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27 September 2022

Talofa koutou,

I write in support of the *Kaniva Tonga* news website, based on my research as a Pacific journalism academic at the University of Canterbury.

I met editor and founder Kalino Latu for my research into Pacific media in 2010, shortly after he launched *Kaniva Tonga*. Since then, I have dipped in and out of the news site both for my own personal use and for my journalism teaching.

My research expertise is in Aotearoa's Pacific media and the role these small media play in serving Pacific communities, which have been traditionally under-served by mainstream media. Like other Pacific media, the *Kaniva Tonga* plays an important role as a New Zealand-based online outlet. It provides Tongan-specific news for Pacific communities in Aotearoa, it connects Tongan communities here with diasporic networks more widely and, by focusing on Tongan-related news in English, it fills a gap for Aotearoa's young New Zealand-born Tongan population, many of whom are unable to speak Tongan.

Pacific media such as this fulfil important public service media functions of reflecting and representing identity and culture, contributing to a shared sense of citizenship and identity, and serving Pacific languages and cultures – and they do so with minimal resource. During the Covid-19 pandemic, these media have had an even more important role in combating mis- and disinformation and getting trustworthy information to Pacific communities, which have been on the frontline of the pandemic. Again, Pacific media producers have done this work under enormous financial pressure. Two longstanding Pacific media (*Samoa Times* and *SPASIFIK* magazine) have closed as a result, and Kalino Latu says *Kaniva Tonga* is likely to close, too, without some additional financial support.

I ask NZ on Air funders to consider investment in Pacific media such as *Kaniva Tonga* to ensure their sustainability beyond the pandemic.

Fakafetai lasi (thank you),
Dr Tara Ross

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Tara Ross'.

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