

## **SPADA's Response to Ministry for Culture and Heritage/ Manatū Taonga's Stronger Public Media Questionnaire**

Monday 19 July 2021

### **THE CURRENT STATE OF NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC MEDIA**

#### **1.0 Strengths: What are some of the strengths of the role New Zealand's public media currently play?**

In general, public media in New Zealand serves the country well by providing entertainment, and trusted information and news that engages diverse audiences, reflecting and enhancing the distinctive and evolving identity and culture of Aotearoa – but our small population and funding pressures do create challenges.

Currently there are public media entities in New Zealand, and there is also public media style content on some of our commercial media outlets. The Screen Production and Development Association of New Zealand (SPADA) defines public media content quite broadly. It's not just serious, earnest content on niche platforms, it's also getting content for under-served audiences into more broad appeal programming. Some content is both broad appeal and of strong public benefit to New Zealanders<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Radio New Zealand (RNZ) – Crown Entity**

RNZ is a strong performer that:

- Registers high levels of trust for its journalism
- Has increased its diversity of programming and embedding of Te Tiriti principles
- Has efficiently moved into online, video and podcast programming, as well as traditional radio

<sup>1</sup> For example, *Shortland Street* was the first prime time series to include te reo in an integrated way, and tackles all sorts of big social issues. Or *Yours Faithfully* (with James Nokise), which allows for different NZ religious groups to see themselves on screen, but it was even more importantly it allows for non-religious NZers (the majority) to be able to listen to someone else ask the questions they would be too uncomfortable to ask, and help them gain a better understanding of other religious groups.

- Freely shares content with other platforms, leading to an increased profile with different listeners/viewers, while also supporting the broader media ecosystem.

## **Television NZ (TVNZ) – Crown Entity Company**

TVNZ is state-owned but works to a commercial mandate - which creates issues given the prescriptive, rather than principles based, nature of its mandate.

Nonetheless:

- TVNZ1, in particular, provides a lot of public media style programming and has a strong, trusted news service
- On TVNZ2, *Shortland Street* plays an important cultural role in New Zealand, and is a vital screen industry training ground
- TVNZ OnDemand is an outlet for some more niche and experimental programming
- The youth platform TVNZ Re is also a valuable part of TVNZ OnDemand
- TVNZ News and Current Affairs registers a high level of trust; this was highlighted during the initial Covid-19 lockdown.
- Free-to-air television has really shown its vital public worth during Covid. TVNZ1 as a source of news, but also in rolling out a whole new educational channel in days – ensuring, for example, that people who couldn't afford to have four children streaming content all day had access.

## **NZ On Air – Autonomous Crown Entity/Funding Agency**

NZ On Air works very well, and – despite being a unique funding model in the international marketplace – its contestable funding strategy performs strongly. It's producer-led approach for the development of local content, in partnership with platforms, is a major strength that could be further enhanced. NZ On Air funding plays a key role in New Zealand's domestic screen sector stability. **This initiative must not weaken NZ On Air.**

As mentioned above, because of NZ On Air's contestable funding remit there is significant public media content on our commercial operators as part of their programming mix, not just on pure public media outlets.

**Māori Television** and **Te Māngai Pāho** also have strengths, and make some excellent content, but have been hampered over the years by funding constraints. Iwi Radio is also a consistent performer.

Niche radio services such as Access Radio and the Pacific Media Network serve important regional, community-based audiences, as well as specialist content for Pacific languages that are under threat.

## 2. Opportunities: What are the greatest opportunities for the role of New Zealand's public media?

The role of any new entity must be to enhance and grow New Zealand's public media and not erode or duplicate what already exists. In that regard, it must plug holes and better serve aspects of the media sector and audiences, not currently well-served. Executed well, the new entity should play a key role in the stability, sustainability and growth of the media and screen sectors.

In a general sense, public media becomes more important as:

- the effects of the internet increasingly impact on commercial media's journalism
- the international streamers overwhelm the local TV market with non-New Zealand stories
- social media platforms are used to disseminate disinformation and fake news that runs counter-productive to the social good.
- Public media provides a trusted source of news and information that endures whatever commercial media is going through. This is vital for a healthy democracy and national identity. This is even more crucial in times of pandemic and other global catastrophe when misinformation becomes dangerous.

In New Zealand, the idea of a new public media entity including elements of TVNZ, RNZ, and other new platforms and content as technology and tastes evolve has great potential to future proof our public media and help it move boldly into the future.

The possible inclusion of Māori Television and Te Māngai Pāho in the new entity should also be explored. The NZ On Screen and AudioCulture websites, and maybe screen archive Ngā Taonga, could also be included.

The establishment of this new entity must be executed well and the **funding must be sufficient**. If not, the move will not strengthen public media in New Zealand, but potentially damage the already fragile ecosystem.

There is a unique opportunity for this entity to better serve under-served communities, especially those who currently have problems accessing public media. It's estimated that 20 per cent of New Zealanders (one million people) are digitally excluded due to affordability issues (cannot afford \$60 - \$150 per month), no internet access/connectivity, lack of appropriate devices, or they are not confident with digital tools.

As public media increasingly goes online, this entity must play a critical role in ensuring all New Zealanders do not miss out, including the elderly, disabled, Māori, Pacific, recent migrants, the poor, and rural/remote communities. Therefore, it is vital the Government ensures appropriate funding is in place to address the digital divide.

This entity could also provide certain "shared services" for the industry. Its role could be through providing funding, facilitative or as a direct service provider. For example:

- As a funder, it could provide sustainable funding for Able (the organisation that provides media access services, including captioning, subtitling and audio description) and other similar organisations, etc.
- A facilitative role could be to help avoid unnecessary duplication e.g. a state-of-the-art central online platform available for Access Radio stations to utilise, the enhanced roll out of Freeview for audiences relying on free-to-air TV services, negotiating bulk/discounted rates for services that are made available to public media entities such as transmission services, etc.
- As a service provider, it could take a lead role in training and development for publicly-funded media entities. This training could include tailored training for media entities in governance, administration, journalism for marginalised groups, etc. However, any training role must be undertaken in concert and consultation with the wider media screen industry, and, again, would require proper funding.

In order to capitalise on these opportunities, the entity must:

- be a trusted, independent and collaborative organisation, that supports and is complementary to the entire media ecosystem, rather than competing with existing and future platforms.

- have freedom to enter into commercial arrangements as appropriate, but act as a not-for-profit organisation, which invests any profits back into the entity for the public good, rather than pay a dividend back to the Government.
- fully utilise, draw on, and build upon the extensive capabilities of the independent screen sector, rather than compete with it. It could act as a useful vehicle for the development of talent, but this must be done in concert with the media and screen sector to ensure training and development outcomes are fit for purpose, in a dynamic and evolving marketplace.
- be led by a governance and management team that is independent of Government, is reflective of New Zealand society, and has a deep understanding of the ethos and essence of public media – to ensure the entity delivers on the Government’s mandate.

### 3 Challenges: What are some of the challenges for the role of New Zealand’s public media?

The main challenge is the **large volume of content** currently available. **Discoverability of content is vital** – so the new entity would need to work carefully to ensure it identifies the right content for the right place, with the right marketing, to reach its intended audience. For example, despite the statistics on the high number of New Zealanders with smart phones and smart TVs, it’s estimated that 30% of Pasifika audiences are impacted by the digital divide or digitally excluded, so non-digital platforms must be factored into how such audiences access public media.

**Funding** is a constant challenge, and will be one of the biggest challenges for this new initiative.

RNZ has tended to teeter on the edge of having enough funding, particularly with the demands of developing online content, mobile apps and podcasts. Likewise, Māori Television and Te Māngai Pāho have always struggled at their current funding levels.

If the commercial elements of TVNZ are to remain, any public media programming guidelines will need to be **carefully introduced to ensure it does not negatively impact advertising revenue**. If there are no new sources of funding for the new entity, there must be no risk that a drop in revenue (i.e. if TVNZ’s ad revenue drops) would be offset by drawing off the current funding levels for RNZ, Māori Television, NZ On Air or Te Māngai Pāho. This would have an extremely detrimental effect on local content production.

In an ideal world, all of the parts of the new entity would be non-commercial, but if that's not possible, then the part crown, part commercially-funded aspect of this needs to be very carefully executed.

*While not in the scope of this work, the introduction of the Public Interest Journalism Fund has been an important development and that initiative should continue beyond its initial three-year life, at the current funding levels.*

#### 4 Threats: What do you think are some of the key threats to the role of public media in New Zealand?

- **Insufficient funding.**
- The impact of **online platforms, cross-border content streaming services**, and paywalls, on funding and policy and the blurring lines between the types of content, which are no longer defined by the delivery medium (more details in the [2030 Screen Sector Strategy](#)).
- With the **high volume of content** coming into the domestic market via international streamers/SVOD services, we recommend the introduction of a levy on international streamers (as recently introduced in France and currently proposed in Canada and South Africa, etc) and those funds could then be allocated to NZ On Air as contestable funding to help grow public media content and New Zealand storytelling. The Commerce Commission should be tasked with this now as levies or quotas on international streamers become normal practice.
- **Introducing a levy on SVODs** (eg Netflix, Amazon, Disney) would be a game-changer for the NZ screen industry, in the same way a levy on Google, Facebook and YouTube for journalism would be a game-changer for NZ media.
- The new public entity needs to **promote and enhance New Zealand's unique cultural identity**. A potential threat is that our public media is not reflective of, or meeting the needs of, the 40 per cent of New Zealanders who identify as non-European. A new entity must be able to engage effectively with ALL audiences who make up New Zealand's changing multi-ethnic, multicultural identity.

- While some may view audience fragmentation as a threat, the new entity should embrace this new reality of the digital media age. However, its focus must be on **ensuring that public media content can reach all New Zealanders**, by ensuring it is accessible and inexpensive (ideally free). It should embrace the notion of multiple, bespoke platforms to meet the individual needs of disparate smaller audiences, especially those groups that are marginalised. It should not be assumed that just because content is shared amongst existing platforms, that it will automatically reach audiences on a platform they can access.
- Local platforms can work in conjunction with global platforms where a significant amount of content is consumed, and where conversations take place, i.e. a digital delivery is not just a site/platform, it includes social media outlets associated with the platform such as Insta and Facebook, and associated video players, such as YouTube and Vimeo, and they should be leveraged as part of delivery [NB: rights issues for things such as backend sales can be worked around through blacklisting and whitelisting content].
- [Attitude](#) provides a good example of how a local platform can leverage global platforms:
  - AttitudeLive: A premium experience and quality resource for the NZ community: **100,000 users pa**
  - Attitude YouTube channel: A channel for the mass, international audience: **63 million streams total / 190,000 subscribers**
  - Attitude Facebook page: **240,000 followers**
  - Attitude Instagram account: **11,000 followers**
- The escalating costs of transmission is also a possible threat, and the fact that there is little competition with only two key players, including one that is crown-owned.

## 5 Collaboration: If you interact with public media entities currently, whether as a private market business or another organisation, what are some of the challenges in the nature of that relationship?

The production community's experience and relationships with NZ On Air, Te Māngai Pāho, TVNZ, RNZ and Māori Television work well.

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| <b>6 Collaboration: Conversely, what works well in those relationships?</b>   |   |
| Communication is an important part of strong relationships, and the entities that have staff with good communication skills are more effective in their roles.  |   |
| <p><b>IMPACTS ON THE ROLE OF PUBLIC MEDIA</b></p> <p>New Zealand public and private media, like other media organisations around the world, are responding to rapidly changing audience habits caused by advances in technology that give people more choices about when and how they access content. New Zealand also has an increasingly dynamic and diverse population with a range of languages, experiences and communities.</p> |   |
| <b>THE FUTURE STATE OF NEW ZEALAND PUBLIC MEDIA</b>   |   |
| <p><b>9 Purpose:</b> In what ways could a public media entity better contribute to the media sector and to New Zealand society?</p>   | <p>RNZ is already a strong contributor to the media sector in its very open policy of content sharing, as well as the training ground it provides.</p> <p>A new entity as proposed, with all of the different pieces working collaboratively together, under the same Charter, should make these aspects – content sharing and training – better, as everything should be functioning more strongly.</p> <p>Likewise, the provision of diverse, trusted content for all New Zealanders should also improve.</p> |
| <p><b>10 Objectives:</b> What could be some specific objectives (outcomes it might seek to achieve) that would drive</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Local content</b></li> </ul>  |



a public media entity's focus? For the media sector?  
For New Zealand society?

Local story-telling is essential and local content is a key point of difference with regard to competing against international streamed content, given it consistently attracts strong local audience numbers.

- **Embrace Te Tiriti O Waitangi principles**
- **Strong Māori content and perspectives, as well as use of Te Reo Māori.**
- **Diversity/Inclusion, better delivery of:**
  - Pasifika content (and on the right platforms)
  - Asian content
  - Content for other ethnic minorities
  - Content for the disabled community
  - Regional content
- **Move toward a broader vision of public service media, one that is more local, more inclusive and more interactive**
- **Content for children and younger New Zealanders**
- **Trusted news and current affairs is essential**
- **Coverage of the following could be strengthened:**
  - Science
  - Arts
  - Documentary programming
- **Model of decent behaviour in the media eco-system**
- **Agile Model**
  - The new entity should be able to move quickly in terms of new platforms/technology/ways of content sharing – to ensure it delivers content to the right people.

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is an exciting time to be in the media, with rapidly evolving methods of consumption and distribution of content. The creation of a new entity that embraces a dynamic landscape and is structured to be agile and responsive to further disruption will help future proof the entity and the sector; and ensure New Zealanders continue to see themselves on screen - whatever form that screen may take.</li> </ul>   |
| 11 Objectives: What could some specific goals of a public media entity be that would indicate its success?                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strong coverage and delivery of the above.</b></li> <li>• <b>By delivering the right content in the right places and growing audiences.</b></li> <li>• <b>Telling local stories and fostering a love for local storytelling (public media isn't something you are - it's something you do).</b></li> <li>• <b>Increased cultural, democratic, and social value.</b></li> </ul>  |
| 12 Functions: What could be the primary functions of a public media entity? i.e. what activities could an entity be responsible for delivering? | <p>A new public media entity that encompassed the best of the current TVNZ and RNZ, plus possibly Māori Television (if they want to be there), and possibly NZ On Screen and AudioCulture (both run by the Digital Media Trust), plus possibly some new arms reflecting new technology and content for under-served audiences – would be very functional; and could deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- trusted news and current affairs</li> <li>- strong local information and entertainment content</li> <li>- content for under-served audiences such as Māori, Pasifika, regional New Zealanders, and younger New Zealanders.</li> </ul> |

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| <p>13 Functions: Are there any examples of activities you think should <i>not</i> be within a public media entity's operating scope? And why?</p> | <p>Everything mentioned above fits in, but – as cautioned earlier in our answers when discussing a mixed economic model - the TVNZ elements of this equation need to be carefully thought through.</p>  |
| <p>14 Guiding principles: What principles (or 'ways of working') could drive how a public media entity undertakes its function?</p>               | <p>The Chair, Board, CE, and management team will need a strong understanding of public media – a real feel for it, a sense of its importance to democracy and New Zealand identity.</p> <p>The current ethos/philosophy of RNZ is suitably public media focused, but TVNZ is not (understandably, considering its commercial mandate), so the RNZ ethos/philosophy would need to infuse the TVNZ elements - not the other way around. How do you protect RNZ's public media ethos to ensure it does not become vulnerable to TVNZ's commercial mandate/economic model?</p> <p>Te Tiriti principles should be observed: and courtesy and decency should underpin all behaviour – both behind-the-scenes and in content.</p> |
| <p>15 Guiding principles: What could guide how a public media entity collaborates with other media organisations within the industry?</p>         | <p>Content sharing is vital. The new entity should help support the commercial media outlets, as opposed to being a threat to them. And let it serve as a helpful staff training ground.</p>  |

## OTHER SPECIFIC QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER PRIOR TO THE WORKSHOP

### Responsibilities of a public media entity in respect of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- What are the outcomes that a public media entity could be aiming to achieve for Māori?
- How could a public media entity best work with Māori media entities?
- How could a public media entity best meet responsibilities in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi?

*There should be a very close relationship and lots of content sharing with Māori Television and Iwi Radio. It is for Māori Television and Te Māngai Pāho to decide if they would like to be part of the new entity in a more comprehensive way.*

*TVNZ and RNZ are already doing some good work with mainstreaming Te Reo Māori usage and Māori content and perspectives, but this should be continually improved.*

*There could be a new part of the entity – perhaps a radio station, perhaps an app or streaming service – that caters to young Māori and Pasifika NZers, perhaps via a music base.*

### Audiences and reach

- Who are the audiences an entity should aim to reach?

*All New Zealanders! With special effort going into under-served audiences such as Māori, Pasifika, Asian, other ethnicities, the disabled community, regional New Zealand, children and younger New Zealanders, etc.*

- ***To what extent should an entity reach audiences directly versus provide content for other platforms with reach into those audiences?***

*Yes, get content out both directly and through content sharing to where the audiences are – always go where the audiences are. Cross the digital divide!*

- ***How could an entity better deliver NZ perspectives internationally?***

*As a mixed economic model, we see the new entity continuing to support the production of strong local content programming that finds audiences not only in New Zealand, but internationally – via the commercial exploitation of international rights. If creating this new entity in effect creates an NZ-inc platform for local content that could also strengthen New Zealand's international voice and brand.*

### **Content and creativity**

- ***To what degree should an entity be a source of authoritative, reliable information about NZ perspectives?***
- ***What types of content should a public media entity provide?***
- ***Should an entity take a role nurturing talent and supporting the creative community?***

*The new entity must be a trusted news and information source – it must provide authoritative, reliable information about New Zealand perspectives.*

*It should provide content of all types – broad appeal (but quality) content that entertains; news, current affairs and documentary content that informs and educates; arts and music content that nurtures and inspires us; and content for more niche audiences to serve inclusivity/diversity.*

*Yes, the new entity should take a role in training and nurturing talent – particularly in the area of journalism. This would likely be in terms of job opportunities as a learning pathway, rather than specific training initiatives, which would require extra funding (as outlined earlier in this documentary).*

## Collaboration with private media organisations

- What content should an entity provide that private providers are not likely to provide?
- What types of content do you think a public media entity should be permitted to commercialise?
- How should a publicly funded entity collaborate with private commercial businesses that may already offer related or competing services?
- How should a publicly funded entity collaborate with private commercial businesses that may already offer related or competing services?

*Private providers will not be able to provide the same volume of content for niche audiences (different ethnicities, disabled NZers, etc), so that is important.*

*Content for regional NZ is important, including local government reporting.*

*As already publicly assured, RNZ National and RNZ Concert should remain non-commercial. NZ On Screen (if it were to be included) would need to remain non-commercial because that is the basis on which its content has been cleared.*

*A new youth-oriented part of the entity could perhaps have some commercial content.*

*TVNZ could continue to be commercial, but with care taken as described above.*

END.