental aim of information disclosure policies is to promote and enhance the processes of democracy and representative government by increasing access to information held by the government.

The development of the toolkit provides an opportunity for IDP to be considered in the context of national level issues and structures. Also addressing these issues at a regional level, and working closely with key stakeholders in the sector we hope will provide an opportunity for political leaders to consider these issues as a matter of good governance and development, divorced as far as possible from day to day politics. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat is currently exploring the feasibility of this for key regional agencies. The ability of the Forum and other regional agencies to communicate themselves to the peoples of the Pacific relies not only on the capacity of the national-level media, and in particular that of radio broadcasting to discuss regional issues, but the Forum and national governments' ability to make information available.

With a few exceptions in the region, media access to government information ranges from ad hoc to difficult, and the quality and timeliness of the information supplied varies significantly. The restriction on the flow of government information can impact on the amount and quality of local news produced and by extension the amount and quality available to citizens about the activities and policies of their government.

In summary, outputs of this activity were:

- Through the *Informing Citizens* report and a literature search, a summary of the current legislation and status of IDP and FOI throughout the region
- Articulation of core principles of IDP, and a framework which provide a practical basis for countries to consider the effectiveness, roles and responsibilities of governments (in particular) in relation to information disclosure policies;
- Working paper(s)/resources and detailed information for use at regional and national level to assist in considerations of the optimal model/s for information disclosure policies.
- Articulated principles and a model for information disclosure policies, based on maximum disclosure, which is capable of adaptation by stakeholder governments.

The Toolkit will shortly be available on the PMCF website at [www.pacmcf.com](http://www.pacmcf.com).