A group of 13 journalists from the southwest Pacific and East Timor sharpened their skills in reporting on government and the economy in a three-week program in Brisbane run by the Centre for International Journalism in collaboration with the Centre for Democratic Institutions.

The program, which followed a similar program to the training course run in 2000, was organized around the planned meeting of Commonwealth heads of government. After taking part in a seven-day workshop at the Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ - http://www.cij.uq.edu.au/) at the University of Queensland (UQ), the journalists were scheduled to report on CHOGM for their own news organizations. Following that they were scheduled to construct an on-line web publication with the assistance of students and staff of the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland.

While CHOGM itself did not take place – this was announced after the program participants had arrived in Australia – the program went on as planned and delivered the outputs originally aimed for in slightly altered circumstances:

- The program as a whole recognized the important role played by the media in promoting democracy.
- The workshop delivered a program of useful instruction and got very good feedback.
- CHOGM provided plenty of “side activity” to report on.
- Participants were able to make professional contact with colleagues in other Pacific countries, in Australia, and internationally.

The Participants

Of the participants, six were women and seven men. (One East Timorese journalist, a woman, was unable to get a visa in time.) Six worked in the print media, five in radio and two in television.
The participants were:

**Fiji**
Ms Mithleshni Gurdayal, Daily Post
Mr Tamani Nair, Radio Fiji
Mr Penijamini Seru, Viti FM

**Papua New Guinea**
Mr John Dau, The National
Ms Jenny Max, PNG FM
Ms Robyn Sela, Post Courier

**Samoa**
Ms Gardenia Elisaia-Brighouse, Newsline Newspaper
Ms Fuapepe Fesili Stanley, Televise Samoa

**Solomon Islands**
Mr Rex Adams, PAOA FM
Mr Charles Kadamana, Solomon Star

**East Timor**
Ms Marlinda Barros, Los Palos Community Radio

**Vanuatu**
Mr Ricky Binihi, Port Vila Press
Mr Stevenson Liu, Vanuatu Broadcasting and TV Corporation

**Workshop at the Centre for Independent Journalism (UQ)**
The workshop was designed by CIJ director, Associate Professor John Wallace, and Nigel McCarthy, a senior journalist with SBS Television, a former Network Seven NSW state political reporter, and a former lecturer at the University of Queensland.

Additional instructors were:

- Dr Levi Obijiofor, School of Journalism and Communication – former night editor and sub-editor of Nigeria's *The Guardian*.
- Dr Stephen Tanner, School of Journalism and Communication – was researcher and personal press secretary to former premier of Tasmania, Robin Gray)
- Belinda Weaver, School of Journalism and Communication liaison librarian and *Courier-Mail* internet columnist.

Guest speakers were:

- Mr Robert Douglas, financial analyst with ABN-Amro Morgan.
- Dr David Brereton, director of the Research and Prevention Division of the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission.
The broad goal of the workshop was to canvass the role journalists should play as they report government and public life in their societies. Speakers identified major problem areas in government performance, the stumbling blocks routinely faced by journalists, and strategies that might be used to overcome these. Participants provided case study material from their countries and discussed the applicability of others’ experiences to their situation.

Details on the program follow at the end of this report.

**Reporting CHOGM**

While CHOGM itself was postponed, the CHOGM focus still played a key role in the program. Participants went through the processes of seeking and getting accreditation for CHOGM, and of engaging in planning sessions – exercises that in themselves are professionally useful to rehearse.

As time passed, the game plan of course had to change, with participants naturally feeling some disappointment. But quickly a new plan emerged and new assignments allocated, with the new focus being mainly on the on-going activities, such as the Peoples’ Festival and the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

Working out of the CIJ and the People’s Festival media office, the Pacific journalists filed reports to their own news organizations. UQ staff helped journalists scan photos and file print and radio reports. The journalists also contributed reports and personal biographical material to the student editors of the on-line web publication CHOGM 2001 – a Pacific journey, which can be found at [www.sjc.uq.edu.au/sp/index.htm](http://www.sjc.uq.edu.au/sp/index.htm).

During this period, the journalists met various international journalists, including Pieter Wessels, Australian representative of the Commonwealth Journalists Association, and Derek Ingram, founder of Gemini New Service and president emeritus of the CJA. The group had two sessions with Ingram and discussed strategies for setting up a Pacific islands journalists association the possibility of this being a chapter of the CJA.

**Other Professional Visits**

Given the cancellation of CHOGM proper, the group had more time to take part in other professional activities:

- A visit to ABC radio and television and the ABC’s Online services.
- A tour of the *Gold Coast Bulletin* (where Gorethy Keneth, a participant in last year’s program, was doing an attachment), conducted by deputy editor Doug Parrington.
- A visit to the studios of 4AAA Murri Country Radio, a leading national indigenous (and country and western) radio station, conducted by station manager Tiga Bayles.
- A visit to an indigenous community centre and school.
- A meeting with the secretary of the Queensland branch of the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance.
Cultural and Social Activities
The CIJ, with help from Journalism students, arranged the following activities:

- A reception at the CIJ to welcome participants.
- A tour of the university grounds and district, with student guides.
- An end-of-workshop dinner at the Vietnamese Restaurant, Fortitude Valley, for workshop participants, instructors, and won tok friends resident in Brisbane.
- A tour to the Gold Coast (in conjunction with reporting on the Commonwealth Youth Forum).
- A visit to the Lone Pine animal sanctuary.
- A visit to the Brisbane Science Centre.

The Pacific journalists themselves organized two traditional dinners and invited CIJ staff and students involved in the program.

Evaluation
In an evaluation survey completed by the 11 participants, the workshop component rated very highly, with all but two participants giving it an overall appraisal of excellent, with two giving it a rating of very good. Participants valued in particular the workshop content and, as with the 2000 workshop, the opportunity to share knowledge with Pacific colleagues. All thought the workshop improved their understanding of Pacific issues.

The CHOOGM component rated lower, which was understandable, given the expectation of the group to be able to report on CHOOGM. Nevertheless, three journalists gave it an overall rating of excellent, one marking it very good, two giving it good, and four giving it a rating of average. Reasons given for the dissatisfaction were the cancellation of CHOOGM. Journalists who rated it highly noted that other reporting opportunities and activities were provided.

Observations
The CIJ seeks to provide a creative learning environment that values participants’ own experience, that recognizes the challenges faced by journalists in the Pacific as they report public affairs, and that helps participants identify practical solutions to deal with the problems they face.

The evaluation and other feedback indicates that the Reporting Public Affairs program for Pacific journalists generally succeeds in doing this. Pacific journalists continue to appreciate the opportunity to share knowledge about professional issues facing journalism in the Pacific and to rehearse the professional skills needed to report public affairs in their communities.
WORKSHOP PROGRAM

24 September – 2 October 2001

Monday 24 September
(Morning – Walking Tour of UQ)

Session 1: (afternoon)
- Introduction and workshop outline – Nigel McCarthy and John Wallace.
- Participants’ self-introduction (individual).
- Participants' address (by national grouping): 'My Country' - highlight the
  major political, social, and economic issues that other participants need to
  know.
- Discussion: Participants' ambitions for the workshop.

Tuesday 25 September

Session 2: (morning)
- What makes political and financial news? Analysing news values – Nigel
  McCarthy, former Network Seven NSW State Political Reporter, SBS
  Television Finance and Economic Commentator.
- Workshop session (in three groups): Current stories in the Australian media.
- Project: Judging current stories against news values. Write a short
  presentation that compares news values to the stories under review.

Session 3: (afternoon)
- The internet: key sites, and researching politics and finance on the web –
  Belinda Weaver, UQ Dept of Journalism Liaison Librarian and Courier-Mail
  internet columnist.
- Workshop session (individual): Find specific information on the net.
- Project: Research and write a news story from the net.

Wednesday 26 September
- 9:00 am Equipment briefing. Seminar Room
- 11:00 am ABC Tour

Thursday 27 September

Session 4: (morning)
- Govt/media relationship. Surviving under a dictatorship. Dr Levi Obijiofor –
  UQ Dept. of Journalism. Former night editor and sub-editor of Nigeria's The
  Guardian.
- Workshop session: Discussion.

Session 5: (afternoon)
- The cost of corruption – Dr Steve Tanner, UQ Dept of Journalism (researcher
  and personal press secretary to former Premier of Tasmania, Robin Gray)
• Workshop (group with Steve Tanner): How to identify corruption.
• Project: Corruption in your country.

Friday 28 September

Session 6: (morning)
• Regional economic issues and finance reporting – Nigel McCarthy
• Discussion: Globalisation. Regional economies.
• Workshop: participants consider key financial terms.

Session 7: (afternoon)
• Politics and finance on print, radio and television – Nigel McCarthy.
• Workshop (in pairs as the 'presenter' and the 'reporter'): Your moment of fame; you've been covering the story, now explain it in a 1.30 minute television two-way.

Monday 1 October

• Morning – Indonesia and East Timor lectures

Session 8: (afternoon)
• The market – the foundations of capitalism – Robert Douglas, financial analyst with ABN-Amro Morgan.
• Workshop: reading the financial pages.

Tuesday 2 October

Session 10: (morning)
• The corruption fighters – David Brereton, the Queensland Criminal Justice Commission.
• Workshop – dealing with corruption.

Session 11: (afternoon)
• Presentations and conclusion – Nigel McCarthy and John Wallace
• Workshop: Video of 'The War Room' (a television current affairs documentary on the political process), and discussion of political techniques.
• Project: Draw up a list of the techniques displayed in the video.

Farewell dinner for Nigel McCarthy

Wednesday 3 October

9.30 - 11.30: Planning meeting with CHOGM website team
• discuss web design and title
• student section coordinators outline needs
• Pacific journalists identify possible stories

13.30 - 17.00: Individual planning session
• work on personal profiles
• research website stories
• email home news desks on story needs
Thursday 4 October
9.30 - 10.30: Planning meeting with CHOGM website team
  • update story assignment roster
10.30
  • CHOGM website work
  • Pacific journalists visit Commonwealth Peoples’ Festival at Southbank
13.30: briefing by festival media coordinator
14.30: meeting with CJA founder, Derek Ingram

Friday 5 Oct.
9.00 - 12.00
  • Right to Information Workshop - Brisbane Town Hall. Coordinated by Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
  • CHOGM website work

Sunday 7 October
  • Lunch and tour of Lone Pine Sanctuary

Monday 8 Oct.
  • CHOGM website work

Tuesday 9 October
  • CHOGM website work

Wednesday 10 October
9.30: Visit to 4AAA Murri Country radio station
  • tour conducted by manager Tiga Bayles
  • meeting with staff, discussion on station philosophy and strategic plan
  • Visit aboriginal community school in South Brisbane [11.30am]
    ▪ meeting with staff, discussion on educational philosophy, community relations and funding issues
Lunch with 4AAA staff
15.00 Wrap-up meeting with CHOGM website team

Thursday 11 October
10.00 - 12.00  CJA affiliation discussions
  • meeting with Pieter Wessels, Australian representative of the CJA
  • second meeting with Derek Ingram
14.00 - 15.30 Professional/industrial discussions
  • meeting with Dave Waters, secretary of the Queensland branch of the Media, Arts and Entertainment Alliance (Australian Journalists Association).
Afternoon: Science museum visit
19.00  *Farewell dinner*
   - traditional dinner prepared by group at St Lucia Gardens motel

**Friday 12 October**

10.00  *Administrative wrap-up*
   - visa and other refunds, travel arrangements, transfers
   - program evaluation
   - group photo

11.00  *Certificate presentation*

**Saturday 13 October**

*Participants depart*