

## Cook Islands country paper

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COOK ISLANDS COUNTRY PAPER

ROUNDTABLE ON:  
"PROMOTING PUBLIC HEALTH & NUTRITION IN THE S. PACIFIC:  
THE NEED TO INVOLVE THE MEDIA"  
Tonga, September 22-26, 1986

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HEALTH PROMOTION AND THE MEDIA IN THE COOK ISLANDS

INTRODUCTION

The formulation of the Cook Islands Broadcasting and Newspaper corporation began in 1970 and at the time, it was necessary for Government to establish a "combine semi-autonomous body" because neither could exist without the support of the other. The Cook Islands Broadcasting and Newspaper Corporation (CIBNC) operates Radio Cook Islands 18 hours daily, and publishes Cook Islands News six days a week except Sunday (2000 daily) and is an ad-hoc government organisation and its budget is subsidised by approximately 40 per cent.

Over the years, the aim of the Corporation has always been to provide an "Information Service" for the people of the Cook Islands. This has not always been possible due to a multitude of disadvantages and drawbacks, however, with the exposure and attachment of our senior journalists and radio personnel to overseas training institutions and overseas news media establishments, it has proven that this service can be realised professionally.

HEALTH AND THE MEDIA

The islands that form the Cook Islands Group are scattered over an area of some two millions square kilometres of ocean, extending from Penrhyn, 9° south of the equator and over 700 miles from Rarotonga the Capital to Mangaia, which is just north of the Tropic of Capricorn and 110 miles from Rarotonga.

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We are part of a region which has mostly small land masses, small populations and great expenses of sea - we are isolated from each other.

In this environment, Radio Cook Islands carry a heavy burden. It is the only effective means of inter-communication between the central authority and the rural masses, especially to the Northern group of islands.

Radio Cook Islands broadcasts and assist to produce information programmes for the following Departments and Ministries:

- Dept. of Public Health
- Dept. of Probation Services
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Agriculture
- Department of Community Services
- Department of Women & Youth Affairs.

The Public Health Division of the Ministry of Health produces a fifteen minutes programmes three days a week - i.e., Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Their subject matters covers a wide spectrum of the health problems experienced among the island people. Apart from the above three days weekly programmes, Radio Cook Islands has been used extensively in the event of an epidemic breakout of various diseases. This has proved effective time and time again in the Cook Island. This has also helped minimise and control the growth of the epidemic.

Three times yearly, the Public Health Division holds their tutaka. This is a form of competition among the villages and homesteads whereby the best kept home and village is selected on a special day. Here again, the people are made aware of this through the use of both media services (Radio and Newspaper) in the Cook Islands. Because of the comprehensive media exposure of this event, the response has been very successful.

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The newspaper side of the Corporation also plays a similar role as that of the Radio. Twice a week, the Public Health Department publish a two column half a page covering mainly topics such as Child care, Diseases prevention and others, Tuesdays in local language and Thursdays in English.

Apart from the above regular columns extras such as that for the Radio are published in the News.

On many occasions during the past years, both media were used to inform the Public of the free services available when specialists and consultants are brought into the country by the government.

The column pages in the Printed Media is free of charge while the Radio programmes are sponsored.

This paper reflects the co-operative spirit that exist between the Health Department and the Corporation in the Cook Islands.

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