PICISOC Annual Report 2015 to the ISOC Board of Trustees

The Pacific Islands Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC) very much appreciates the opportunity to meet with and to present our 2015 annual report to, the ISOC Board prior to its PacINET@NetHui, Auckland. The report includes the following sections:

1   Introduction
2   Members of the PICISOC Board
3   PICISOC Membership
4   Organisational Challenges
5   Outcomes of the ICT Ministerial Meeting, Tonga
6   Conclusion

The future of Pacific Internet

1. INTRODUCTION

IT-PacINET was originally formed in 1994 by a group of techies working out of SOPAC in Fiji who were at the time making internet connections across the Pacific at the time. The Pacific Islands Chapter was formed in 1999 and they held their first PacINET conference in Fiji in 2002. PacINETs have been held across the Pacific since then – twice in Fiji, Tonga and the Cook Islands. This year's event is the 14th PacINET and is the first time we have collaborated with another organisation.

2. MEMBERS OF THE PICISOC BOARD

The PICISOC Board consists of seven members of the PICISOC community. Four members are elected during the first year and three members elected the following year. Four new members were elected the Board for 2014-2015. Those elected were: Ellen Strickland (New Zealand), Edwin Liava'a (Fiji), Winifred Kula Amini (Papua New Guinea) and Priscilla Kevin (Papua New Guinea). The other members on the Board continuing with their two year term are: Maureen Hilyard (Cook Islands), Jackson Miake (Vanuatu) and Patrick Queet (Fiji). The next Board elections will be held in August 2015. Last year ISOC assisted us with the administration of our elections and we hope to take advantage of this service again for this year's elections.

The current Board Chair, JACKSON MIAKE, is in his second year of his first term on the Board. Jackson took over as Board Chair after the resignation of Edwin Liava'a due to work commitments. He works in the Communication and Information Office of the Vanuatu Government, and in this role attends several regional and international events. Although his attendance may originally be related to his government role, there is often some opportunity to raise wider Pacific and PICISOC issues. Jackson took over the role of Board Chair following the resignation of Edwin Liava'a.

Former Board Chair, MAUREEN HILYARD, has been on the Board for three terms (2 years as Vice Chair, 3 years as Board Chair and this year as Secretary) and will not be standing in the next election. Maureen has had a more focused opportunity to raise Pacific interests as an Asia-Pacific representative on ICANN's At Large Advisory Committee for the last two years and has recently been

Maureen Hilyard, June 2015

selected to represent the region for another two year term. Over her term on the PICISOC Board, Maureen has been funded by ICANN and ISOC to attend regional events to provide a Pacific perspective on governance issues as well as to engage in an outreach role that informs the wider community about Pacific concerns, interests and activities.

After successfully completing a Diplo Pacific Policy and Governance Programme (June 2014), Maureen and Jackson were selected by the Diplo Foundation to see policy in action within several UN organisations in Geneva. They also participated in a panel discussion "The Internet as a Critical Resource for Pacific Islands States" with Diplo's Internet Governance guru, Jovan Kurbilija.

Ellen Strickland is the Collaboration and Community Engagement Lead for InternetNZ and has responsibility for community grants and strategic partnerships. Ellen has had a long-standing association with PICISOC and is in her second term on the Board. Ellen's role is Vice Chair of Policy. She recently completed a PhD on IT Policy Development in the Pacific. Through her InternetNZ connection Ellen is also a member of ICANN's ccNSO and also attends ALAC meetings and functions when she has an opportunity to attend an ICANN meeting.

Patrick Queet is the Board's Treasurer. He was the Director of PacCERT, based at USP in Fiji – responsible for dealing with emergency response issues within the Pacific. The World Bank withdrew

its funding support for this service at the end of 2014 and the office was closed. The revival of this service was given some serious reconsideration by the ICT Ministerial meeting in Tonga. Patrick's major task during this past two years has been to resolve contact issues with the Westpac Bank in Suva, Fiji. We have only just recently organised online banking so that we can access our Board funds – to pay for our two PNG Board members to attend PacINET@NetHui.

Patrick, Ellen, Maureen and Jackson attended the IGF in Bali, in 2013 – a rare opportunities for the team to get together.

Priscilla Kevin (left) and Winifred Kula Amini are new to PICISOC and to the Board, and run an IT business in Port Moresby in PNG. Priscilla is the Vice Chair of Technical issues and website management. Winnie is in charge of membership management – welcoming and introducing new members to our chapter. Priscilla attended the ISOC Leadership Workshop in Colombo and reported very positively about her experience. Priscilla and Winnie also participated in the judging of the ICT Days event in Vanuatu to which several Pacific participants presented projects that they are undertaking in their countries to support the development of technology in the Pacific.

Maureen Hilyard, June 2015

3. PICISOC MEMBERSHIP

Countries

Australia	45	Marshall Is	5	Papua New Guinea	79	Tuvalu	9
New Zealand	44	Micronesia	7	Samoa	28	Vanuatu	37
Fiji	193	Nauru	9	Solomon Is	32	OTHER	45
Kiribati	20	Palau	3	Tonga	13	U.S.	35

*Fiji is more populated as the home of USP (CROP Coordinator) and other major regional organisations. Papua New Guinea is larger geographically and population-wise, but much of the country is under-developed has many social issues. There is little internet coverage across the country. We are very fortunate to have two of our Board members from PNG.

(www.beautifulpacific.com/south-pacific-islands.php)

Territories and Dependencies

American Samoa (US)	11	Guam (US)	1	Pitcairn (UK)	0
Christmas Island (Aus)	1	Northern Marianas (US)	1	Tokelau (NZ)	1
Cocos Islands (Aus)	0	New Caledonia (Fr)	14	Wallis and Futuna (Fr)	0
Cook Islands (NZ)	14	Niue (NZ)	9		
French Polynesia (Fr)	3	Norfolk Is (Aus)	0		

4. ORGANISATIONAL CHALLENGES

CHAPTER ENGAGEMENT is a major challenge when opportunities to meet face-to-face are limited. Our members generally only meet virtually, through an email list (picisoc@picisoc.org). Topics under discussion are usually initiated by the members themselves, and they create their own networks based around interests through online chats. The Board usually participates in these discussions as individual members or if we have some formal contribution to impart, perhaps after a Board meeting. It is important that the Board maintains dialogue with its membership in order to get a wider understanding of concerns and interests that we can take to any forums that we, as individuals, may be able to participate in. It is generally up to the individual Board members themselves, to locate and take advantage of any opportunities that will enable them to undertake their "messenger" role to higher levels.

Participation by PICISOC Board members on the ISOC Chapter email lists also helps to maintain our profile as well as add our voice to the policy processes offered by the Internet Society. PICISOC

members are very strong in their support of each other, and the online discussions can get very heated and very involved. However, in times of need, the membership list really demonstrates its strength, for example, in the support provided by members from across the Pacific trying to get funds and equipment to those countries affected by the Cyclone Pam disaster that hit the western Pacific region, particularly Vanuatu and Kiribati.

Sometimes national events within the region can be inclusive and a recent event run by the Vanuatu government (Jackson as the main organiser) attracted projects from across the Pacific. This year's major prize "Best Digital Leader in the Pacific" went to Ano Tisam the Cook Islands Internet Action Group for who has produced a mobile app (IOS and Android versions) of a Cook Islands Maori Language Database to help to promote their local language which is on the verge of extinction according to the UN. Ano hopes to present his project at Pacinet@NetHui.

PARTNERSHIPS: The Pacific Islands Chapter covers such a widely spread and diverse region, that there are also few opportunities for the Board to meet with each other let alone with any PICISOC members outside of our own country islands. To get to PacINET@NetHui, the Board is using its own meagre financial resources to travel to Auckland. This makes fundraising a big focus for the next Board. We therefore very much appreciate the support of our partners, including the Internet Society (Singapore), Internet NZ, APNIC and ICANN Oceania who are sponsoring both Board and Pacific participants (via a Pacific Fellowship programme) to attend this conference. Not only will the Pacific be able to take part in the NetHui, but we have also been allocated a day for our own PacINET meetings. It helps that current Board member Ellen Strickland is the key organiser of this event, but we appreciate the approval that has been given by the other NetHui partners to enable us to participate. This year's event if enhanced by the inclusion of the Internet Society's Intercommunity 2015 event, and to the opportunity for the PICISOC Board to meet with the ISOC Board to present our views, interests and concerns to you face to face. This is a rare opportunity indeed for our Pacific Islands Chapter.

STRATEGIC EVENTS: NetHui and other such large events within the region are of strategic significance to the PICISOC Board. Increasing costs, and our limited access to financial resources are causing the Board to seek less costly and less time-consuming alternatives to holding our traditional PacINET events within the Pacific itself. Sometimes despite the training and capacity building opportunities offered to the local host communities, the expectations of a large conference are beyond the means of many of our small island states. We ask for a suitable venue and free internet access, as well as suitable accommodation facilities for visitors, in return for an organised conference that is organised to meet local technical and governance needs.

The Board is currently looking at coordinating a PacINET based around a technical training and conference event organised by a larger, more highly recognised IT entity that relates well to ISOC principles. Ideally it is an event that will encourage government officials and private sector employers to attend or at least fund their employees to the event. Maureen has had discussions with Paul Wilson of APNIC to support PacINET participation in APRICOT 2016 which will be held in Auckland in February 2016. We are also working with the APRALO Leadership Team to use this event as an outreach opportunity, as we did in Fukuoka.

ICANN is also discussing regional meetings in areas that they would not normally go to. The Pacific may be an area that they would look at in the future and I would promote not only an APRALO meeting in the South Pacific, but also an opportunity for bringing together the many former participants of the Fellows programme who have not yet had an opportunity to share their experiences with others in a regional meeting. The CROP ICT WG could also look at coordinating a

Maureen Hilyard, June 2015

major event in the region that would draw all sectors to discuss Pacific-wide technical and governance issues based on the Pacific Strategy.

LOCAL EVENTS: While these large events can offer wider possibilities for building the capacity of our Pacific technical personnel, the Board must be mindful of the need for continued contact with its grassroots communities on their islands. This year's event is the 14th PacINET coordinated by the PICISOC Board, and the first time it has been held outside of the Pacific Islands region. It is important that as the Board plans its programme of events within the region that they continue to provide training and capacity building support for the local communities with the assistance of partners such as APNIC and local APTLD and ccTLD partners, even if as a smaller local event. In this way, the Board can continue in its role to lobby at all levels for support for local internet development initiatives within the region. Funding is the issue, as ISOC event funding would only allow us one event a year.

EVENT FUNDING: ISOC has provided invaluable seed funding for local communities to establish a local event on-island, but it becomes a major task for the volunteer organising committee to seek the additional sponsorship funding that is required to cover the other costs related to getting local participants along to the meeting, plus the cost of internet access and a venue. Although the latter expectations are included into our PacINET hosting agreement as the government's contribution to the hosting of a PacINET conference, this has not been an easy call for some of our small island economies. However when this has been possible and government support has been available, Prime Ministers or the Ministers of IT or Telecommunication of the host countries have availed themselves to open the PacINET conference and to be present at some of the social events which included into the conference programme.

Although each organising committee takes responsibility for its own fundraising efforts, the Cook Islands two PacINETs have been very fortunate to have benefited from the magnanimous individual contribution from the Internet's and one of the Pacific's most avid supporters – Vint Cerf. We cannot thank him enough for the opportunities that his contributions have enabled us to provide at our PacINETs for both the Board and the PICISOC community.

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS: Maureen Hilyard, former Chair of PICISOC, is a member of the At Large Advisory Committee (ALAC) – appointed by members of ICANN's Asia Pacific Regional At Large Organisation (APRALO). PICISOC's relationship with APRALO is quite unique in that it goes back to when the original memorandum of understanding between ICANN and APRALO was signed in October 2007. The first APRALO Chair at this historic event was Rajnesh Singh, who was the Chair of the PICISOC Board at the time and is now Director of the Singapore Bureau of the Internet Society. Maureen maintains this connection having been re-elected as the APRALO representative on the ALAC for a second term (ending December 2017). PICISOC itself has greatly appreciated the advice and support, both financial and in kind, that has been given by Rajnesh and Naveed Haq who have been a one-stop-shop for troubleshooting for us in the Pacific – advice, funds, Board meeting platform trials, Board election scrutineering. At the same time, we have also benefited from the regular and long-standing participation and support for PacINETs and other regional activities by the ICANN Vice President of Oceania Stakeholder Engagement, Save Vocea, whose involvement was originally via his previous life with APNIC.
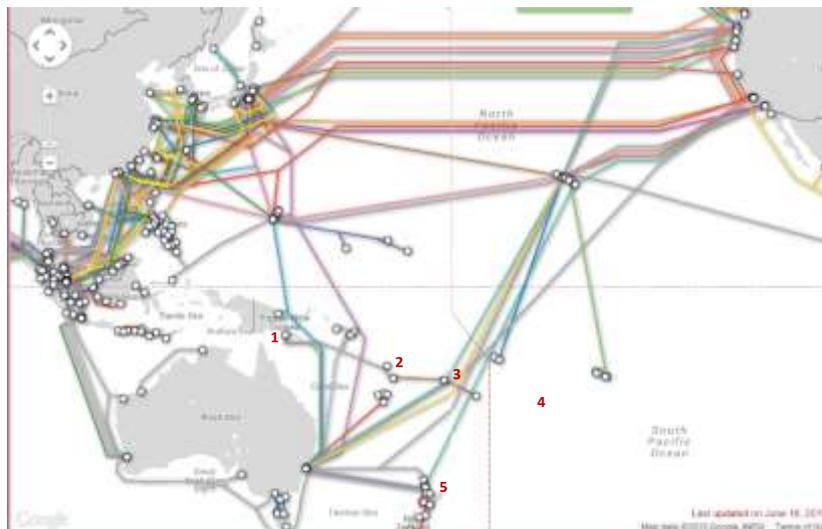
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ICANN involvement also puts us in contact with personnel from the APAC (Asia Pacific) Hub based in Singapore which provides training and capacity building support via webinars and workshops in which PICISOC members are welcome to participate. The webinars are free (depending on the capacity of broadband connection for PICISOC members) but workshops would require travel funds to wherever the event is being held. The APNIC and ICANN relationship helped two APRALO Leaders to attend the Fukuoka APRICOT meeting in March. This sponsored was also beneficial for ISOC as both representatives were ISOC members - PICISOC (Maureen Hilyard, Cook Islands) and ISOC Trivandrum (Satish Babu, India). We were able to attend the ISOC Japan meeting and I met the Chair of the CROP (Dr Dilawar Grewal) for the first time.

Maureen, Dilawar, Rajnesh, ISOC Japan's Yachiushi & Tomohiro and Naveed @APRICOT, Japan.

CONNECTIVITY: According to the Submarine Cable map, the Interchange Cable Network 2 connects Port Moresby, PNG (1) with Port Vila, Vanuatu (2). It also connects to Fiji (3) via Interchange Network 1. Unfortunately, there are obviously "last mile" issues in PNG and Vanuatu because connection to Board members for monthly meetings is invariably unsatisfactory. The skype calls to these countries frequently drop during most of the hour-long calls, so that regular Board attendance is usually limited to the Cook Islands (4), Fiji (3) and NZ (5).

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The Cook Islands is reliant on satellite connection (O3B) and drops if there is poor weather conditions in the vicinity. The Board normally has to resort to email communication, with timeliness being an issue when we need to make urgent decisions – for example, planning the programme for NetHui.

Naveed Haq from the Singapore Bureau has been very helpful to the PICISOC Board in a number of different ways. Not only has he been an invaluable source of information and advice about ISOC matters and helping us as our electoral officer for our Board election, but because of our Board communication issues he offered to trial Webex and Zoom in an attempt to identify a platform that the Board members in PNG could use more successfully. We are still to understand why neither worked for PNG. What it highlights for us as a Board at election time is to insist that Board members are aware that regular teleconferencing is an important communication activity for us. Limiting it to those who can connect is not a totally satisfactory outcome when it may prevent potentially excellent people from being on the Board, but the lack of communication prevents the Board from being effective in its duty to its members and to ISOC. The opportunity for the PICISOC Board to come together in Auckland to discuss Board communication and its importance to the achievement of Board objectives, is timely.

5.   OUTCOMES OF THE RECENT ICT MINISTERS MEETING IN TONGA[1]

The Pacific ICT Ministers noted as one of the key challenges in the Pacific as: "Lack of coordination and information around ICT initiatives within the Pacific region countries by countries, donor agencies and international organisations that could benefit from common approaches, standards, resources and infrastructures in ICT that could provide the force multiplier effect through cooperative development scaling and multi-purposing of technical resources. This includes human resource development and harnessing of available expertise and resources." The key themes that the Pacific Ministers supported for inclusion into the regional action plan included "policy and regulatory frameworks, cybersecurity, human capacity building, infrastructure and universal access, gender equality, leadership and governance, disaster risk management, etc".

While USP has been tasked by the Forum Secretariat to lead the Pacific Regional   ICT Strategic Action Plan as the designated Chair of the Council of Regional Organisations (CROP), it has been continually disappointing that PICISOC has not been formally invited to participate as a contributing stakeholder group within the CROP. Lack of coordination by many organisations was listed by the Ministers as a challenge and yet PICISOC which has the capacity through its members to create synergies among the various coordinating mechanisms to make things happen at the grassroots level without having to fund people to the individual islands. The local expertise is already there if the regional decision-makers would just choose to use our local experts rather than importing them from outside of the region. The Board has asked in the past for an opportunity to have a voice on the CROP in its own right, and to promote our members as a major human resource whose expertise and skills should be harnessed so that they can contribute to the development of the internet in their part of the region.

6.   CONCLUSION

The ICT Ministers have identified quite a few critical areas of need in the region, but what is missing are the basics of connectivity, accessibility, last mile issues and the expensive cost of broadband across the Pacific which are still barriers to quality internet service for the millions of potential end-

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[1] *A full account of the Ministers meeting, programme and outcomes can be found at http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Pages/Events/2015/June-Pacific-Ministerial-Meeting/home.aspx*

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users in the Pacific. It also precludes the people of the Pacific from taking advantage of the economic as well as social benefits which the internet could bring to the region with greater skills and knowledge building across the Pacific. PICISOC has the potential to aid governments and the CROP to facilitate this development. PICISOC should be a strong lobby group to support local ICT entrepreneurs.

As an ISOC Chapter Board, we cannot do what we would like to achieve within the Pacific by ourselves. We are reliant on the partnership support of regional and international organisations. We have been able to strengthen our links with local partners to leverage some benefits for our chapter members. We know that PICISOC could do more to contribute towards development in the Pacific. Unfortunately in order for our offers to be more effective, we need government backing. We need to have a voice at the meetings where there is government representation, and in a forum that collectively can influence change.

It would be of great assistance to the PICISOC Board if the Internet Society could advocate on our behalf to help us get onto the CROP ICT Working Group. Access would be via the Pacific Islands Forum meeting of government leaders - a forum by which ISOC and ICANN could make an impact in the Pacific. If our people are to participate in the global economy there are important issues that need to be addressed, but there needs to be more understanding at the high levels of decision making in order to make this happen. The culture of the Pacific is for leaders to speak to leaders. We need your help and support to move the Pacific towards joining the global Information Society.

Maureen Hilyard
PICISOC Board Secretary
Former Board Chair (2012-2014)
June 2015.