

Noted

Poignant tale of colonialism, sexual politics

An Island Calling, directed by Annie Goldson. Auckland: An Occasional Production, 2008, 78 min.

WHEN Fiji police bumbled their way through investigating the double murder of Red Cross hero John Scott—the ‘angel of mercy’ during the parliamentary hostage drama in May 2000—and his longtime partner Greg Scrivener, they were accused of a lack of ethics and professionalism.

Legal breaches such as sub judice and contempt of court were cited by international critics. The media was also condemned (Tapueluelu, 2001).

Some commentators, such as Radio Australia’s James Panichi, lamented that the relationship between Fiji police and reporters had become ‘too close for comfort’. Even the News Corp daily *The Fiji Times*, that custodian of colonial tradition and privilege, admitted the national code of ethics had been breached.

But the real culprit was then



Police Commissioner Isikia Savua who triggered the ‘homophobic slant’ of media coverage and compromising the investigation. Unfortunately, the media happily fed at his table of bigotry and double standards.

The editorial self-criticism by the *Times* came at a point when much of the harm had been done. Acknowledging a call by the Scott family for ‘restraint and sensitivity’, the *Times* noted:

Parts of the media have been insensitive and less than balanced in their desire to beat their rivals in this most competitive of industries. There is little doubt that the Fiji Media Council’s code of ethics—drawn up in consultation with the industry—has been breached. (p. 6)

Much of the climate of media misinformation and prejudice against Suva's gay community was exposed four years later in the book by Scott's younger brother, Owen, in his family history, *Deep Beyond the Reef*. So when Auckland film maker and media academic associate professor Annie Goldson took on the task of developing this story for the screen, she faced a huge challenge.

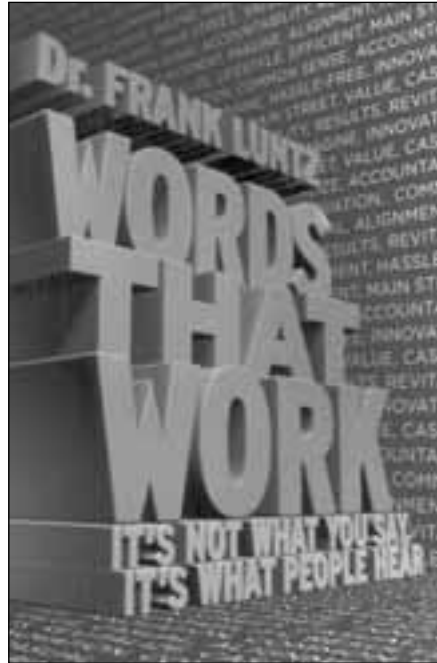
Confronting this complex Fiji tragedy could have been a trap. Instead, Goldson has woven a compelling and poignant tale of racial intrigue, sexual politics and the coup culture.

John Scott won the heartfelt admiration of many Fiji Islanders for his courageous and humanitarian daily visits to the Chaudhry government captives who were held at gunpoint by George Speight's renegades for 56 days.

He deserved a lasting tribute. The Goldson film negotiates the conflict and contradictions to do just that.—*DAVID ROBIE is director of the Pacific Media Centre.*

References

- Scott, O. (2005). *Deep beyond the reef*. Auckland: Penguin Books.
- Tapueluelu, 'A. (2001). Reporters and the police—too close? *Pacific Journalism Review*, 7(1): 159-163.
- The Fiji Times*. (2001, July 28). Editorial.



Words that move public opinion

Words That Work: It's Not What You Say, It's What People Hear, by Frank Luntz. New York: Hyperion Bookstions, 2007, 324 pp. ISBN 1401302599

FRANK LUNTZ is the propagandist who sold Republicanism and Bush to the United States. He prepares congress leaders for televised debates and advises senators on how to employ language to their advantage. In *Words That Work* he tells us how he uses words to move public opinion.

Not surprisingly, *Words That Work* has ignited controversy. Even