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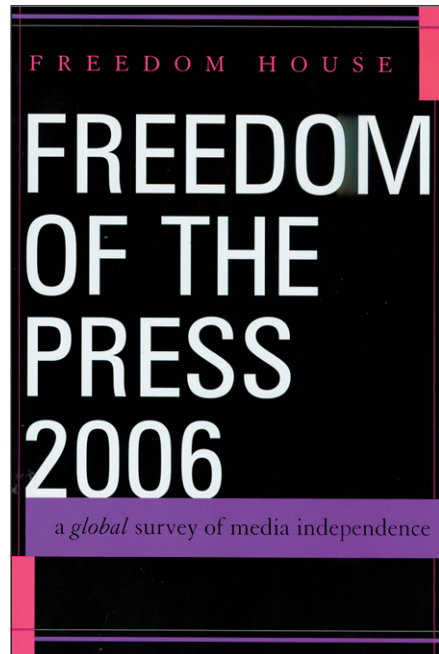
Dual purpose resource for media freedom

Freedom of the Press 2006. A Global Survey of Media Independence, edited by Karin Deutsch Karlekar. New York: Freedom House, 2006. 272pp. ISBN 9780742554368.

JUST how many surveys of world press freedom do we need? One view is that there can never be enough because, every time Freedom House, Reporters Sans Frontières, the International Federation of Journalists or the Committee to Protect Journalists releases one, the message of media freedom is disseminated.

Of course, the counter argument is that the same message loses its impact when so many competing non-government organisations announce their various lists derived from different formulae.

The annual survey by the non-partisan, US-based pro-democracy organisation Freedom House has taken on a certain authority now it has been published for 26 consecutive years using a developed survey methodology. Numerical values



contribute to classifications of countries according to whether their media are given the status ‘free’, ‘partly free’ or ‘not free’.

Other rankings of legal, political and economic environments contribute to a nation’s total score on a scale of 100.

Pacific Journalism Review editor David Robie and *Asia Pacific Media Educator* editor Eric Loo were among the analysts for the Asia-Pacific sections of the 2006 report.

Overall figures for the region rated 17 countries (42.5 percent) Free, eight (20 percent) Partly Free and 15 (37.5 percent) Not Free. The

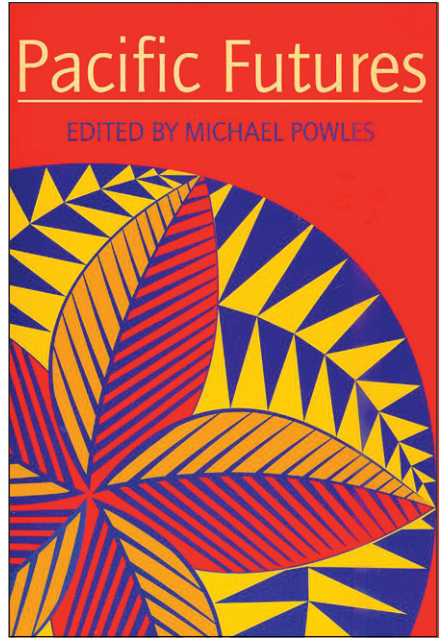
Pacific Islands and Australasia shone as exemplars of media freedom, while several Asian countries, such as Burma, North Korea, China, Laos and Vietnam were rated poorly because of their state controls on the media.

Scandinavian countries took out the first five positions in the rankings of 194 nations. North Korea came in last.

While rated Free, Australia was criticised for its revitalisation of sedition laws and contempt charges against two Melbourne journalists and was ranked 31 on the international scale, well behind New Zealand at 10. Pacific Island nations categorised as Free included Palau (12) Marshall Islands (15), Micronesia (35), Vanuatu (52), Tuvalu (53), Fiji and Kiribati (59), Papua New Guinea and Samoa (65), and Nauru and the Solomon Islands (69).

Tonga was the worst performing Pacific island nation, ranked at 74.

The survey serves a dual purpose in that it is an excellent research tool with its account of important media events in each country and a useful lobbying resource for advocates of media freedom in an individual country or in the broader region.—*MARK PEARSON, professor of journalism at Bond University, Queensland*



Crucial democracy media role

Pacific Futures, edited by Michael Powles. Wellington: Pacific Cooperation Foundation; Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2006. 260 pp. ISBN 1740761871.

SAMOAN Prime Minister Tuila’epa Sailele Aiono Malielegaoi waxed eloquently about the future of the Pacific in the foreword to this handsome volume. Noting the vision adopted by Pacific leaders in Auckland in April 2004, he said they must offer Pacific solutions to the unique Pacific challenges. Quoting from the vision declaration, Tuilaepa