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**JOURNALISM EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION OF NZ CONFERENCE
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I'd like to begin by thanking the organisers for this opportunity to address this annual Journalism Educators Association conference.

The reason I am here is because you are an influential and important constituency that plays a vital role in shaping young journalists.

And with the media industry poised uncertainly on the threshold of big changes, your work has acquired even greater importance.

While your core responsibility remains unchanged – the teaching of journalism and the upholding journalistic standards – I'm sure the evolving technical and editorial environments that young journalists are employed in presents new challenges to you as educators.

I hope most of you will be acquainted with the work of the Asia New Zealand Foundation. And I know some of you have a direct relationship with our media programme.

We've been funding journalists to undertake reporting assignments in Asian countries since 1994. And since about 2000, we've been providing scholarships to promising young graduate journalists to undertake internships in a handful of Asian countries.

While the media travel grants we offer to working journalists continues to roll out funding for assignments that we see value in, the real growth

area in the media programme has been in the scholarships we now provide to support these internships.

I would like to acknowledge Massey University as the first institution to work with us for the very first internships at the Phnom Penh Post and the Shanghai Daily.

Today we also work with AUT and Canterbury University in providing support for their young graduates to undertake internships in Beijing and Jakarta.

We are also fortunate to be included in the Journalism Professional Practicum which is run by the Australian Consortium of In-Country Indonesia Studies run out of Murdoch University in Western Australia.

Over the past two years, nine New Zealand journalism graduates have participated in this six week long media field trip and in January, four more young New Zealanders will be supported by the foundation to take part in the 2010 Journalism Professional Practicum which is now held in Jakarta annually.

Lately we have started to promote three internships that are not tagged to specific journalism schools and are open to all young journalism graduates and young working journalists.

These are for work experience opportunities at the Philippine Star in Manila, the International Herald Tribune bureau in Hong Kong and CNBC Asia in Singapore.

This year's successful applicants include a TV3 journalist, a TVNZ journalist and a Fairfax intern from the Massey University course.

Over the past five year, the foundation has supported over 50 young journalists on internships. Next year, there will be 13 young journalists

on internships at various Asian media organisations. Many of these internships have been brokered by the foundation and all will be supported with our funding.

There is an attrition rate. About one third of the journalists we make this investment in go offshore or find entry level work in public relations or communications but two thirds are actually working in the media industry in New Zealand. And by and large, this isn't a bad result.

We will continue to provide these opportunities because we feel keenly the need to hold a torch for journalism in New Zealand that promotes an international agenda.

While our agenda is one with an Asia focus, we are convinced that New Zealand's best interests are served if the public is informed about our offshore diplomatic, economic, environmental and cultural relationships.

This year we have also initiated a scholarship to draw attention to the need for more Kiwi Asian journalists in our news rooms.

I'd like to pay tribute to the work of Jim Tucker in his former role as the NZJTO for illustrating the lack of representation of ethnic minorities in our news rooms through a survey conducted about three years ago.

It showed that a handful of Asian journalists – for example, Lincoln Tan at the New Zealand Herald, Melissa Davies at TV3 and Arrun Soma at TVNZ - made up about two percent of all New Zealand journalists despite Asian communities making up about 10 percent of the population.

This isn't necessarily anyone's fault but it is something I am confident that will change and has changed even in the past five years from a virtually zero base.

I take heart in the example of Maori journalists. It wasn't long ago that there were very few Maori mainstream journalists and today there is a visible and growing number in our news media.

I know that many of you are conscious of this issue and pro-active in your recruitment processes. We hope that this scholarship will assist in promoting journalism as a career choice for young Kiwi Asians.

The reasons for it are simple and indisputable. If Asian communities are ignored or depicted in negative or stereotypical ways as outsiders as they have been, Asia as a region that is vital to this country's future will continue to exist in the minds of New Zealanders as too hard, too foreign and too scary.

As a corollary of this, I note that the level of reporting about Asia has improved substantially from what in the past has passed as standard fare – disasters, wars and oddities about eating habits.

To a large extent this shift in the qualitative coverage of the region has been unavoidable.

English language global news media organisations such as BBC World and CNN are devoting more time and resources to the region and the New Zealand news media is influenced by this trend even if it can't afford dedicated correspondents based in Asian centres.

This raised level of coverage, particularly in the print and web-based domestic media, is now more nuanced and the debates about Asia's role in issues such as climate change, disarmament and security issues, and free trade are well reflected.

There is now an increased volume of Asian business and political stories in our domestic news coverage. It follows an international trend

of paying closer attention to a region that has now seized the world's attention.

But if there is a noticeable trend that runs counter to our agenda, it is an observable diminishing quantity of international stories in our often times hyper local news media.

I do want have a number of questions.

- Do you think the overall level of international news in our domestic news media has decreased?**
- Do local news stories now rule over stories that test a young person's geography?**
- Is it a correct assumption that local stories are of greater interest to the New Zealand public?**

In my time back in New Zealand having been High Commissioner in Singapore, it strikes me that even programmes such as Morning Report have fewer international items than five years ago and the focus is increasingly domestic.

The same can be said of TVNZ and TV3 in their 6 o'clock news hour and the current affairs programmes Campbell Live and Close-Up.

I am well aware of the commercial considerations that influence the editorial decision making processes and interest in particular news stories can be determined immediately by the number of hits on individual stories on a website.

But I would have thought that in order to mitigate our geographical isolation from the rest of the world, we should be served by a news media that is strongly internationalist.

The Asia New Zealand Foundation isn't in any position to lecture editors and executive producers about the role they could be playing in promoting this country's interests.

But it is for precisely this reason that we are committed to giving young New Zealand journalists opportunities to work offshore on temporary internships.

The candidates are selected on the basis of excellence, for wanting to widen their own professional horizons and the likelihood they will make a contribution in the news media here.

It matters that young New Zealand journalists are given the opportunity to experience the news media and news landscape in Asia, or for that matter, in other parts of the world.

I call it playing the long game. We can't influence the New Zealand news media in the short term beyond funding some of their journalists to go on assignment in Asian countries. But we can invest in new journalists who are good prospects to climb the industry ranks to be in positions of influence.

By investing in young journalists by providing them with professional development opportunities by way of internships at Asian media organisations, we also hope that we are inspiring a life-long interest in international news and current affairs.

But the domestic impact of internationalism and globalisation also needs to be reported in an informed way.

For example, how many of you know that there are now hundreds of Filipino migrant workers employed on South Island dairy farms?

It is a theme that was explored in a series of articles by reporters at two South Island rural newspapers Courier Country and Southern Rural Life.

The reporters looked at a wide raft of issues facing the integration of migrants including schooling, social services, discrimination, employment issues and so on.

This is why New Zealand needs future cohorts of young journalists who enter the news industry with a professional eye on Asia and the other on the Pacific.

News with an international element isn't just something that happens overseas which has tides and currents that are felt here among a minority of export or import related companies and government policy wonks.

The simple reason is that our now deep and entrenched relationships with Asian countries and others around the Pacific are now manifestly obvious and evident no matter where you are in New Zealand.

My challenge to each of you, bearing in mind you have to be closely responsive to the demands and requirements of the news industry, is to nurture this spirit of internationalism in your students.

While the day-to-day news agenda may squeeze the idealism out of a young internationalist working in a provincial and metropolitan news room, it is a principle worth persevering with.