

GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA  
*Press Release on Friday, 13th February, 2004*



**The Government of Tonga requests correction to the  
Radio New Zealand International online article on 9/2/2004,  
titled "Tonga Government accused of bias over issuance of newspaper licences"**

The Government of Tonga requests correction of the following points reported in the Radio New Zealand International online article on 09 February 2004 titled "*Tonga Government accused of bias over issuance of newspaper licences*":-

- (1) *"The Taimi's application was declined as was the application for the pro-democracy newsletter, the Kele'a."*

The Taimi 'o Tonga newspaper never applied for a newspaper licence. Lali Media Ltd. applied. Suliana Moala, Kalafi Moala's wife, holds the majority of shares in Lali Media together with Mateni Tapueluelu and Karl Taufaeteau.

- (2) *"[Kalafi Moala, publisher of the Taimi 'o Tonga said] 'They've approved the government newspaper and the church papers, that's no surprise. They have also approved the Tonga Star as well as the Ofa ki Tonga. Both are papers that are run with an extreme right-wing, pro-monarchy paper so there's obviously very strong favouritism."*

Newspaper licences were granted in accordance with the Newspaper Act 2003 which outlines the licensing regulation. The Act ensured newspaper operators were competent, committed to honesty, fairness, independence and the respect of rights of others. These are basic standards of journalism and editorial responsibility absent in print media in Tonga before the Newspaper Act 2003.

The Department of Communications granted licences on the basis of adhering to the Act and not whether the newspaper was anti-government or pro-government.

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